



Document Accessibility Checklist

Any documents that are going to be shared electronically (especially those posted to the website or attached to an agenda) need to meet ADA accessibility requirements. This guide will help you make your Word document (and in turn, PDF) accessible.

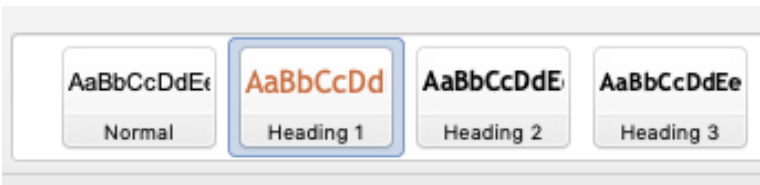
Make sure you start with an accessible template if possible. [Download MCG accessible templates here.](#)

Follow the checklist below to address accessibility requirements for various elements of your document.

- Headings/Styles
- Fonts & Alignment
- Lists
- Images
- Hyperlinks
- Colors
- Tables
- Headers/Footers
- Document Properties
- Save the Document as a PDF – VERY IMPORTANT
- Check PDF Accessibility

Headings/Styles

Headings should be used to thoughtfully structure the document. Create headings using Word's styles labeled "Heading 1," "Heading 2," etc. (located in top right under "Home" tab in most versions of Word). Don't just use a larger font or make text bold or underlined.



Use headings in order. (Title in Heading 1, section headings in Heading 2, subsection headings in Heading 3, etc.)

Bonus: You can easily insert a table of contents for your document based on your headings. This improves the experience for everyone when reading longer documents.

Fonts & Alignment

Sans-serif fonts are recommended, such as **Arial**.

Your document should use **left alignment** for text.

- Do not use justified as this alignment creates inconsistent gaps between words, which makes it more difficult to read for some groups, including those with dyslexia or low vision.
- Centered text is not ideal because when a low vision user zooms in, content can get positioned off the screen.

Lists

Lists are a great way to make information easily scannable. Make sure to use the built-in bullets or numbered lists from the Styles Pane. Numbered lists should only be used if the numbers are conveying a specific order. For lists that could easily be reordered, use a bulleted list.

Images

All images should have alternative text. Add “Alt Text” by right-clicking the image. Select either **Edit Alt Text** or **Format Picture** and choose the **Alt Text** tab.

- **Is the image important to the context of the document?** Add a few words or sentence describing the image in the Alt Text box.
- **Is there text on the image?** Add that text in the Alt Text box. If there is a lot of text in the image, it should also be in the body of the content. Images with a lot of text are strongly discouraged.
- **Is the image a chart?** Describe the meaning the chart is conveying in the Alt Text box. (Ex: Chart shows rates have increased 10% from 2008 to 2018)
- **Is the image unimportant to the context of the document?** Check the “Mark as decorative” box.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks should be a description that identifies the links destination (such as the title of the page you’re linking to). Avoid generic text like “click here” and “read more” or listing out the URL (unless the page is to be printed and it’s necessary to spell out the URL).

Good examples: “View the new Permitting Fee Schedule” or “Download MCG Accessible templates” (see first page of this document)

Colors

Use of color should be limited, especially with text. **Your safest bet is always black text on a white background.** Colors must meet contrast ratio requirements. (There are [free color contrast checkers](#) if you must use color.) People with low vision or color blindness may not be able to read text on a colored background or even red or orange text on a white background may not meet contrast requirements.

Additionally, **colors should never be the only way information is conveyed.** Different colored text or different colored lines should never be the only way to discern different information or datasets.

Tables

Tables should never be used to control the layout of a page. Use Columns for this purpose.

When a table is necessary to display data, try to keep it simple. Complex tables with multiple header rows are difficult to make accessible. Avoid empty or merged cells.

Make table accessible:

- Select the Header Row (top row that serves as header for each column), right click and **select Table Properties**, click the **Row** tab, check the **Repeat at header row** box
- Click the **Alt Text** tab and add a Title and Description for the table

Headers/Footers

Make sure your headers and footers don't include any essential information, as this content is typically not read by screen readers.

Document Properties

Navigate to **File > Properties** and fill out:

- Title
- Author (recommended: Manatee County Government)
- Keywords (optional)

Search engines use the "Title" and "Keywords" information fields to determine how accurately the document fits with a user's search request. Screen readers use title as the first thing announced in the file.

Save the Document as a PDF - VERY IMPORTANT

DO NOT use the "Print to a PDF" option. You will lose all of your hard work and end up with an inaccessible PDF document.

Depending on your version of Word you should:

- Save as Adobe PDF
- Export to PDF

If you have the option, select **Best for electronic distribution and accessibility**.

Check PDF Accessibility

If you have Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Acrobat DC, you can also check the accessibility for the PDF once it's been converted (located under **Tools**). Select **Accessibility > Full Check** and it will let you know if there are any additional errors.

If you don't have Acrobat Pro, you should have a contact in your department (such as your Department Content Manager) who you can send it to.