# Word Accessibility Demo

This is a document for training document creators on how to properly set up a Word document for accessibility.

**Document Properties**

Environment Setup

When setting up Word for writing accessible documents, start by turning on the **Navigation Pane (View Tab),** so you can see and organize headings, ensuring a clear structure. Use the built-in **Check Accessibility Pane (Review Tab)** to add meaningful descriptions to pictures, charts, and other visuals. Together, these tools help you create documents that are easier to navigate and understand for all readers, including those using assistive technology.

Document Title

In Word, you can set the document title by going to **File > Info** and locate the **Properties area > Title** and typing a meaningful name. This title is carried over when saving as a PDF and is read by screen readers, helping users quickly identify the document. Without a proper title, assistive technology may just read the file name, which can be unclear or unhelpful.

Language

Setting the document language is important because it tells screen readers how to pronounce words correctly, especially for different languages. Without it, the text may be read in the wrong voice or accent, making it confusing or hard to understand. It also ensures tools like spell check and grammar check work properly, improving accuracy for all users. Go to **Review** > **Language** > **Set Proofing Language** (it will open up the dialog box). In there, you will see the option for doing this only for **Selected Text** or for the **Current** (whole) **Document**. Visit [Word: Set Language](https://cityofmadison.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2427/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=168520) for more guidance.

Built-in Styles

Built-in styles, like headings and lists, give documents a clear structure that screen readers can follow, making it easier for people to move through the content. They also keep the look of the document consistent so readers can quickly see what’s important. Styles make it simple to update or change the design without breaking accessibility.

Color Contrast

Good color contrast makes text and visuals readable for people with low vision, color blindness, or those viewing a document on a dim screen. Without sufficient contrast, important information may be missed or misinterpreted, creating barriers to understanding. Strong contrast improves clarity for everyone, enhancing overall readability and reducing eye strain.

**Document Structure**

When a document is set up with a clear structure, it’s easier for everyone to use, especially people who rely on screen readers. Headings, lists, and clear sections order act like signposts, helping readers quickly find what they need without getting lost. Good structure not only supports people with disabilities, but it also makes the document easier and faster to read.

Headings

Headings break a document into clear sections, making it easier to scan and understand. In Word, using the built-in heading styles (like Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) ensures the structure is recognized by screen readers and other accessibility tools. This also helps with creating automatic table of contents and keeps the document consistent and organized.

Lists

Lists make information easier to follow by breaking it into smaller, organized pieces. When the built-in list tools in Word are used (bulleted or numbered lists), screen readers can tell users how many items are in the list and read them in the right order. This helps people understand steps, options, or key points more clearly, reducing confusion and making the document more usable for everyone.

**Red**

**Yellow**

**Blue**

## Images

Images in documents should always have alternative text descriptions so people using screen readers know what the image shows. This makes the content clear and useful for everyone, including those who are unable to see the images. Remember, context matters when writing alt text and AI features may not always be helpful. Visit [Image Accessibility](https://cityofmadison.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2427/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=167334) for more guidance.

 

**Links**

Links should use clear, descriptive text that tells people where the link will go, instead of vague phrases like “click here” or “read more.” They should be easy to see, with enough Color Contrast and sometimes underlining to show their links. This helps everyone, including people using screen readers or those with low vision, quickly understand and use the links.

**Tables**

Accessible tables use clear headers to explain what each row and column means, helping screen reader users understand the data correctly. Tables should be kept simple, with a logical reading order and no merged or blank cells that can confuse navigation. They are best used only for presenting data, not for page layout, so information stays organized and easy to follow. Visit [Word: Table Accessibility](https://cityofmadison.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2427/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=168513) for more guidance.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
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**Check Accessibility Tool**

The Check Accessibility tool in Word is a built-in tool that reviews your document for common accessibility issues. Located under the **Review Tab**, this tool points out problems, explains why they matter, and gives guidance on how to fix them, like missing alt text on images or unclear link text. This helps ensure your document is easier to use for people with disabilities before you share or publish it. However, it does not guarantee your document is accessible.

**Export to PDF**

Go to **File** > **Save a Copy** (or **Save As**). Do **not** use “**Save as Adobe PDF**” option. Visit [Word: Export to PDF](https://cityofmadison.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2427/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=168526) for more guidance.

For additional guidance, visit [Word: Intro to Accessibility](https://cityofmadison.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2427/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=168348) or the [Word Accessibility](https://cityofmadison.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2427/Portal/KB/?CategoryID=26601) category of the IT Knowledge Base.