Digital Accessibility Overview

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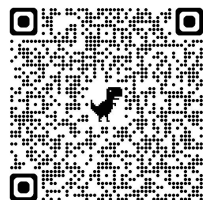
Contents

Please note:
To open links in this document in a new window,
Ctrl+Click on PC and CMD+Click on Mac.

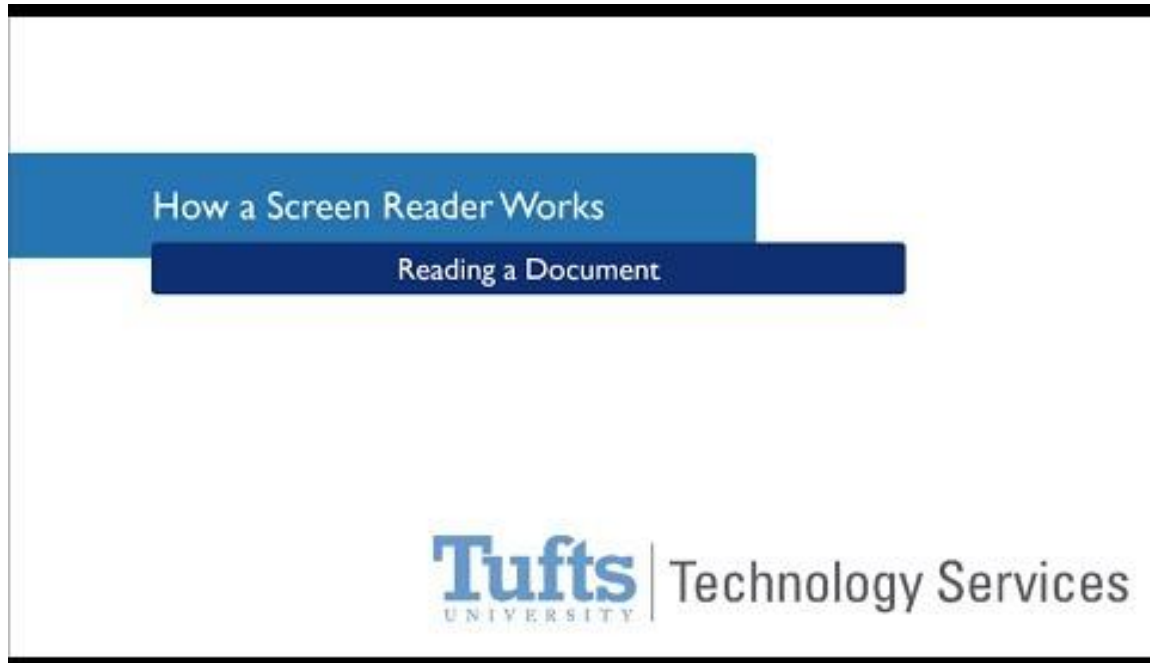Scan the QR code below to access a digital copy of this document.

Screen Reader Software Demo

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The video below demonstrates how screen reading software uses headings, links and alt text to navigate through a document that was created using accessibility tools.

To watch the video, click on the picture above or scan the QR code below.
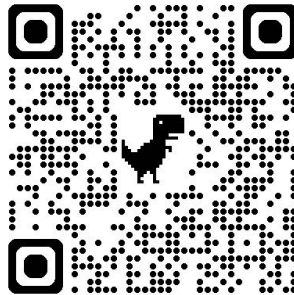
Word Document Accessibility

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Table 1. Word Document Accessibility

What to do to make a Word document accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Use a font size that is 12 points or larger.	Text can be difficult to see when it is smaller than 12 points. This is especially important for printed documents.	How to change the default font size.
Use hierarchical heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) to identify headings and subheadings.	Headings that are created using heading styles allow screen reading software to jump to different parts of a document. Making headings visually different (bigger font, bold, etc.) is not enough. Heading styles must be used in order for screen reading software to identify headers from body text because this codes the text as headings.	How to use Styles to create headings. If you don't like the default options you can customize or create new styles to your preferences.
Use Word's built-in formatting options to create lists, page numbers, headers and footers, and footnotes.	Using the built-in formatting options allows screen reading software to differentiate lists, page numbers, headers and footers, and footnotes from body text.	How to create: • Bulleted or numbered lists • Page numbers • Headers and footers • Footnotes
Avoid using the Enter key to skip lines. Instead, use the line spacing options or page breaks to skip lines or go to the next page.	Screen reading software will repeat the word "Blank" every time there is a line that was skipped using the Enter key. This can be annoying especially when there are many skipped lines.	How to change the line spacing in Word and insert or delete a page break.

What to do to make a Word document accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Include alt text for all non-decorative pictures, tables, graphs, charts and graphics.	Alt text is a description of images or other objects that have a visual component. Screen reading software reads alt text out loud for the user.	How to improve accessibility with alt text. If the picture or graphic is only used for decoration, select "Mark as decorative" in the alt text options. This way screen reading software will disregard it.
Make sure there is appropriate contrast between the text color and background.	Light text on a light background or dark text on a dark background is hard to see.	Use this contrast checker to ensure there is enough contrast in your document.
Do not use color as the only means of conveying information.	People who are colorblind might not be able to differ the color differences.	For example, do not say "Take note of the text in red." Instead, make the text red **and** bold, and then say "Take note of the text in red and bold." How to use color and other sensory characteristics plus text to convey meaning.
Use the built-in formatting options to create lists.	Using the built-in formatting options allows screen reading software to differentiate lists, page numbers, headers and footers, and footnotes from body text.	How to create bulleted or numbered lists.
Make sure data tables have a header row and (if needed) a first column.	Screen reading software depends on a header row (and first column) in order to read the contents in a data table in the correct order.	When creating tables used for data (vs. just for layout), check the header row option (and if needed, the first column row) in table style options. If you are using a table for layout purposes, make sure to uncheck both the header

What to do to make a Word document accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
		row and first column options. Please see [Use Built In Features to Create Data and Layout Tables](#) for in-depth instructions on how to do this, and for further instructions on how to accessibly create tables, please see [Create accessible tables](#).
Use meaningful text for links.	Descriptive hyperlink text provides context that allows people who use screen reading software to identify and sort through links. **Important:** *For documents that might be printed, full URLs can be included within the text body or at the end of the document.*	Instead of typing "Click [here](#) to log in to MySCCC," type "Log in to [MySCCC](#)." How to [create a more meaningful hyperlink](#).
Place images, text boxes, or other graphic elements "in line with text."	Doing this ensures that the reading order of elements is preserved and that screen reading software will identify the elements in the proper order. **Note:** *Screen reading software might not detect text that is in text boxes at all unless the text boxes are placed in line with text.*	[How to create accessible text boxes](#). Although this linked video pertains to text boxes, the instructions are the same for placing images in line with text.
Avoid using tabs or the space bar to create columns.	Using tabs or the space bar does not ensure that the text would be read in the correct order.	Instead, [create columns using built-in features to organize content](#).

What to do to make a Word document accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Use the MathType add-in to format mathematical equations.	Equations or scientific notation that is typed out without the use of these products will not be read correctly by screen reading software.	To request a license for MathType, please put in a software ticket with IT by going to Suffolk Help and then clicking on the "Request a Service" tab at the bottom of the page.
Do not rely on the accessibility checker to pick up all issues.	The accessibility checker is an excellent supplementary tool, but it will not identify every issue.	How to use the accessibility checker.

PowerPoint Presentation Accessibility

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Table 2. PowerPoint Presentation Accessibility

What to do to make a PowerPoint presentation accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Use the preset slide layouts.	These layouts will preserve the reading order of text and other elements on your slides.	Read what is a slide layout? If you decide to manually create text boxes instead of using the preset slide layouts, they need to be placed onto the slide in reading order. This does not refer to positioning, but rather the order in which the text box was placed onto the side. The reading order can easily be checked or rearranged by using the Reading Order pane.
Use a minimum font size of 18 points.	Text that is smaller might be difficult to see. This is especially important if the presentation is shown in the classroom.	How to change the font size.

Make sure that there is appropriate contrast between the text color and background.	Light-colored text on a light background or dark-colored text on a dark background is difficult to see.	Use this contrast checker to ensure there is enough contrast in your document.
Include alt text for all non-decorative pictures, tables, graphs, charts and graphics.	Alt text is a description of images or other objects that have a visual component. Screen reading software reads alt text out loud for the user.	How to improve accessibility with alt text. If the picture or graphic is only used for decoration, select "Mark as decorative" in the alt text options. This way screen reading software will disregard it.
Do not use color as the only means of conveying information.	People who are colorblind might not be able to differentiate the color differences.	For example, do not say "Take note of the text in red." Instead, make the text red and bold, and then say "Take note of the text in red and bold." How to use color and other sensory characteristics plus text to convey meaning.
Make sure data tables have a header row and (if needed) a first column.	Screen reading software depends on a header row (and first column) in order to read the contents in a data table in the correct order.	When creating tables used for data (vs. just for layout), check the header row option (and if needed, the first column row) in table style options. If you are using a table for layout purposes, make sure to uncheck both the header row and first column options. Please see Use Built In Features to Create Data and Layout Tables for in-depth instructions on how to do this, and for further instructions on how to accessibly create tables, please see Create accessible tables.
Use meaningful text for links.	Descriptive hyperlink text provides context that allows people who use screen reading software to identify and sort through	Instead of typing "Click here to log in to MySCCC," type "Log in to MySCCC." How to create more meaningful hyperlinks.

	links. (Important: For documents that might be printed, full URLs can be included within the text body or at the end of the document.)	
Avoid using blinking or flashing animations	Blinking and flashing animations can induce seizures in people with photosensitive epilepsy.	Ensure that animations do not blink or flash more than 3 times per seconds and disable auto play by setting the start time and speed of an animation effect.
Disable autoplay for embedded videos.	If a video is set to autoplay, the audio can interfere with the screen reader audio.	How to set the play options for a video in your presentation.
Do not rely on the accessibility checker to pick up all issues.	The accessibility checker is an excellent supplementary tool, but it will not identify every issue.	How to use the accessibility checker.

Brightspace Accessibility

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Please note: In Brightspace, "Brightspace editor" refers to the text editor panel (formerly called the "HTML editor") that enables you to type, insert pictures, files, etc.

Table 3. Brightspace Accessibility

What to do to make a Brightspace course accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Set font size to at least 20 pixels.	Unlike Office programs which measure font size in points, Brightspace measures it in pixels. This is why the font size needs to be set to at least 20, not 12.	How to Brightspace course font settings. ***Note:*** *This will change the default font setting for anything new that you type in your course. It will not change the font for type that is already there. This type will need to be changed manually in the Brightspace editor.*

Use hierarchical heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) to format headings when typing in the Brightspace editor.	Headings that are created using heading styles allow screen reading software to jump to different parts of a Brightspace page.	How to use headings in the Brightspace editor.
Create bulleted and numbered lists using the formatting options in the Brightspace editor.	The built-in formatting options allow screen reading software to differentiate lists from body text.	In the Brightspace editor, use the bullets and numbering option to create lists.
Include alt text for all non-decorative pictures, tables, graphs, charts and graphics.	Alt text is a description of images or other objects that have a visual component. Screen reading software reads alt text out loud for the user.	How to include alt text for web page images.
Do not use color as the only means of conveying information.	People who are colorblind might not be able to differentiate the color differences.	Do not write "Take note of the text in red." Instead, make the text red **and** bold, and then say "Take note of the text in red and bold." How to use color and other sensory characteristics plus text to convey meaning.
Make sure data tables have a header row and (if needed) a first column.	Screen reading software depends on a header row (and first column) in order to read the contents in a data table in the correct order.	When creating tables used for data (vs. just for layout), check the header row option (and if needed, the first column row) in table style options. If you are using a table for layout purposes, make sure to uncheck both the header row and first column options.
Use meaningful text for links.	Descriptive hyperlink text provides context that allows people who use screen reading software to identify and sort through links.	Instead of typing "Click here to log in to MySCCC," type "Log in to MySCCC." How to create more meaningful hyperlinks.

Make sure your video or audio notes contain captions.	All video and audio must contain captions in order to be accessible.	How to record a video note for your students in Brightspace and how to edit closed captions in your Brightspace video notes.
Use the equation editor in the Brightspace editor to type out equations or scientific notation.	The equation editor ensures that mathematical or scientific notation will be read correctly by screen reading software.	Make use of the equation editor in Brightspace.
Make sure that all documents that are uploaded to Brightspace are accessible.	Documents must be accessible inside and outside of Brightspace.	Follow the directions for creating accessible Word documents, PDFs and PowerPoint presentations.
Take advantage of the many accessibility checkers that are integrated in Brightspace.	This will help to identify any accessibility issues that you might have missed.	How to check the accessibility score of your course and its content using the integrated Anthology Ally tool. How to use the accessibility checker in HTML-authored content (in the Brightspace Editor).

PDF Accessibility

CTRL+Click (Mac: CMD+Click) to open links in new window.

Table 4. PDF Accessibility

What to do to make a PDF accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Make sure that the PDF is searchable and not a picture of text.	Text on a PDF that is scanned as a picture is not accessible and thus not able to be read by a screen reader.	Make sure that the scan setting in your printer or scanner is set to "Scan as searchable PDF."
When saving a Word document as a PDF, make sure that the Word document is accessible.	PDFs must start off as accessible Word documents in order for the PDF to be accessible.	Follow the Microsoft Word accessibility guidelines. Then create an accessible PDF by making sure that "Document structure tags for accessibility" is turned on in the save options.

Video Accessibility

CTRL+Click (Mac: CMD+Click) to open links in new window.

Table 5. Video Accessibility

What to do to make a video accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Make sure that your video contains closed captions.	All video and audio must contain captions in order to be accessible.	How to create captions using: • YouTube • Microsoft Stream • Brightspace Video Notes • Zoom
Include audio description if needed.	Actions or imagery that do not contain audio but that are essential to understanding the content of a video should contain audio description. Audio description is a separate track that contains narration that explains what is happening.	YouDescribe is a free site that will allow you to add audio description to videos you created and even videos on YouTube that you did not create.

Zoom Accessibility

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Table 6. Zoom Accessibility

What to do to make a Zoom meeting or recording accessible	Why to do it	How to do it
Allow Live Transcription (aka automatic captioning) during your meetings.	Live Transcription provides captions in real time for those who need them.	How to turn on Live Transcription (aka automatic captioning) in Zoom.
Include captions in your recordings.	All recorded video and audio must contain captions in order to be accessible.	How to enable captions in Zoom Cloud recordings.

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