

Creating an Accessible Syllabus In MS Word (Windows)

Introduction

All online course syllabi at Western Illinois University are required to meet accessibility guidelines. Essentially, this involves creating a document in a manner that allows individuals with assistive devices to navigate it in a logical order. This tip sheet provides step-by-step instructions on using the accessibility checker within Microsoft Word and step-by-step instructions for making your document accessible.

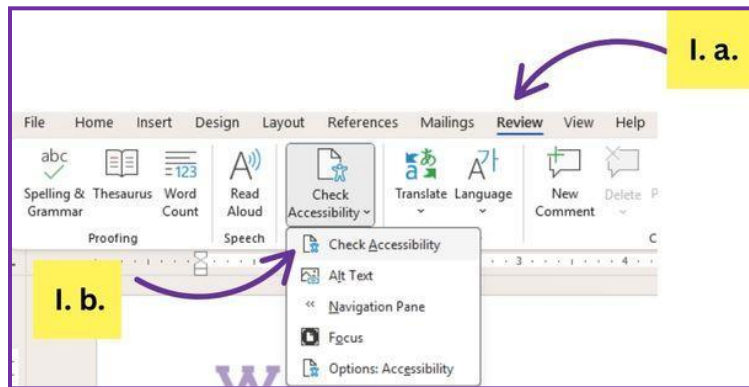
Note: OTL has created an accessible template and companion site for online syllabi. The [companion Syllabus Template website](#) offers exemplary paragraphs and wording to include in your online course syllabus.

Creating an Accessible Syllabus in MS Word (Windows)	1
Introduction	1
I. Running the Accessibility Checker	2
II. Adding Headings to your document	3
III. Providing alternative (alt.) text for images	4
IV. Using tables	6
V. Create accessible hyperlinks	8
VI. Using Lists	11
VII. Adding a table of contents	13
Note about Copying and Pasting Information into this Document	15
Resources	15
Accessibility Resources	15

I. Running the Accessibility Checker

The accessibility checker helps you identify and correct accessibility issues within your document.

- a. Click **Review** on the **Ribbon** menu in the toolbar.



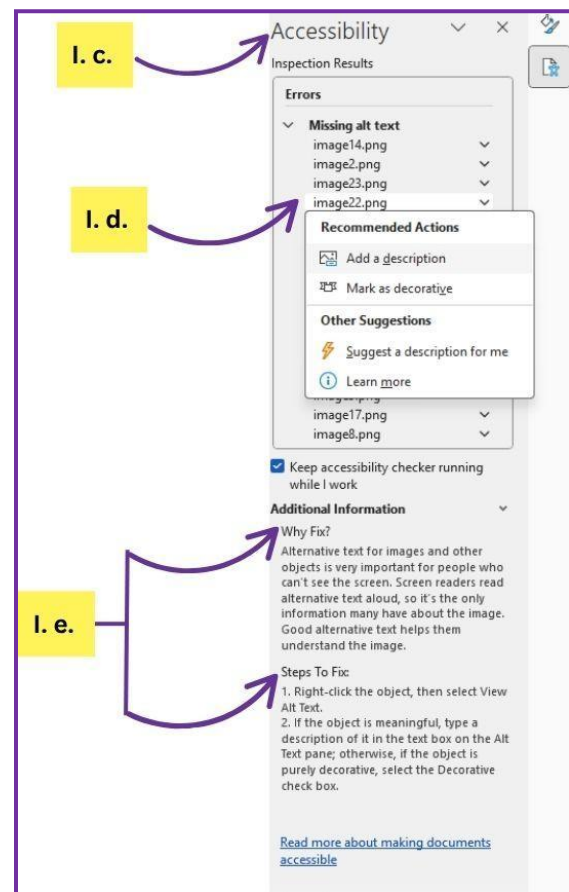
- b. Click on **Check Accessibility**, then choose **Check Accessibility** from the drop-down menu.

- c. The **Accessibility Checker pane** will appear to the right of the document. It will show the inspection results.

- d. Click on a specific issue within the inspection results to select it.

- e. At the bottom of Accessibility Checker Pane, you will see the **Why Fix?** option that explains why you should fix the issue, and in the **Steps to Fix** option you will find steps that guide you on fixing the issue.

Follow the steps provided in the window to fix all identified issues, then run the accessibility checker again until all issues are gone.



II. Adding Headings to your document

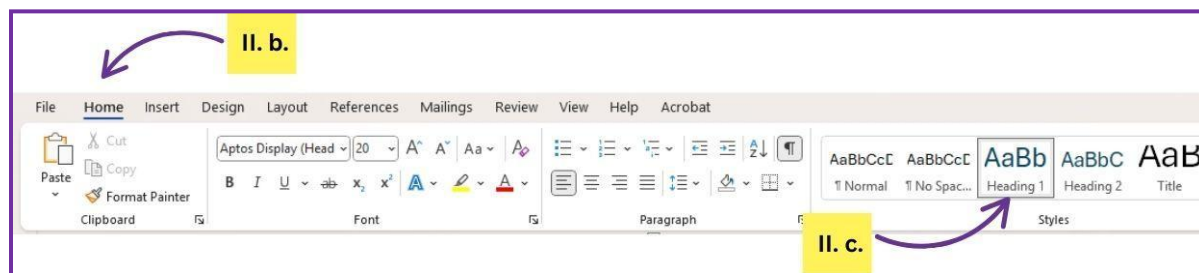
Headings give documents a hierarchical structure that will allow assistive devices to successfully navigate your syllabus in a logical order. According to webaim.org, a page structure should follow the heading order shown below.

- **Title** – serves a clear and concise description of the document, making it easier for the screen reader users to understand the document's purpose. It is the first piece of information conveyed to the user when the document is opened.
- **Heading 1** – Main content heading. **This is the most important heading and there should be only one per document.**
- **Heading 2** - major section heading.
- **Heading 3** - sub-section of a Heading 2 section.
- **Heading 4** - sub-section of a Heading 3, and so on through Heading 6.

Using such a page structure allows users with assistive devices to view all headings on one page (table of contents), selectively choose which headings to visit, and read or navigate through the document by heading without having to read every word. Visit WebAim's information on headings for a deeper understanding.

Follow the steps below to add Headings to your document.

- Select the most important heading within your document that you want to use as Heading 1 (H1).
- Select the **Home** tab in the toolbar.
- Click on **Heading 1**, to change your selected text into a Heading 1 within your document.
- Repeat steps a. - c. as you format the remaining headings throughout your document based on a hierarchical order (H2, H3, H4, etc.)



Remember, you can have as many H2, H3, H4 as necessary, but you can only have one H1 to identify your most important heading.

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III. Providing alternative (alt.) text for images

Alternative text should be added to images in order to provide a non-visual representation of the content or function of an image. You should provide alternative text for all images contained in your document.

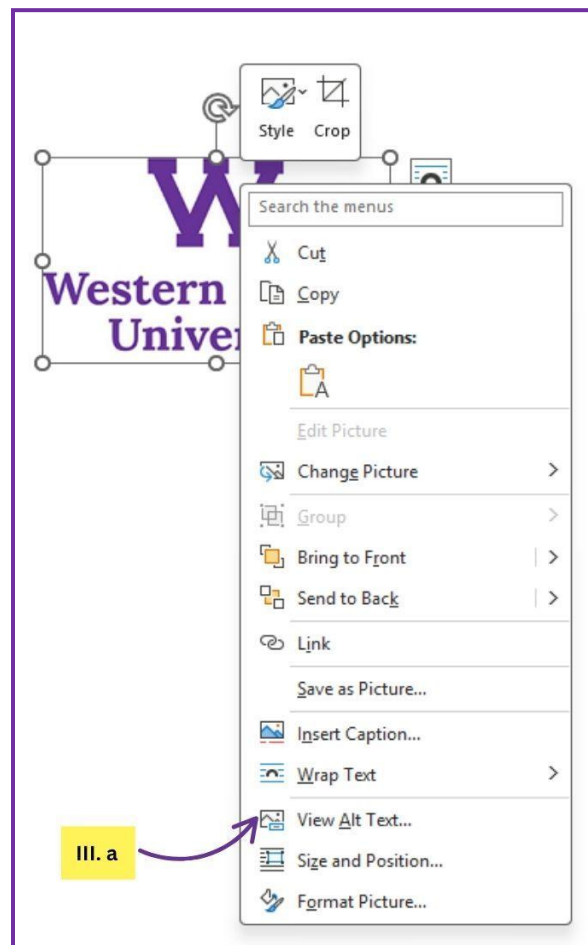
The website webaim.org provides these best practices for alternative text:

Alternative text should:

- Be accurate and equivalent - present the same content or function as the image.
- Be succinct - no more than a few words are necessary.
- NOT be redundant - do not provide information that is in the surrounding text.
- NOT use descriptive phrases - screen reading software identifies images, so it is not necessary to use phrases such as “image or. . .” or “graphic of. . .”

Follow the steps below to add Alternative text to images in your document.

- a. Right-click on the image that you would like to add Alternate text to, then select **View Alt Text. . .**



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- b. The **Alt Text** window will appear, and you will see a field where you can enter alternative text for your image along with guidance directly above the field.
- c. Alternatively, if the image does not convey necessary information, you can select **Mark as decorative**. (Note: if the image is needed for understanding you **must** provide alt text.)

Alt Text ✓ ✕

How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind or low vision?

- The subject(s) in detail
- The setting
- The actions or interactions
- Other relevant information

(1-2 detailed sentences recommended)

This is the Western Illinois University logo. It consists of the letter W centered over the words Western Illinois University.

Generate alt text for me

☐ Mark as decorative ⓘ

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IV. Using tables

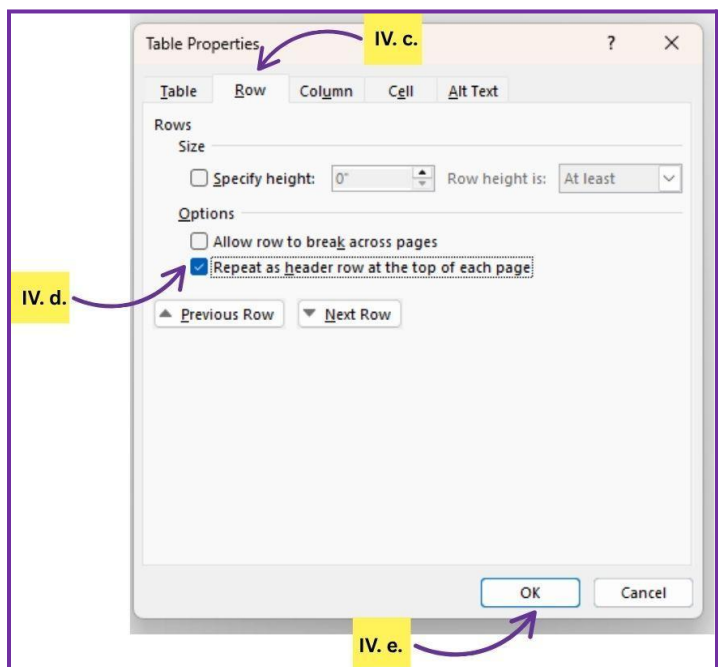
Webaim.org states, “The purpose of data tables is to present information in a grid, or matrix, and to have columns or rows that show the meaning of the information in the grid. Sighted users scan a table to make associations between data in the table and their appropriate row and/or column headers. Screen reader users make these same associations with tables in web pages and PDF files. Unfortunately, support for table headers is limited in Word. You can add properties to Word documents so column headers (headers in the first row of the table) are identified by a screen reader and read and when exported to PDF. Unfortunately, row headers (headers in the first column of the table) do not have the same level of support.”

The following tips will assist you in providing the most accessible form of tables possible in MS Word.

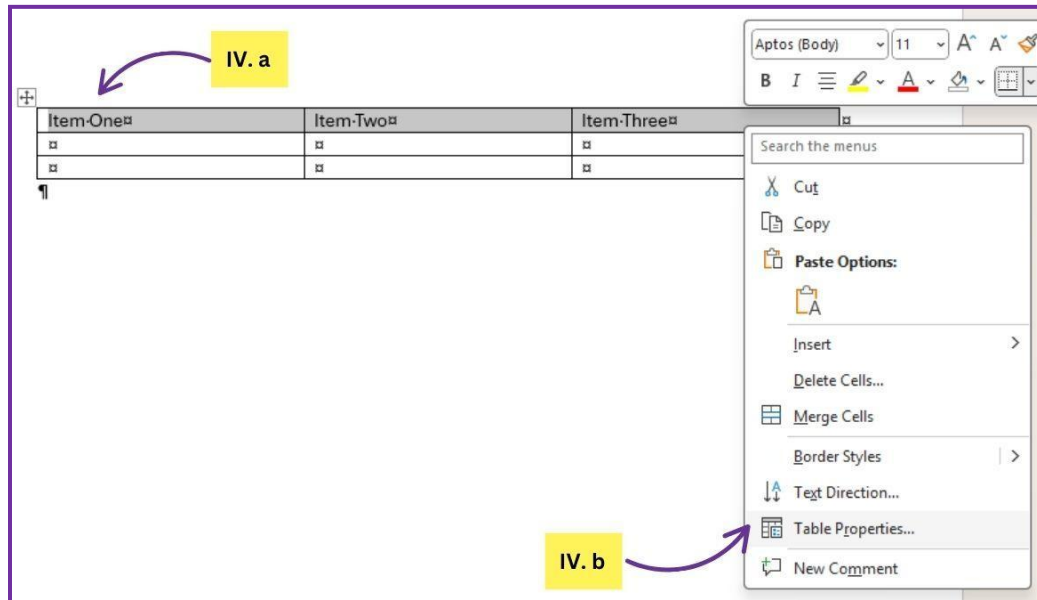
- Do not use tabs or spaces as alternatives to creating tables.
- Do not use tables for page layout purposes. They should only be used to present columns and rows of data.
- Do not use the Draw tool to create tables.
- Do add and repeat Row and Column Headers to distinguish between heading text and data.

Follow these steps to add and repeat Row and Column Headers in Microsoft Word tables.

- a. Select the first row of the table (that contains your headers.)
- b. Right click on the table and choose **Table Properties**.



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- c. Click on the **Row** tab.
- d. Select **Repeat as header row at the top of each page**.
- e. Click the **OK** button.

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V. Create accessible hyperlinks

Webaim.org states Hypertext links are one of the most basic links of HTML. Therefore, making hypertext links accessible is one of the most basic and most important aspects of web accessibility. Typically, when creating a hyperlink in a Microsoft Word document we copy and paste the link into the document, resulting in the automatic creation of the link. This does not guarantee that a link is accessible. In order to make a link accessible in Microsoft Word follow these tips and steps.

Tips for creating descriptive, accessible links:

- Use descriptive link text that doesn't require context from surrounding text. Link text should inform users where the link will take them.
- Keep the amount of text in the link to a minimum.
- Do not use terminology that is difficult to understand out of context. (e.g. don't use something like "click here".)
- As a precaution include the URL where they are going to be directed to in parentheses after the hyperlink.

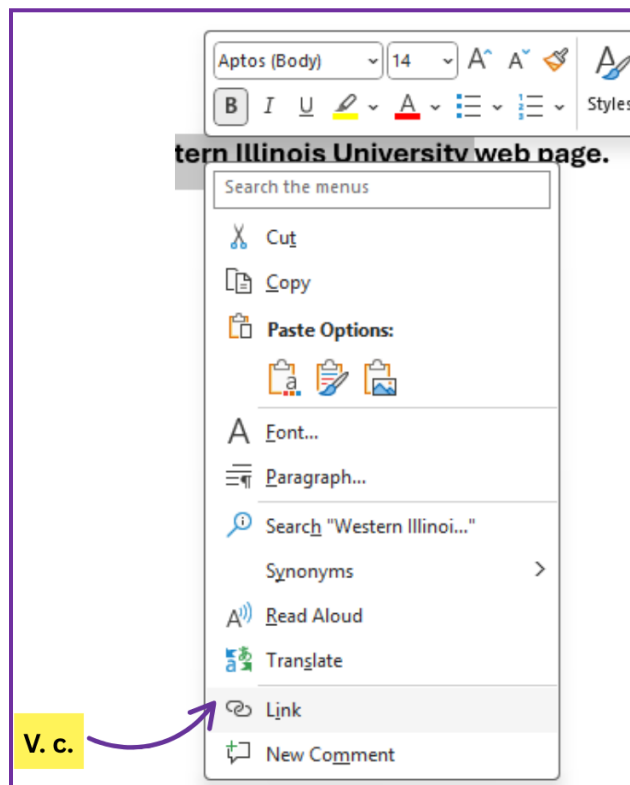
Follow these steps to set descriptive link text.

- a. Type in a sentence in which the link falls in context, such as, *"Please visit the Western Illinois University web page."*
- b. Select (click and drag to highlight) the text that you want to turn into a link (e.g. Western Illinois University).



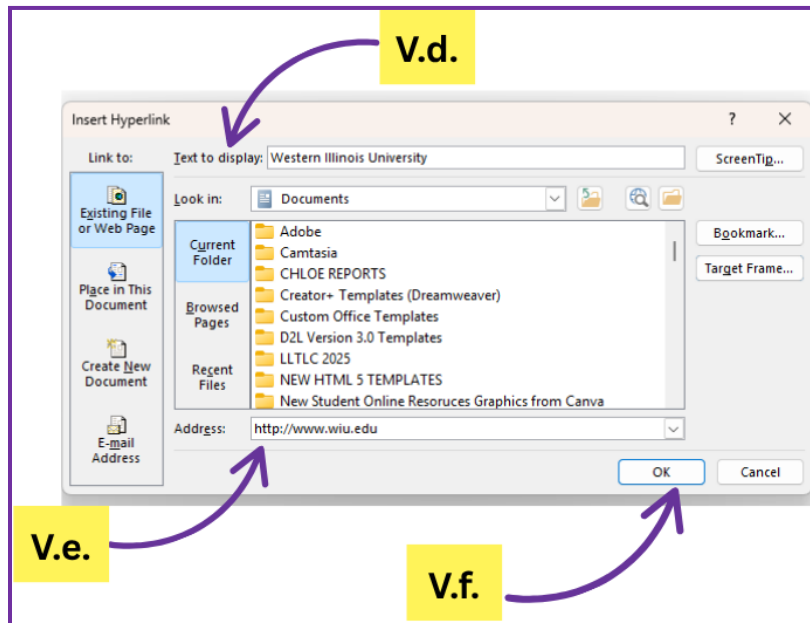
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- c. Right-click (Ctrl + Click) on the text and choose **Link**.

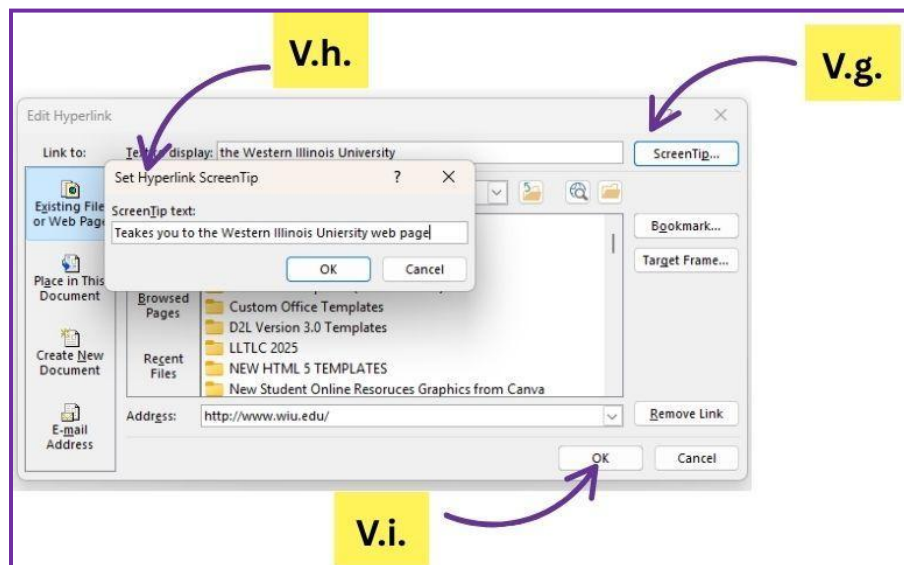


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- d. The link text should already be placed in the **Text to display** field. If it is not correct or you would like to change it type new text into that field.
- e. Copy and paste or type the URL where you want the link to take the user in the **Address** field.
- f. Click the **OK** button.



- g. Additionally, you can add a screen tip that will appear when someone moves over the link to provide additional information. Click on the **ScreenTip** button.
- h. Enter descriptive information into the **ScreenTip text** field.



- i. Click the **OK** button.

VI. Using Lists

Webaim.org states, like Headings, lists convey a hierarchical content structure. Lists are used to separate important information from paragraphs and are very important to the structure of a document. List structure should be used wherever a logical list is present, and nowhere else. You should never merely create something that looks like a list by starting each paragraph with a bullet character.

Sometimes users create such lists by pressing the **Tab** key to indent content. This provides a visual structure for the document. However, it does not provide a suitable structure for assistive technology users. In order to provide an accessible document, you need to follow the following best practices and use the list tools within Microsoft Word.

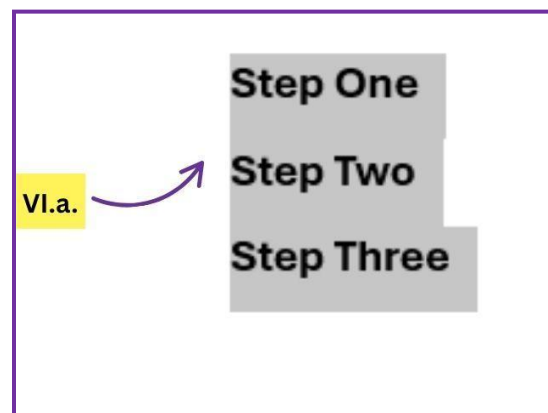
Tips for using lists:

- Lists should be used to represent information in a certain order.
- Use Microsoft Word's list tools rather than the tab key, hyphens, and asterisks.
- There are two types of lists. Ordered (numbered) and unordered (bulleted).

Ordered lists present information in a particular order. They should be used to convey direction or present information in a series of steps such as in a user manual or recipe. This type of list should include at least two items. Unordered lists also known as bulleted lists could include one or more items. They are typically used to separate important information from a paragraph or highlight key points.

Follow these steps to create a list in Microsoft Word.

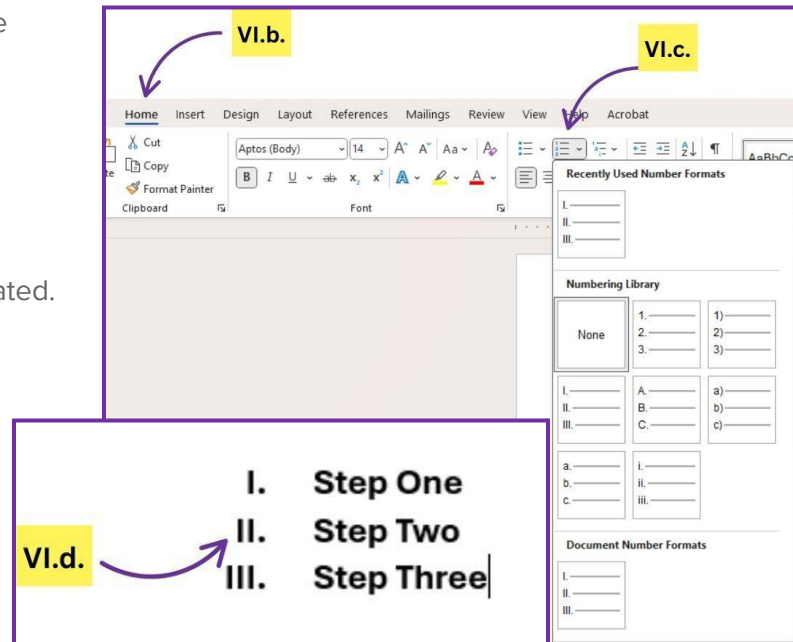
- a. Type in a list of items. (Type a word and press your return/enter key to enter the and so on.) Then click and drag to select (highlight) the text you want to include in List.



then
next,
your

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- b. Click on the **Home** tab in the toolbar.
- c. Click on the **Bulleted List** button in the toolbar.
- d. Your bulleted list will be created.

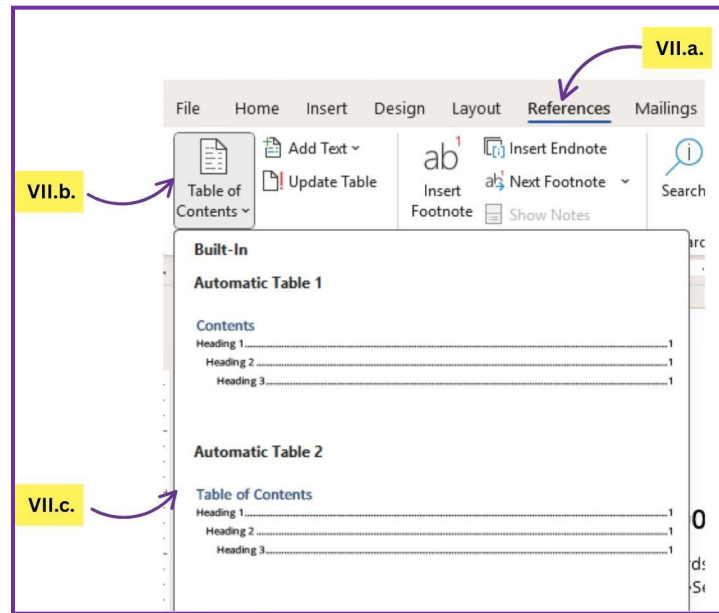


VII. Adding a table of contents

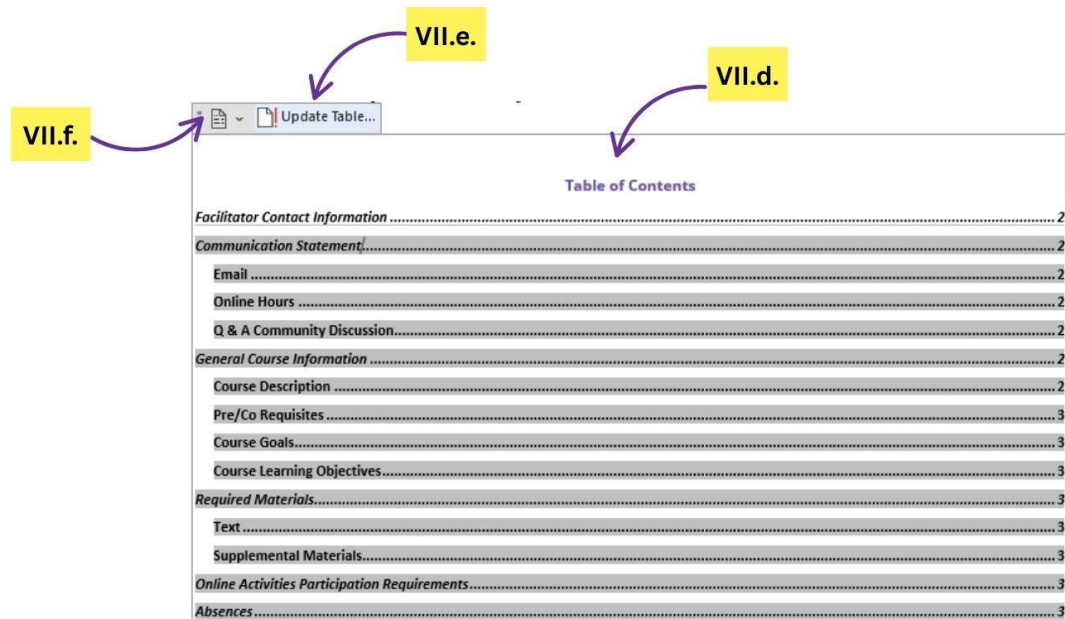
For long documents, it is recommended that you supply an interactive table of contents. Since you have created a hierarchically ordered document using headings, this will be quite simple.

Follow these steps to add an interactive table of contents.

- Click where you want to insert the table of contents within your document. Usually, this will be near the top of the first page, then click the **References** tab on the toolbar.
- Click the **Table of Contents** icon.
- Click on the style of the table of contents you would like to use.



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- d. Your table of contents will appear in your document.

There will be times when you make changes to your document and you will need to update the Table of Contents

- e. Click on the **Table of Contents** within your document to select it, then click on the **Update Table** tab to the upper left. When the pop-up menu appears, click **Update entire table**, then click **Ok**.
- f. If you decide to remove the table of contents from your document, click on the icon to the left of the Built-In window pane, choose **Remove Table of Contents** at the bottom of the pop-up menu. The table of contents will be removed.

Note about Copying and Pasting Information into this Document

If you intend to copy and paste information from your current syllabus into this document, use the **Paste Special** method under the **Edit** menu or by right-clicking in the document where you want to paste your content and choosing **Unformatted Text** to ensure that the fonts match.

Resources

- [OTL Homepage](#)
- [OTL Webinars and Self-Guided Training](#)

Accessibility Resources

- [WebAIM.Org MS Word Tutorial](#)
- [WIU Accessibility Resources](#)

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