

Accessible Document Checklist

You want everyone to get your message, right? Readers access your documents in many ways, so here's how to set things up for everyone to get the same information. Like always in life, the most important step you can take is to keep things simple.

Let the software format your document: other than entering text, avoid doing things manually. If you're not sure how to do any of this, search for tutorials and videos to suit your learning style – they are abundant! If you're using Microsoft products, see their support site for tips: [make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities](#).

Do use

- Styles. Set your title and headings in order. Lists, tables, emphasis in text, etc. – all elements need to be formatted with styles.
- Line and paragraph spacing rather than extra returns.
- Page and section breaks to separate parts of your document.
- Columns to align text.
- Colours with high contrast: black and white are great.
- Sans serif fonts for easier readability.
- Tables with headers for data.
- Alt text with images. Position images “in line” with text.
- Hyperlinks that say where they lead.
- Fields for elements like page numbers.
- “Camel case” for hashtags. #ThisIsReadable, #analbumparty is not.
- Built-in or web-based accessibility checkers.
- Templates that have your favourite styles set as defaults.

Do not use

- Watermarks or “WordArt”. Text boxes are problematic too.
- Spaces to align text.
- Colour to express meaning.
- Manual text formatting.
- All caps or italics for emphasis.
- Hyperlinks that say only Click Here.
- Charts or graphs without descriptive text.
- Glossy paper for hard copy printouts.

These tips apply for documents to be read by screen reader software, all sorts of other text-conversion software, and human beings with varying visual and processing abilities. There are many tools for reading the written word, don't let your message get lost in translation.