

Simple Steps to Create Accessible Informational Materials

2021

Background: Adherence with Section 508, part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is required for all entities receiving federal funding. These are web-based standards applied to electronic information technology, enabling equal access to information for all persons with sensory impairments.

Rationale: In general, the ideal is to use the structures within MS Word, PowerPoint, and/or Excel and then convert to PDF documents (Adobe Acrobat Pro is recommended) prior to presenting or publishing them. These programs have built in tools to organize documents in such a way that devices created to read for those who have any type of visual impairment can read them more easily.

Word, PowerPoint and Excel

- Use Check Accessibility Feature, following suggestions to remediate the document, presentation or spreadsheet



PowerPoint

- Use distinct headings for each slide. When re-using titles or adding to a series, use (2), (3), or (a), (b), etc. for the following slides.

General Practices

The table below indicates tools within Microsoft Office programs to utilize and a brief description of how to use them. The help feature in the programs will offer additional instruction if needed. Also included are some do's/don'ts related to document and website design.

Element	Description	Quick How To
Background Images or Watermarks	Do not use background images or watermarks.	Click "Page Layout." Select "Watermark" then "Remove Watermark."
Bookmarks and Table of Contents	Use Bookmarks or a Table of Contents (TOC) for documents over 9 pages. Create using Word's Bookmark or TOC feature. Check that Bookmark or TOC entries hyperlink to the correct locations in the document.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create bookmarks, click "Insert" then "Bookmark." 2. To create a TOC, click "References" then "Table of Contents." Select a TOC style.
Bullets and Numbering	Use the automatic list formats available in Word. Do not manually type lists preceded by special characters, such as hyphens or asterisks. Wingdings are not acceptable bullets.	Click "Home" then the "Bullets," "Numbering" or "Multilevel List" icon.
Color Contrast	Text must be easy to read in comparison to the background. Use very dark-colored lettering on a white or light-colored background.	Test color contrast by printing in grayscale or by using one of the color contrast analyzer tools found online.
Color Emphasis	Do not use color for emphasis without providing an alternative method of emphasizing text (e.g., bold, italics, or both); do not use color alone.	Example: Use the provider directory to find a list of doctors in your area.

Converting to PDF (if have Adobe Acrobat Professional)	Convert documents to PDF by using the Acrobat add-in on your toolbar (preferred method) or by clicking "File," "Save as Adobe PDF." Do not use "Print," "Printer," "Adobe PDF."	If the Acrobat add-in on your toolbar doesn't convert all of the formatting elements in original document, try "File," "Save as Adobe PDF."
Comments and Tracked Changes	Remove all comments from the text. Accept or reject tracked changes and turn off Track Changes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Right click on comment then select "Delete Comment." 2. Click "Review" then "Accept" or "Reject" changes.
File Name Brevity	File name must be concise, clear and generally no more than 30 characters in length	Example: 508HousingInnov-Ref.docx
File Name Characters	Do not use spaces or special characters in file names. Hyphens (-) are acceptable.	Example: CommonElements.docx or Common-Elements.docx
Flashing, Flickering, or Animated Text	Do not use flashing, flickering, or animated text.	--
Fonts	Use recommended fonts: Times New Roman, Verdana, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica, or Calibri.	See "Style Elements" below. You can modify a style to change the font.
Footnotes	Create footnotes using the Footnotes linking tool.	Click "References" then "Insert Footnote."
Page Breaks	Use page breaks instead of hard returns to move text to the next page.	Click "Insert" then "Page Break." Or click "Page Layout" then "Breaks."
Page Numbering	Use automatic page numbering fields.	Click "Insert" then "Page Number."
Paragraph Spacing	Use paragraph spacing instead of hard returns or tabs to increase spacing between paragraphs.	Select one or more paragraphs. Click "Page Layout," then under "Spacing," adjust space "Before" and "After."
Print Preview	View the document in Print Preview and check to see if it flows correctly from page to page. Look out for image placement, table format, and stray ("orphaned" or "widowed") lines and characters.	Click "File" then "Print." A preview of the document automatically appears on the right-hand side of the screen.
Style Elements	Create a hierarchical structure using Word's style formatting. Use Style elements (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2) or a Multilevel List (e.g., Heading 1 to Heading 2 to Body Text).	Click "Home" then select desired style from the "Styles" ribbon. Or click "Home" then the "Multilevel List" icon.
Text Boxes	As a general rule, do not use text boxes for graphics or floating text	Exception: Text boxes are okay if the final format will be PDF or HTML.
URLs and E-mail Links	All Web citations (URLs) and e-mail addresses must be correct, complete, and linked to an active Web or e-mail destination.	<p>Example: http://www.ctbos.org not www.ctbos.org</p> <p>Example: Jane.Doe@housinginnovations.us</p>

Advanced Practices

The table below indicates practices that are required for accessibility, and may need additional expertise and/or time.

Element	Description	Quick How To
Alternative Text (Alt Text)	Provide alternative text descriptions ("alt text") for all images, graphics, grouped images, and non- text elements that convey information. Do not provide alt text for images that are purely decorative.	Right click on image. Select "Format Picture" then "Alt Text."
Complex Content	If there is no other way to make the content accessible, provide a separate accessible version.	Example: Organizational charts are often complex. Provide a separate full-text version that is 508-compliant.

Element	Description	Quick How To
Document Properties	Fill out Title, Author, Subject (description), and Tags (keywords).	Click "File," "Info," "Properties." Choose item in "Properties" you wish to update.
Descriptive Text	Provide Descriptive text near a complex image such as a chart or graph.	In a paragraph right above or below the image, describe the information intended to convey.

For a deeper dive into Accessibility, see the [HI 508 Guide](#) linked here and related resources on the CT [BOS Trainings page](#) under Making Information Technology Accessible.