Word and PowerPoint Accessibility Evaluation Checklist

WebAIM
web accessibility in mind

The following checklist uses the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office 2016 and newer. See our online Word and PowerPoint articles for more information on using the checker and creating accessible electronic documents.

To start the accessibility checker:

- On Windows: **File > Check for Issues** dropdown menu **> Check Accessibility**
- On Mac: **Review tab > Check Accessibility**

Errors, **Warnings**, and **Tips** indicate automated feedback from the Accessibility Checker. These may vary slightly based on your operating system and how recently your version of Office was updated. **Manual** review items will require manual checking for accessibility issues.

Headings (Word-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
Headings use Word "Styles" (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.)	**Manual: View > Navigation Pane**. Text that should be a heading is present in pane.	Apply the correct heading style in **Home** tab > **Styles** gallery
Headings do not skip levels (e.g., Heading 1 to Heading 3).	• **Error: Missed heading level** (not in all versions) • **Manual:** Headings do not skip levels in **Navigation Pane**	Apply the correct heading style in **Home** tab > **Styles** gallery
Headings are not empty	**Manual:** There are no empty lines in **Navigation Pane**.	Delete empty headings

Slide Titles (PowerPoint-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
Slides have descriptive titles (See Note)	• **Error: Missing slide title** • **Manual:** Title describes the slide content.	Enter a descriptive slide title in the **Title placeholder**.
Slide titles should typically be unique	**Tip: Duplicate slide title**	When appropriate, change the slide **Title** text so it is unique on every slide.

Note: The PowerPoint checker requires a descriptive title for every slide. If it is not appropriate to have a title on a slide, either omit the title (which will be flagged as an error) or hide the slide visually (but not from screen readers) under **Home** tab > **Arrange** > **Selection Pane** > click the **Eye** icon to toggle visibility.

Slide Reading Order (PowerPoint-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
Slide reading order is logical	**Warning: Check Reading order**	**Home tab > Arrange > Selection Pane**; Ensure reading order is *bottoming to top*

Images

Principle	Review	Repair
Images and other non-text content have alternative text (see Note)	**Error: Missing alternative text**	• **Right click > Format Picture > Size and Properties** tab > **Alt Text**. Enter alternative text in the **Description** field • In some newer versions, **Right Click > Edit Alt Text**
Alternative text is equivalent	**Manual:** Inspect text in the **Alt Text > Description** field, or **Alt Text** field in newer versions	Enter alternative text in the **Description** or **Alt Text** field
Images that present content are positioned "In Line with Text" (Word-only)	**Warning: Image or object not inline**	**Right click** > **Wrap Text** > **In Line with Text**

Note:
- There is not a reliable way to hide decorative images from screen readers in older versions of Word or PowerPoint. If an image is decorative, or if the alternative text is already presented in nearby text, we recommend leaving the image blank. Unfortunately, that means it will be shown as an error in Accessibility Checker.
  - If you have a newer version of Office with the "Edit Alt Text" option, there is a "Mark as decorative" checkbox. Check this box if the image is decorative.
- Some newer versions have a "Generate a description for me" button. **Do not** select this. The quality of the automatically-generated descriptions is usually very poor, and a description of an image is often not the same as alternative text.
  - If a document has images with automatic descriptions. "**Intelligent Services: Suggested alternative text**" will appear in the Accessibility checker. Review and repair the alternative text of these images.
- Some older versions of Office will prompt you to add alternative text to tables. This is not recommended.

Tables

Principle	Review	Repair
The first row in a table contains correctly-defined column headers.	**Error: No header row**	Table **Design** tab > Check **Header Row** checkbox
When the first column of a table should contain headers, they are correctly identified as row headers.	**Manual:** Click within the Table **Design** tab > make sure the **First Column** checkboxes match the table header structure.	Check or uncheck the "First Column" checkbox to match the table header structure.
Table has a simple structure, avoiding merged cells or split cells	**Warning: Merged or split cells in table** Use the **Tab** key to ensure the order of the cells in the table is logical.	Table **Layout** tab > **Merge Cells** or **Split Cells**
Tables don't use blank columns or rows for visual formatting	**Manual:** Visual Inspection	**Right Click** empty column or row > **Delete Cells**
Avoid tables that are used for layout when possible. If used, or ensure table reading order is logical.	**Warning: Check reading order** (for tables with no borders or styles) – Use the **Tab** key to navigate the cells and ensure reading order is correct.	• If the content can be removed from the table: Click in the table > Table **Layout** tab > **Convert to Text**. • If this isn't possible, use the Tab key to navigate the cells and ensure reading order is correct.

Note: Support for table headers is still incomplete in Office. If you are saving a file as a PDF, the table structure should be reviewed and improved in Acrobat Pro.

Links

Principle	Review	Repair
Hyperlink text is descriptive (see Note).	• **Warning: Unclear Hyperlink Text** (not in all versions) • **Manual:** Link text describes the link target	**Right click > Edit Hyperlink > Text to display**

Note: If you are creating a presentation that is intended to be displayed in a printout, you may want to include the URL and a description in the link text—e.g., "WebAIM Introduction to Web Accessibility (webaim.org/intro)."

Color and Contrast

Principle	Review	Repair
Text (and images of text) have good contrast	• **Warning: Low-contrast text** (Only present in newer versions) • **Manual:** Search for text that has low contrast.	• **Home** tab > **Font Color** to change in one place. • **Home** tab > **Styles gallery** or **Design** tab > **Colors** to change document-wide.
Color is not used as the only way information is presented	**Manual:** Visually review the document for color reliance.	Use text or other visual presentations in addition to color.

Other issues

Principle	Review	Repair
Document has a descriptive file name	**Manual:** The filename that appears at the very top of the application window accurately describes the file.	**File > Save As >** • **File Name** field in Windows • **Save As** field in Mac
Document has a descriptive Title	**Manual:** Verify title is descriptive • Windows: **File** tab > **Title** • Mac: **File > Properties > Summary** tab > **Title**	Enter a descriptive document title in the **Title** field
There are no spelling or grammar issues	• Word: **Review** tab > **Spelling & Grammar** • PowerPoint: **Review** tab > **Spelling** • **Manual:** Proofread for other spelling, grammar, and readability issues	Correct any spelling and grammar issues
Bulleted and numbered lists are used correctly	**Manual:** Click on text that looks like a list. In the **Home** tab, **Numbering** or **Bullets** is highlighted.	Change text to use the correct type of list.
Multiple spaces/lines/tabs are not used for layout.	• **Warning: Repeated blank characters** (not in all versions) • **Manual:** Spaces, tabs, empty lines are not used excessively for layout.	Use Paragraph styles or columns to control spacing between elements.
Media has captions and/or transcripts	• **Warning: Use captions for audio and video** (embedded media in PowerPoint) • **Manual:** Embedded and linked media has equivalent captions and or transcripts.	Provide media with captions and/or transcripts.

Available online at: webaim.org/resources/evaloffice/