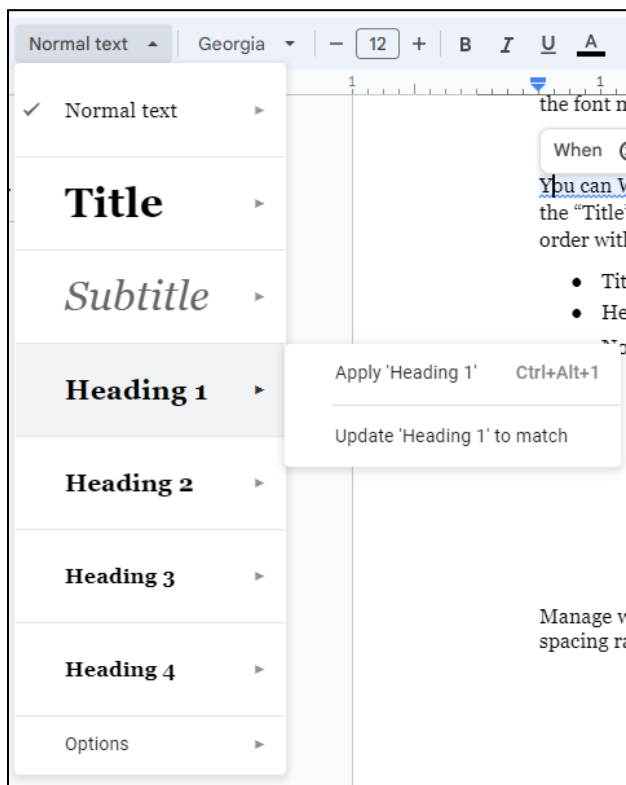


Create an Accessible Google Document

Structure your Document Accessibly

Document structure tags are data encoded into your document that screen readers and other accessibility apps utilize to ensure that your document is read correctly. You can ensure that your document is properly coded by using Text Styles.

Text styles can be viewed and edited through the drop-down menu to the left of the font menu. When utilizing text styles, you can either use Google's default font settings or create your own. To customize your text styles, write out a section of text as you would like it to appear. From there, **right click to select your text and open the Text Style dropdown menu**. Drag your mouse over the tag that should apply to your highlighted text, such as "Title" for the title of your document or "Normal text" for the body of a paragraph. **Then click the option "Update '[Tag]' to match"**.



Once your text styles are customized to your liking, you can select any text and then click on the appropriate style from the drop down menu. Your selected text will update automatically, and will be encoded properly when your document is saved.

When using text styles, make sure to use them as intended. For example, the “Title” style should only be used once, and heading styles should be used in order without skipping. An example of an appropriate text style layout is provided below.

- Title
- Heading 1: main content heading
 - Normal text
 - Heading 2
 - Normal text
 - Heading 3
 - Normal text
 - Heading 2
 - Normal text

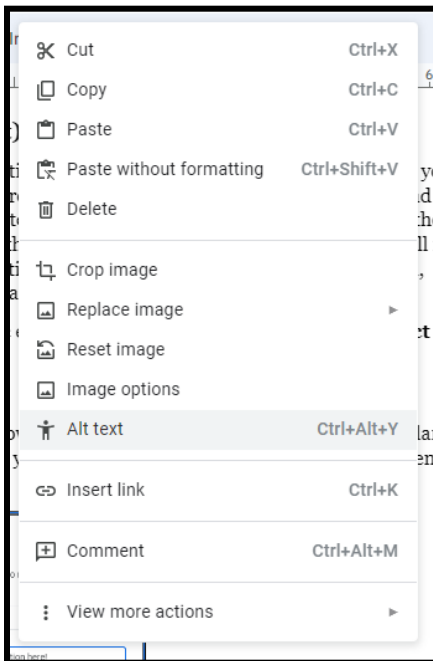
In addition to managing text styles, you can make sure the format of your document is legible to accessibility software by following the formatting guidelines below.

- Communicate your intended reading order in your document’s layout and design. You can achieve this by placing images in relevant areas and ensuring that your document reads cleanly from left to right and from top to bottom. Manage white space in your document by adjusting the line and paragraph spacing rather than relying on the tab and enter keys. Accessibility apps may read a series of space bar entries or similar manual formatting out loud, which can be confusing.
- When including images, keep them formatted in-line with text rather than alternative text-wrapping options. This will ensure that screen readers read your document in the correct order.
- Utilize bulleted and/or numbered lists rather than manually creating them. Accessibility apps will recognize and read your Google doc’s bulleted and numbered lists better than it might handle text following a “-” or an “*”.
- Keep text left-aligned rather than center-aligned or justified. This ensures even spacing between letters which is easier on dyslexic readers.
- Headers and footers are not read by all screen readers. If you have vital information in a header or footer, consider moving it or repeating it elsewhere in your document.

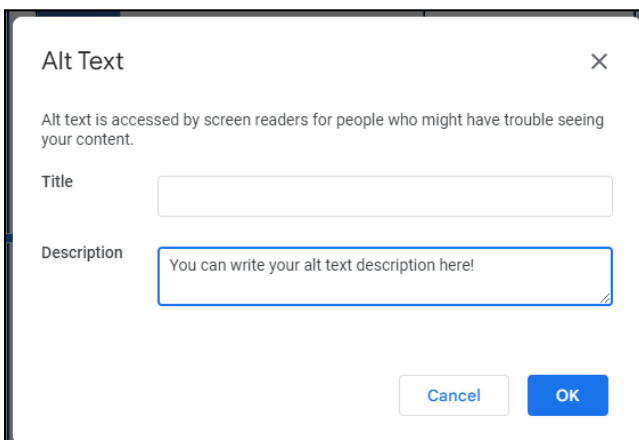
Add Alternative (alt) Text

Alt text is a textual description of a visual component that is encoded into your document. When a screen reader is used, these image descriptions are read aloud. This allows readers to access and understand visual elements that they may not be able to see. Without alt text, a person using a screen reader will not be able to gather any information from the visual components you have used, including pictures or diagrams as well as some charts and graphs.

To add alt text to a graphic element, **right click the element and select Alt Text.**



From there, a popup window will appear. You can leave the title section blank and write a description for your visual element in the description field, then click OK to save your changes

A screenshot of the 'Alt Text' dialog box. The dialog has a title bar with the text 'Alt Text' and a close button (X). Below the title bar, there is a short instruction: 'Alt text is accessed by screen readers for people who might have trouble seeing your content.' There are two input fields: 'Title' and 'Description'. The 'Title' field is empty. The 'Description' field contains the placeholder text 'You can write your alt text description here!'. At the bottom of the dialog, there are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'OK'.

Writing good alt text

You do not need to begin your alt text with “a picture of...” or “a screenshot of...”. Screen readers will make the user aware that they are reading the content of an image before your description is read.

Aim to keep your alt text at 125 characters or less.

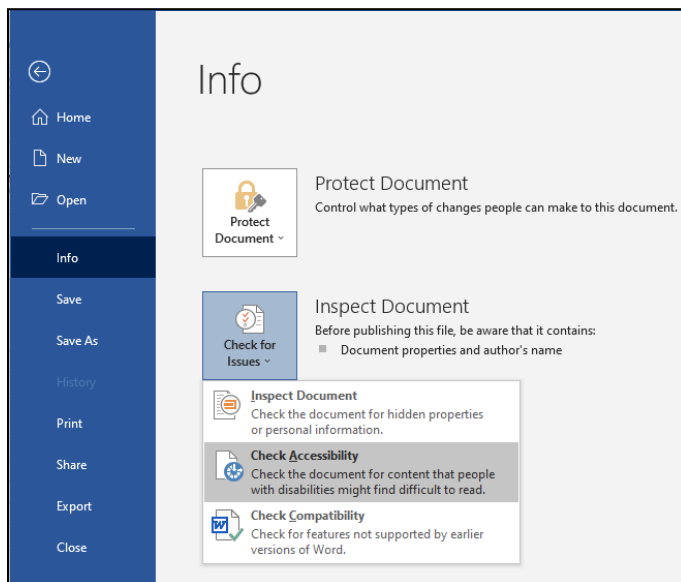
Try to write descriptively, providing context to the image. Good examples of alt text are available through the [University of South Carolina's Digital Accessibility webpage](#).

Run an Accessibility Check

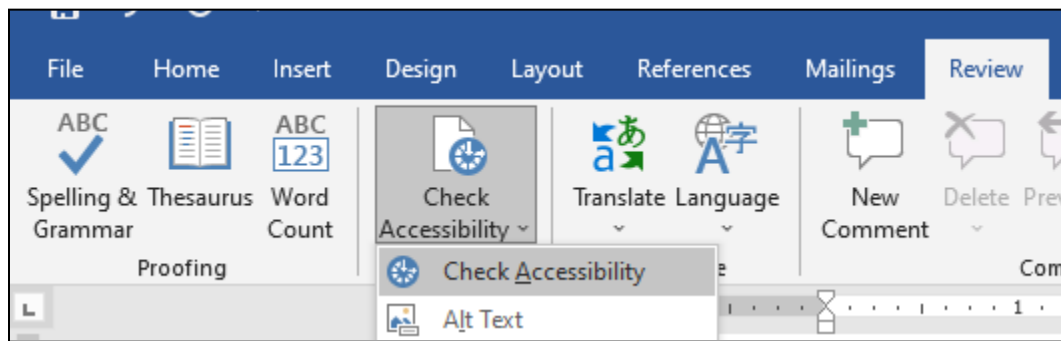
An accessibility check is similar to a spelling and grammar check, but it focuses on correcting common accessibility barriers in word documents. In addition to highlighting any errors, accessibility checkers will provide information on how to fix them.

Google does not have a built-in accessibility check function, but there are options. You can either download your document and run an accessibility check in Microsoft Word, or you can install and run this [accessibility check plugin by Lovely API](#). For those without extensive experience, running the accessibility checker in Microsoft Word is recommended as it not only highlights any errors, but it also explains why the error needs to be corrected and provides step-by-step instructions on how to do so. You can access Microsoft Word's accessibility checker by navigating to:

File, then Info, then Check for Issues, then Check for Accessibility

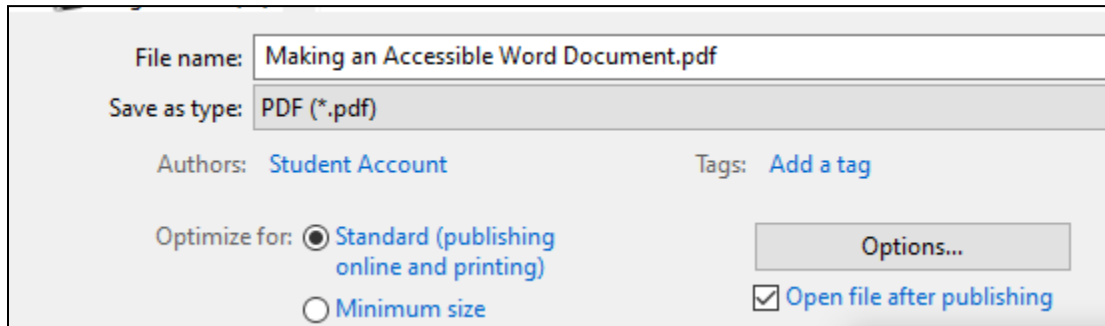


OR Review, then Check for Accessibility, then Check for Accessibility

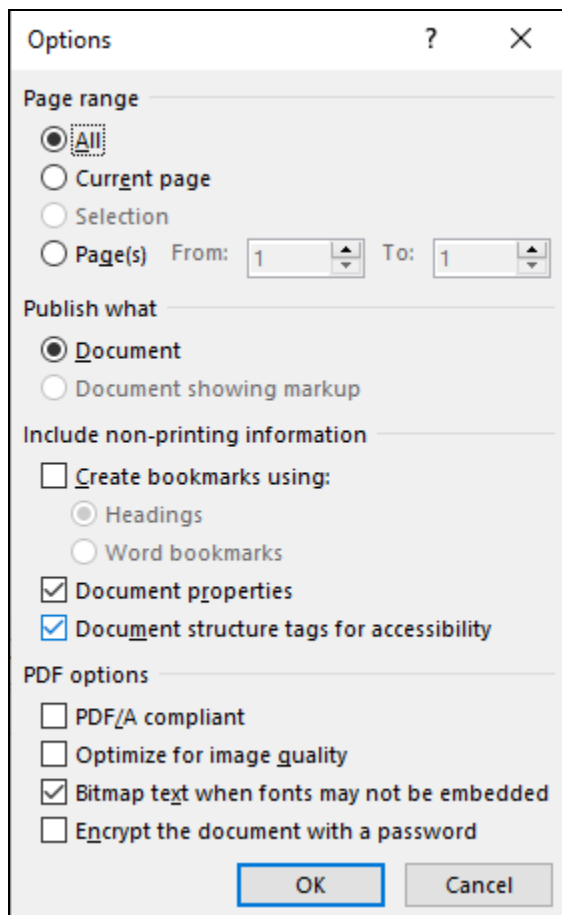


Convert your document to an accessible PDF

When converting your accessible document to a .pdf, make sure you do not lose all the structure tags you worked to create! You can ensure that they are properly encoded by downloading your google document as a .docx file and then opening it in Microsoft Word. From there, select file, then save as, then open the **Options** menu. Make sure that the **Document structure tags for accessibility checkbox is checked**, then hit okay. From there, you are good to save your converted pdf.



This screenshot shows the 'Save As' dialog box in Microsoft Word. The 'File name' field contains 'Making an Accessible Word Document.pdf'. The 'Save as type' is set to 'PDF (*.pdf)'. The 'Authors' field shows 'Student Account' and the 'Tags' field has a link to 'Add a tag'. Under 'Optimize for', the 'Standard (publishing online and printing)' radio button is selected, while 'Minimum size' is unselected. An 'Options...' button is visible on the right. At the bottom right, the 'Open file after publishing' checkbox is checked.



This screenshot shows the 'Options' dialog box in Microsoft Word. The 'Page range' section has the 'All' radio button selected. The 'Publish what' section has the 'Document' radio button selected. In the 'Include non-printing information' section, the 'Document structure tags for accessibility' checkbox is checked, along with 'Document properties'. The 'PDF options' section has 'Bitmap text when fonts may not be embedded' checked. The 'OK' button is highlighted with a blue border.

Design with Accessibility in Mind - General Tips

Serif fonts (including Times New Roman, Georgia, Cambria, and Garamond) tend to include letterforms with high visual distinction, making them easier to read and interpret. This makes them a good choice for print and long-form sections of text.

Make sure the size of your text is appropriate. Text size should not be smaller than 11 or 12 point for text documents, or 24 for powerpoint slide text, depending on the font chosen.

Ensuring high contrast between the background color and font color of your project will increase readability. There are many free contrast checkers you can use online, including the [WCAG Color Contrast Checker](#).

Rather than pasting an address as it appears in your web browser's address bar, create hyperlinks with text descriptions through the insert link function. This provides context to a reader utilizing a screen reader, and generally reads better than a standard web address.

Emphasize thoughtfully. Aim to use italicized, all-caps, and bolded text sparingly. Do not use color alone to indicate important text. Underlined text should be avoided if the included text is not a hyperlink.

Tables can be a challenge for screen readers which will read them from top to bottom and from left to right. Prefer the use of headings, subheadings and bulleted or numbered lists over tables when possible. When using tables, always include a table header and keep the structure of your table simple. Avoid splitting cells, merging cells, or using nested tables.

Consider supplying your document in multiple formats. Some accessibility applications handle word documents better than pdf documents, and vice versa.