

# Word Accessibility

## Microsoft Word Documents and Google Docs

Word is the most commonly used authoring software. Word documents can be uploaded into LMS pages. Instructors often convert document generated in Word to PDFs for distribution.

### Accessible Word document benefit many students

- Style headings embed visual indicators of information signposts into the coding of the document that can be read by screen reading devices to illustrate the organization and the structure tree of information
- Style headings can create navigable Table of Content to make large documents such as syllabi easier to negotiate
- Although not always applicable to the classroom context, using style headings in a digital document creates Search Engine Optimization.
- Alt text is the description of an image that is inserted as an attribute in the HTML coding of a document. This descriptive text is visible to a screen reader so a student who may be unable to see the image visually will receive the information conveyed in the image through the alt text.
- Alt text is visible when images are not compatible with other devices.

# Accessible Strategies

Unfortunately, headings are often visually constructed through the use of font tools such as size, bold, and underline. These strategies are not readable to assistive technologies such as a screen reader.

## Use the Style Toolbox in Word to create headings

- Make sure to list headings in the correct logical order starting with Heading 1 and systemically selecting the next heading size, Heading 2, for the second largest sub-heading.
- A Heading 1 is usually a page title or the main content heading. It is the most important heading, and there is generally just one.
- A Heading 2 is usually a major section heading.
- A Heading 3 is usually a sub-section of the Heading 2.
- A Heading 4 is usually a sub-section of the Heading 3, and so on, ending with Heading 6.
- Do not skip heading levels, start with Heading 1, followed by Heading 2, Heading 3 and Heading 4.

## Include Alt-text with Images

- Use the alt-text option in Word by right-clicking on the picture or object and choose "Format Picture." In the "Format Picture" menu choose "Layout & Properties" and then choose "alt text."
- You can also include descriptive text within the surrounding text of the image.

## Alternative text should

- Present the same content or function as the image. It is important to know why you are using the image and what

information you want to convey through the image.

- Have no more than a few words; rarely a short sentence or two may be appropriate.
- NOT be redundant—do not provide information that is in the surrounding text.
- NOT use descriptive phrases—screen reading software identifies images, so do not use phrases such as “image of...” or “graphic of...”.

## **Consider Color Contrast**

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 suggest a 7 to 1 contrast between the background and foreground color to reach a AAA accessibility status.
- Avoid the use only color as an indicator of comparison such as lines on a graph. Using non-color indicators such as a dotted blue line compared to a solid green line creates two methods of access to the same information.

## **Lists**

- Screen readers understand lists better if you use the built-in formatting to create numbered or bulleted lists.
- Highlight your list and select the bullets or numbered list buttons at the top of the page, rather than typing in your own numbers or asterisks.

## **Links**

- Attach hyperlinks to meaningful text within the document rather than inserting a URL.

## **Tables**

- Label your tables with headers.
- Keep in mind that screen readers read tables from left

to right, top to bottom, one cell at a time.

## **Use the Ability Checker**

- In the Windows version of Microsoft Word, there is a built-in Accessibility Checker. In the File menu, choose Inspect Document and then Check Accessibility to bring up a panel on the far right of your screen. This panel will show you a list of the accessibility errors in your document and how to fix them.
- For Google Docs, you can install an add-on accessibility checker called Grackle Docs from the Add-on Menu.