

# Checklist for Accessible Documents

This checklist is intended to support the creation of an accessible Google Docs document (though most of these concepts will also apply to any document or web page).

It is always best to start with Google Docs if the information will end up in Google Docs. Copy/paste frequently brings unwanted (and unseen) coding that impacts the functionality of the document.

## Landmarks

Landmarks such as headers, footers, page numbers, and page counts (all in the Insert menu) help your readers orient themselves in your document. To maximize accessibility, include one or more of these landmarks, especially in long documents.

Please be judicious with these.

## Headers and Footers

### Observe the Following Rules for Header/Footer Content

- Content within the header/footer area conforms to the following criteria:
  - **Acceptable:** running headers, logos, page numbers, and copyright messages.
  - **Unacceptable:** document title, author or contact information, date of document update or document version number (unless the information has also been included on the cover page or at the beginning of the first page of the document).
- Page numbers should be in the footer (or header) of the document and NOT manually entered.

## Headings

### Use Heading Styles to Convey Structure

- Major headings in the document have been structured using Heading styles.
- Headings have been used to divide content into meaningful sections and not to format text.

### Use Heading Levels in a Logical Order

- If the Heading 1 style has been used for the document title, it has been used only once in the document.

- The Heading 2 style has been used for each major heading.
- The Heading 3-6 styles have been used for each sub-heading and sub-subheading.
- The Heading styles are always used in order without skipping (ex. Heading 4 is a child of Heading 3, not Heading 2).
- The Heading styles 7-9 have not been used in the document.

### **Use Short Titles in Headings**

- Document headings are short (fewer than 20 words or limited to one line).

## **Text Formatting**

### **Appropriate Fonts Have Been Used**

- Sans Serif fonts are used throughout the document. (Sans serif fonts do NOT have “lines” along the top or bottom of the characters. Arial is a sans serif font. Times New Roman is a serif font. Wikipedia has a [list of serif fonts](#)).
- Body text (Normal text) is adequately sized (depending on the font used, it should be no smaller than 11 or 12 point).

### **Control White Space in the Document with Styles**

- Document white space has been controlled through the use of styles and before/after paragraph spacing.
- The “Enter” key was not used to create white space within the document.

### **Use List Formatting**

- Styles have been used to create lists in the document.
- The Numbered list style was used for ordered lists (lists where order is important).
- The Bulleted list style was used for unordered lists (lists where order is not important).

### **Generate a Linked Table of Contents and Add a Cover Page for Longer Documents**

- An up-to-date and accurate linked table of contents has been provided if the document is more than eight pages.
- A cover page has been included if the document is more than eight pages.

### **Left justify text where possible**

- Justified text is more difficult to read because of extra space between the words.

### **Paste without style**

- If you are copying and pasting text from other sources, paste without style

and then select the appropriate styling (choose “Paste without formatting” from the Edit menu or by right clicking). This will assist in removing styling that may cause problems and frustration.

## **Columns**

### **Use Column Formatting Instead of Tabs and Spaces**

*\*Columns are available once you type some text. Then pick Format | Columns. You can use Column breaks once you have.*

- Columns have been created using the Column setting.
- Spaces and tabs were not used to create the appearance of columns.

## **Tables**

Use tables for presenting data, not for visually changing the page layout. Also, be sure to include headers within tables, since screen readers automatically read the first row as the header row.

### **Do Not Use Tables for Layout Purposes**

- Tables have been used to display truly tabular data and not for layout purposes.

### **Do Not Use Heading Styles in Tables**

- No Heading styles have been used within a table.
- Decorative formatting of the table headings (larger, bold font, etc.) has been accomplished with the formatting buttons on the toolbar.

### **Split Complex Tables Up into Simpler Tables Where Appropriate**

- Tables with complex structures (i.e., multiple heading rows) have been split up into smaller and simpler tables where appropriate.

### **Simple Table Structure Was Used**

- Cells in the table have not been merged or split.

### **Control White Space in Tables Using Table Properties**

- White space within tables has been controlled by adjusting the cell margins or cell padding within the table. Do NOT use the “space” key for alignment.
- The “Enter” key was not used to create white space.
- The use of blank cells to format the table was avoided.

### **Rows of a Table Breaking Across Pages**

- Every effort has been made to ensure that table rows are not allowed to break across pages.

## **Set Header Row(s) to Repeat in Tables**

- The Header row(s) of a table have been set to "Repeat as header row at the top of each page" regardless if the table spans multiple pages.

## **Hyperlinks**

### **Use Text for Hyperlinks Rather Than URLs**

- Links within the document have descriptive text that describes the target destination of the link rather than the URL.
- The URL has been included in parentheses (but is not an active link) after the descriptive text if the document is intended for both electronic and print distribution.
- Avoid multiple links that go to the same location next to each other.
- Please note that name and description may be the same thing.

### **Ensure Link Text is Descriptive and Makes Sense When Read Out of Context**

- The link text used to describe the link destination makes sense when read out of context.
- "Click here" or "more" have not been used as link text.
  - For example, a link so say "[Dearborn Public Schools webpage](#)" rather than "for Dearborn Public Schools, [click here](#)".

### **Ensure Link Text Is Identical for the Same Destinations and Unique for Different Destinations**

- Multiple links that have the same target destination have the same descriptive link text.
- Links with different purposes and destinations have different descriptive link text except where two links that serve different purposes need to point to the same destination.

## **Pictures**

### **Provide Alternative Text for Pictures**

*(\*Use the Alt text field by selecting an image, then picking Format | Alt text.)*

- All non-text elements (pictures, images, clip art, shapes, charts) have alternative text descriptions that convey the same information to the user that the image or picture conveys except for the following:
  - The alternative text description for decorative images has been set to "decorative image".
  - If the non-text content is a test or exercise that would be invalid if presented in text, the text alternative should at least provide

descriptive identification of the non-text content.

- Alternative text does not start with "Image of" or "Photo of".
- Alternative text has been put into the "Alt text" field.
- Alternative text has been limited to 125 characters. (*\*Note that this can be longer in Google Docs, but it is still best practice to limit this.\**)

### **Provide Captions for Images When Appropriate**

- Captions have been provided for all images when appropriate (e.g., when further explanation of complex images is necessary, when operating under a style guide, or when a document is optimized for print).
- All captions have been placed below their respective images.

### **Place Graphics and Images "In Line"**

- The "wrapping style" of non-text elements has been set as "In line".

## **Other Non-Text Elements (Clip Art, Charts, etc.)**

### **Provide Alternative Text for All Non-Text Content**

- All non-text elements (images, clip art, shapes, charts) have alternative text descriptions that convey the same information to the user that the image or picture conveys except for the following:
  - The alternative text description for decorative images has been left blank.
  - If the non-text content is a test or exercise that would be invalid if presented in text, the text alternative should at least provide descriptive identification of the non-text content.
- Alternative text does not start with "Image of" or "Photo of".
- Alternative text has been put into the "Alt text" field.
- Alternative text has been limited to 125 characters.

### **Provide Additional Descriptions for Complex Images/Charts**

- Complex charts and graphs that require additional explanation (beyond what can be provided in the alternative text area) have been further described and explained in the surrounding text.

### **Avoid the Use of Images of Text**

- Information has been presented as text rather than using images of text except where a particular presentation of text is essential to the information being conveyed (i.e., logotypes).

## **Do Not Use Text Boxes**

- The visual effects of a text box have been achieved by using a bordered paragraph.

## **Do Not Use Drop Caps**

- Drop caps (where the first letter of a paragraph is a large decorative letter) have not been used.

## **Appropriate Use of Color**

### **Do Not Use Color Alone to Convey Information**

- Information or emphasis conveyed with color is also available or conveyed without color.

### **Text Has Adequate Contrast to Background**

- Text and background colors have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 (large text that is  $\geq 14$  point and bold or  $\geq 18$  point can have a ratio of 3:1).
- If links are differentiated by color alone, the contrast ratio between the link color and the surrounding text color is at least 3:1.

## **Document Metadata**

### **Use a Concise File Name**

- The document file name is concise, generally limited to 20-30 characters, and makes the file's contents clear.

### **Language**

- Set the Language of the document (available under the File | Language menu)

## **Sharing**

### **Sharing with others**

- Simply share the document. Do not create a PDF or a "Microsoft Word" version of the document.

*Want to learn even more about accessibility and Google Docs? Read the [Voluntary Product Accessibility Template Document](#).*

*This document was adapted from Alt+Shift materials, with permission, from the Microsoft Word Document Accessibility Checklist developed by the [Michigan Department of Education](#).*



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