

ETDs in MS Word Accessibility Training

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Table of Contents

- General 2
 - Filename 2
 - Document Protection 3
- Headings 4
- Lists 5
- Layout Tables 7
- Language 8
- Links 9
- Header, Footers, and Watermarks 10
- Data Tables 11
- Images and Other Objects 13
- Colors and Sensory Characteristics 15
 - Color Contrast 15
 - Audio, Video, and Synchronized Media 15
- Forms 16
- MS Word Accessibility Checker Tool 16
- Converting Word documents to PDFs 17

General

Filename

The file must be in .docx format, unprotected, and have a descriptive filename.

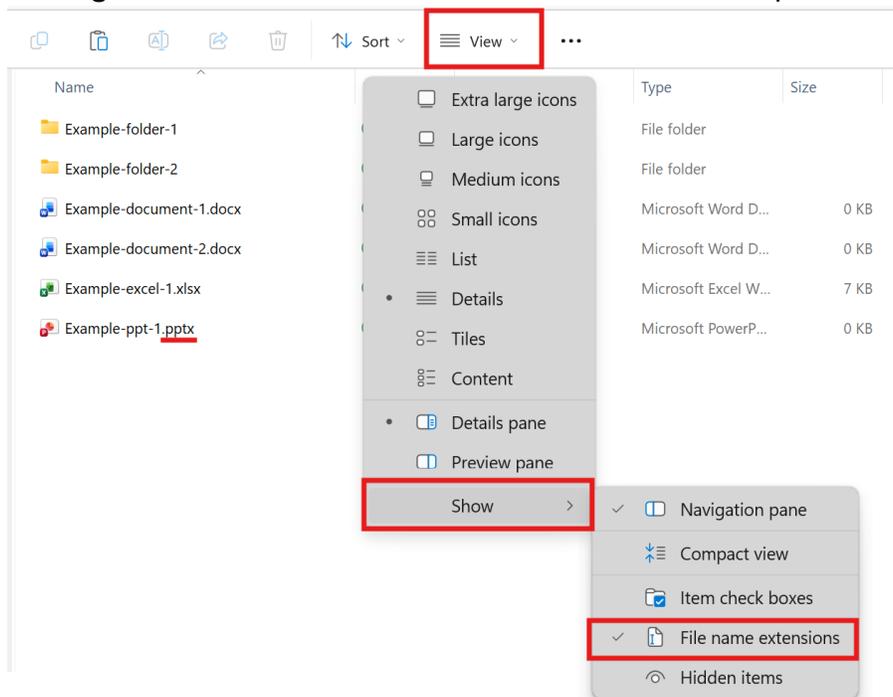
Example of non-descriptive filename: New Microsoft Word Document.docx

Example of a descriptive filename: Smith-Dissertation-2025.docx

Instruction (Windows):

If the filename extension is not displayed, open your documents folder in **Windows Explorer**, select **View > Show > File name extensions**.

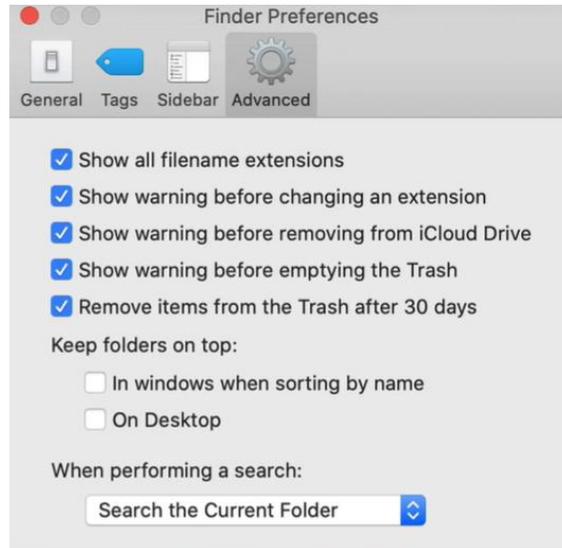
Figure 1: Enable “File name extension” in Windows Explorer



Instruction (Mac):

If the filename extension is not displayed, open your documents folder > open **Finder > Preferences > Advanced tab > check “Show all filename extensions.”**

Figure 2: Enable “File name extension” in Finder Preferences



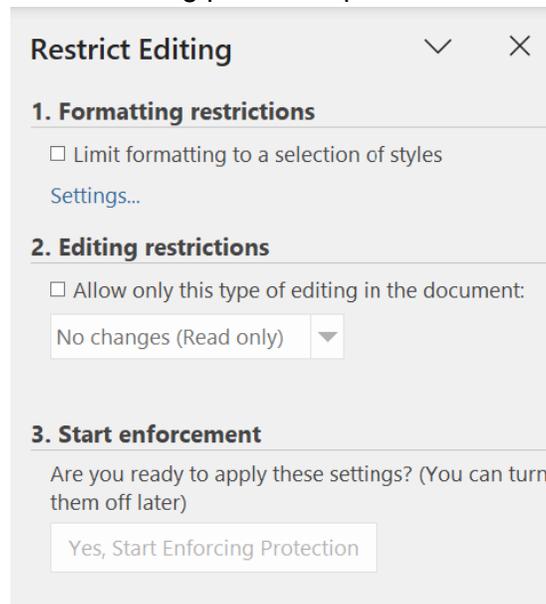
Document Protection

Document protections limit the ability to test for accessibility and can make part or all the document inaccessible.

Instruction:

In MS Word, to check whether the file is protected, select the **Review tab > Protect > Restrict Editing**. If the “Stop Protection” button appears at the bottom of the panel, the protection is active. Please click “Stop Protection” to turn off the restriction.

Figure 3: Restrict Editing panel and protection in inactive mode.



Headings

The MS Word heading styles should be used throughout the document where applicable and in the correct hierarchy. All heading styles used in the document will be listed in chronological order.

Instruction:

To determine if heading styles were used:

Method 1: open the **Navigation pane (Ctrl + F/Cmd + F)** and select the Headings tab

Method 2: open **View > Navigation pane > Headings tab**.

Figure 4: Matching headings displayed in Navigation Pane and document.

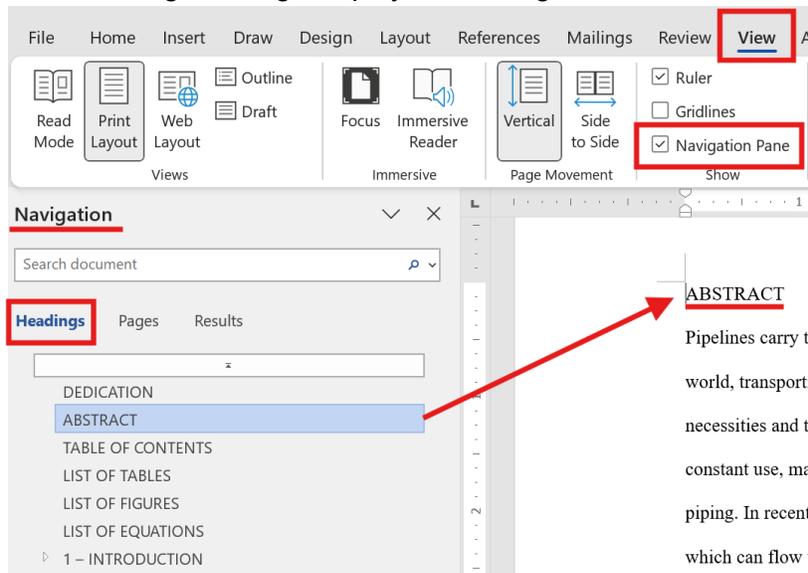
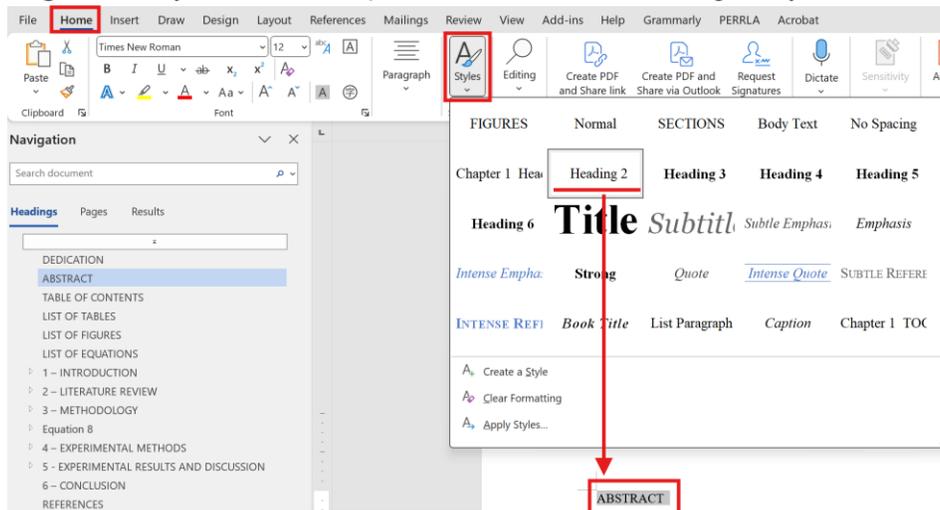


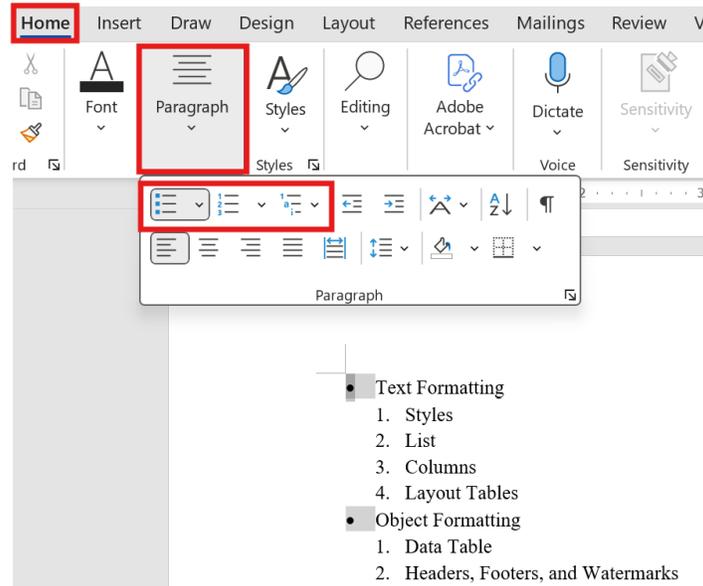
Figure 5: Style Pane and options window with Heading 2 Style selected



Lists

Lists used to organize or structure content must be created using the build-in features found in the Bullets and Numbering pane on the **Home tab > Paragraph pane**.

Figure 6: Paragraph tab displaying options for bulleted, numbered, and multilevel lists.



Instruction:

To ensure the appropriate hierarchy is used in a list, place your cursor on a list and open the Reveal Formatting pane by

Method 1: Shift + F1 in Windows; ⌘ (Command) + Option + Shift + S > Style Inspector > Reveal Formatting in Mac

Method 2: Click **Home tab > little arrow in the bottom right-hand corner of the Styles > Style Inspector > Reveal Formatting**

Figure 7: Steps of turning on the Reveal Formatting pane

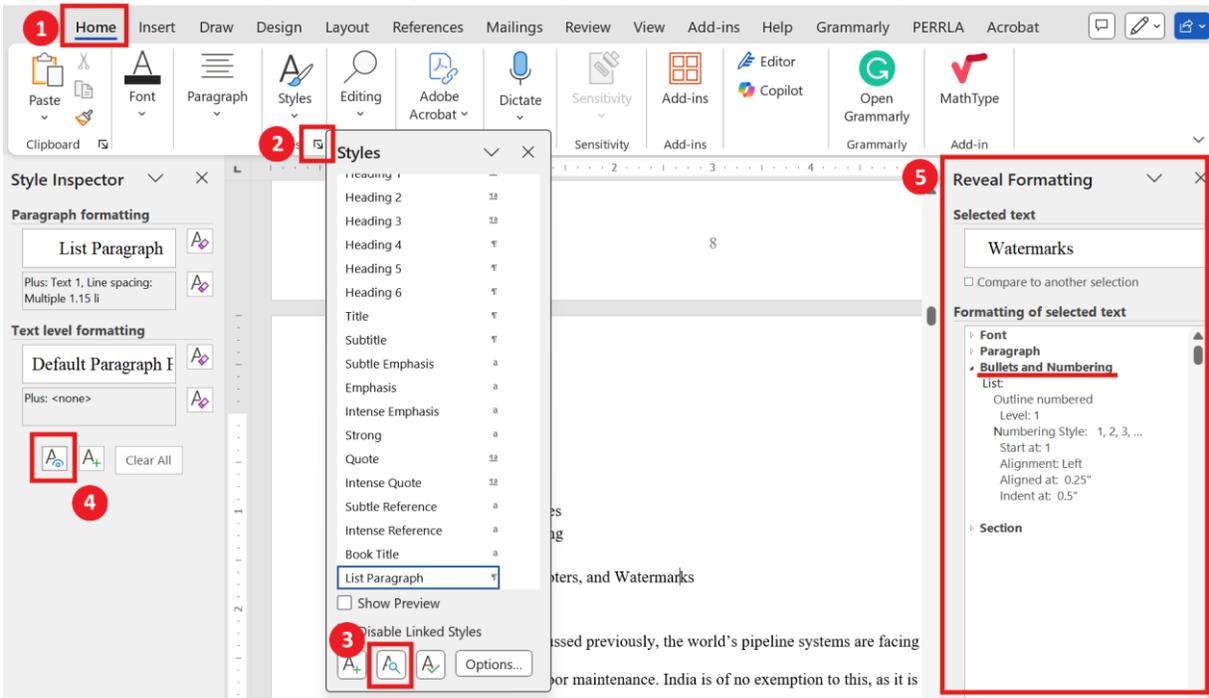
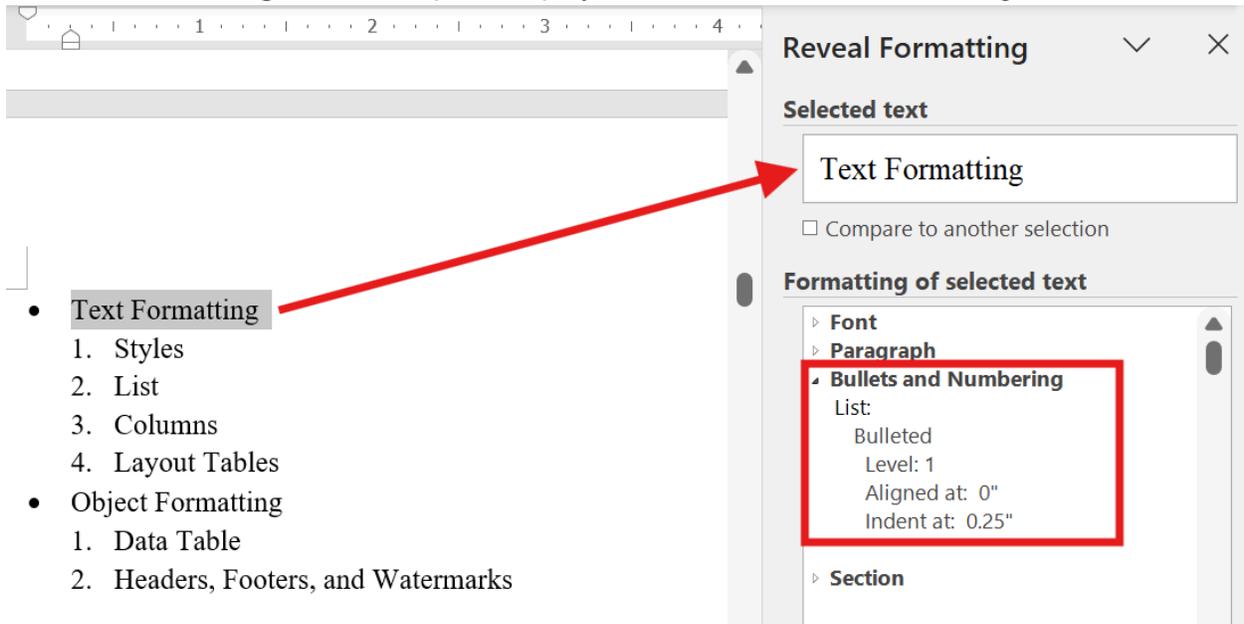


Figure 8: List option displayed under Bullets and Numbering.



Layout Tables

*** Applies if a table is in the word.docx ***

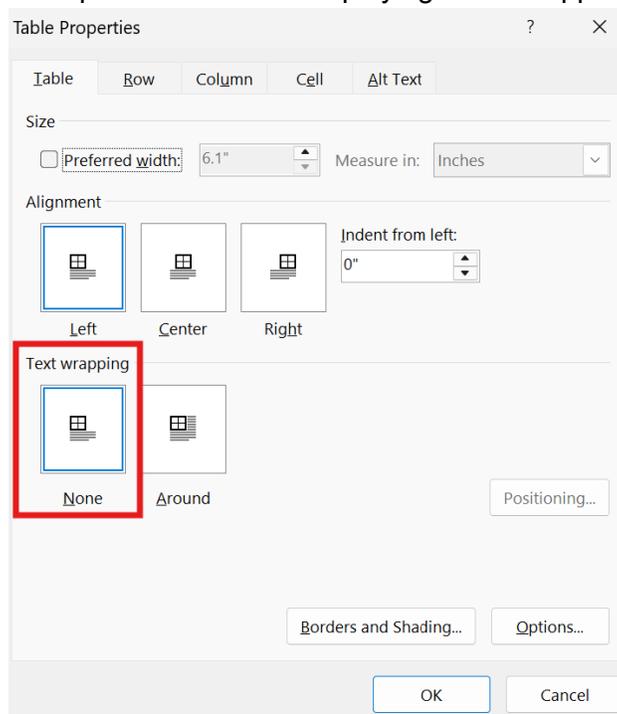
Layout tables arrange content on the page. The **text wrapping** in table properties should be **“None,”** else the document fails this test.

Instruction:

Method 1: “Right Click” inside a table > Select **Table Properties** > **Text Wrapping** “None” > OK

Method 2: Select the table > **Table Layout** tab > **Properties** in Table > **Text Wrapping** “None” > OK

Figure 9: Table Properties Table tab displaying Text Wrapping set to “None.”



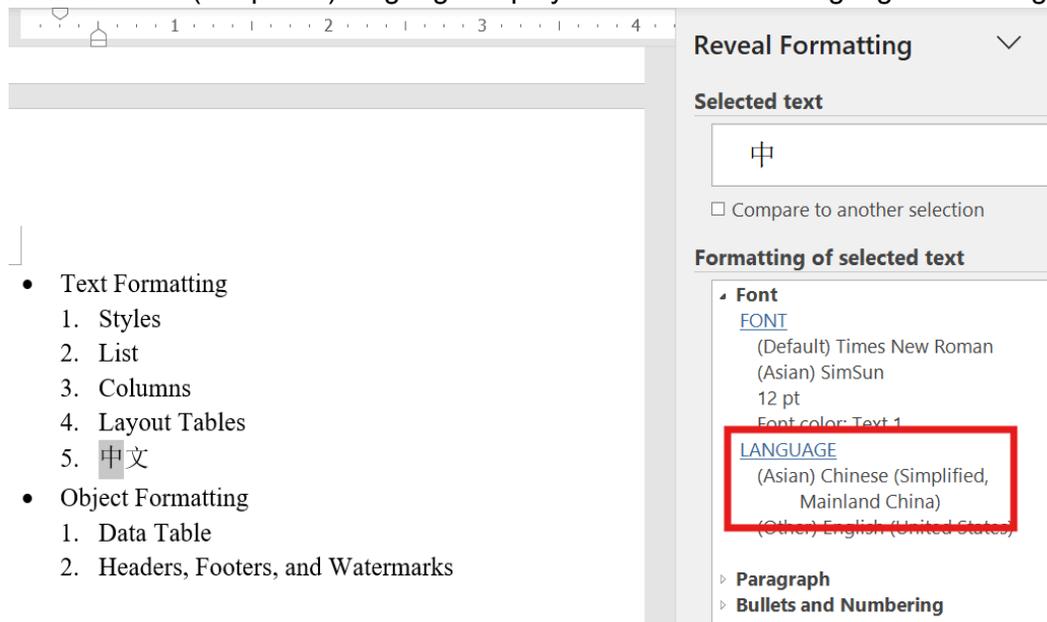
Language

* Documents that only use one language do not need to be tested. *

Instruction:

If the document contains phrases/sentences/paragraphs in a language other than the predominant language, place your cursor on the text and open the **Reveal Formatting pane > Language** and ensure the correct language is applied. To change the language, select **LANGUAGE > select the appropriate language from the list.**

Figure 10: Chinese (Simplified) language displayed under Font > Language formatting option.



Links

Links must have meaningful names that describe the destination, function, and/or the purpose OR the name must be easily determinable within context.

Example of a uniquely named link: <https://www.section508.gov/>

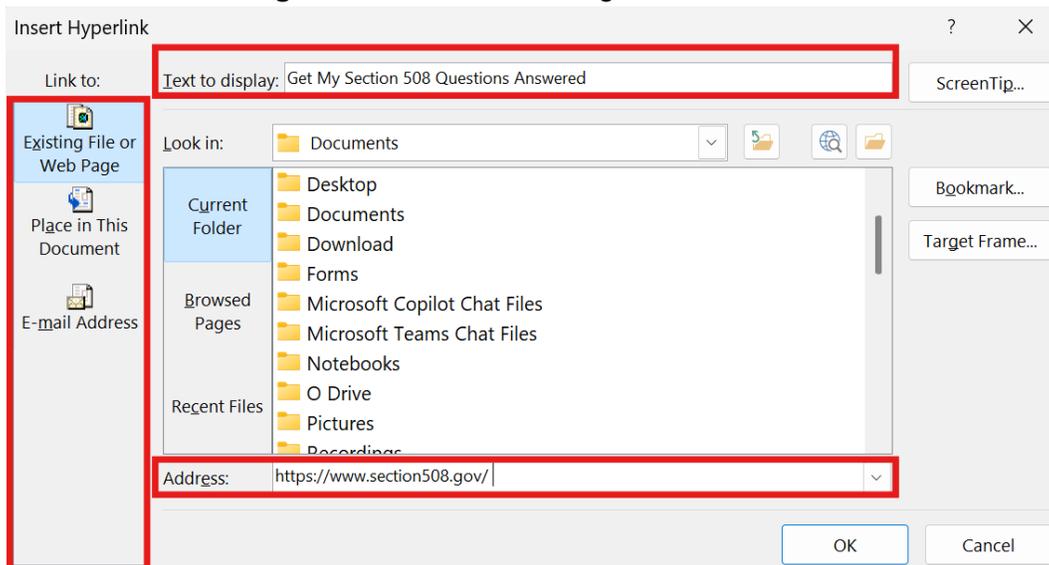
Example of a link whose name is determinable within context: [Get My Section 508 Questions Answered](#)

BAD Example of an unclear link name without context: [click here](#)

Instruction:

Method of editing the name of a link: **Right Click** selected displayed text/link > **Link/Hyperlink** > Check the appropriate name in “**Text to display**” and URL are in the “**Address**” > OK.

Figure 11: Insert Link configuration window.

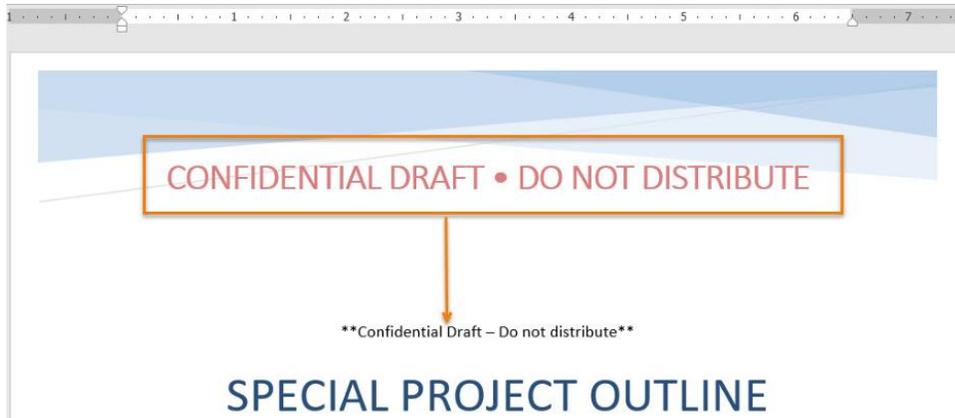


Header, Footers, and Watermarks

Assistive technology does **NOT** automatically read information in headers, footers, and watermarks.

Vital information found in headers, footers, and watermarks **MUST** be duplicated within the body of the document near the beginning (e.g., Respond by X date, Confidential, or Do Not Distribute).

Figure 12: Example of vital information in a header repeated in the body of the document.



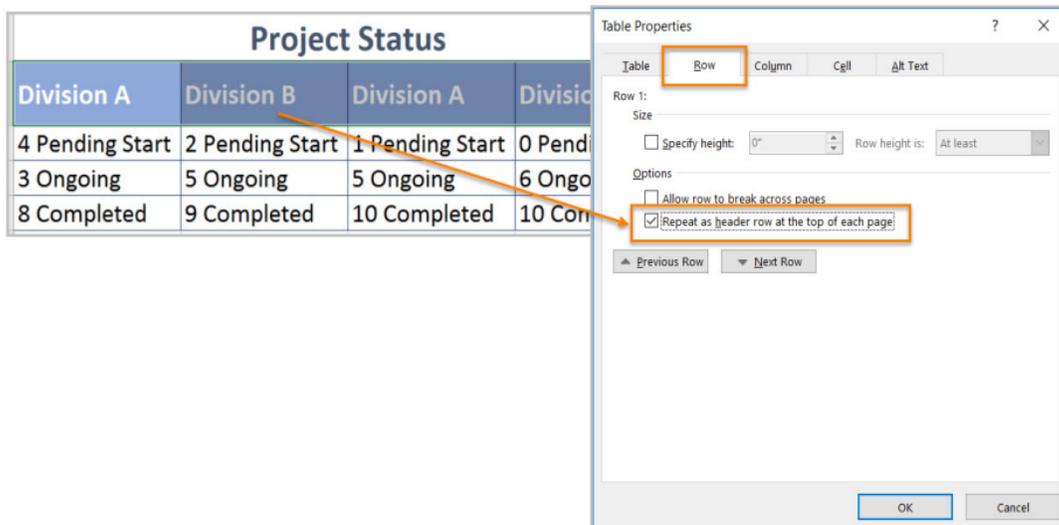
Data Tables

Data tables must be created using the built-in **Insert Table** feature and cannot be an image. To **PASS** the accessibility check, the **Table Layout** tab **MUST APPEAR** when selecting the table.

Instruction:

- Headers must be identified and repeated across page breaks.
 - Select any cell in the header row, open the Reveal Formatting pane, and look under Table. If the header row is not set, the option to repeat the header across page breaks will not be available. Identify the header row and make sure the “Repeat as header row” option is checked.

Figure 13: Table properties with Repeat Header Row setting selected.



- Table must include an alt text.
 - Select the table > Right-click > Table Properties > Alt-Text tab> Insert the table title and table description.
 - **Note:** Due to differences between the systems used by MS Word and Adobe Acrobat Pro, the table description will not be transferred successfully. Therefore, you will need to copy and paste the description into the 'Table Summary' field in Adobe Acrobat Pro.
- Avoid merging or split cells.
 - They disrupt the reading order causing a loss of meaning, missed content, or misinterpretation of your data. Use one value per cell to keep your information clear and understandable. Learn more from [Microsoft's Create Accessible Tables video](#).
 - **Note: Complex data tables** that require multiple header rows, a header column, and/or merged/split cells require the document to be converted into an accessible format (i.e., an PDF document remediated for accessibility). Complex data tables cannot be made accessible in MS Word.

Figure 14: Complex table with merged and split cells.

Assigned Projects						Future Projects	
Division A			Division B			Funded	Pending
Initiated Pending Ongoing	Completed	Completed	Initiated Pending Ongoing	Completed	Completed		
1	3	8	2	2	8	8	2

- No empty cells.
 - Use “N/A”, “none”, “0” or something else to indicate the absence of data
- Control color contrast.
 - Use high color contrast between text and background.

Resources:

[Video: Create Accessible Tables in Word](#) by Microsoft

[Accessible data tables Instruction](#) by U of Arkansas

[Word Tables | Accessible data table instruction](#) by U of Washington

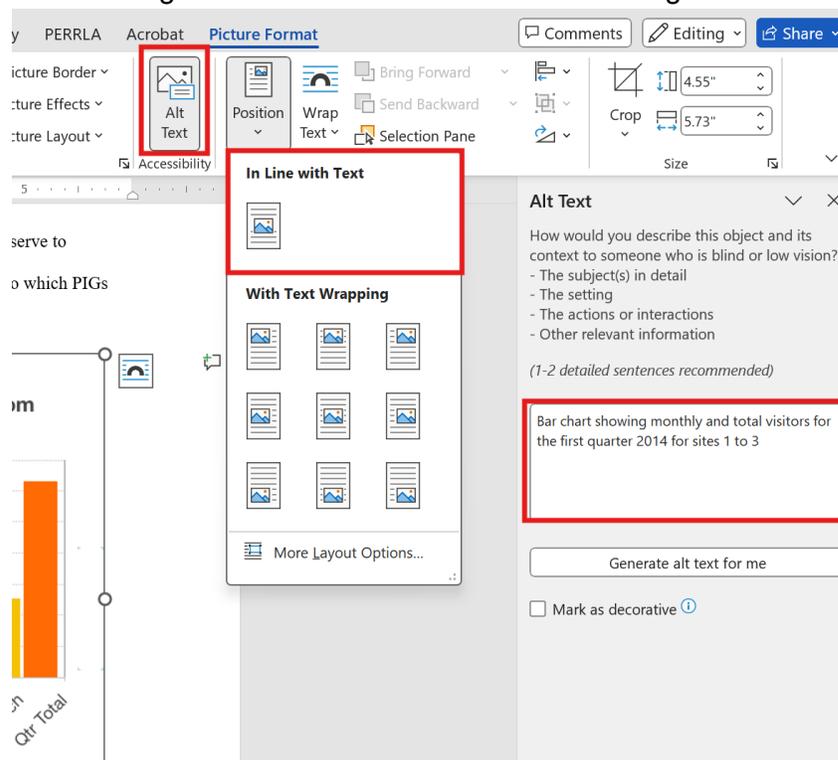
Images and Other Objects

Meaningful images, objects, and shapes are required to have descriptive text detailing all vital information. This can be achieved either by using alt text, captions, or by describing the image in the surrounding text.

Instruction:

- **Insert images inline.** Word places objects like images inline by default, which helps maintain the correct reading order.
 - **Windows:** To edit, **Click on the image** > **Picture Format** tab > **Position** > **In Line with Text**.
 - **Mac:** Click the image > **Picture Format** > **Wrap Text** > **In Line with Text**
- **Inform in words.** Use [Alternative Text](#) to describe meaningful images. [Complex images](#) may require additional description or data set.
 - **Windows:** To edit, **Click on the image** > **Picture Format** tab > **Alt Text** > add 1-2 detailed sentences to describe the object.
 - **Mac:** Right-click (Control-click) the image > **Edit Alt Text**
 - Do not rely on autogenerated alternative text for a complete description. The [image description generator](#) from Arizona State University can be helpful.
- Check contrast. Make sure text or symbols in images are strong [color contrast](#) against their background.

Figure 15: Activate Image in Line with Text and location of Image Alternative Text.



Resources:

[Tips: Alternative text](#) by U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

[Image Description Generator](#) by Arizona State University

[Web Accessibility Tutorials: Complex Images](#) by W3's

[Alt Text](#) by Poet Training Tool

Colors and Sensory Characteristics

The use of color cannot be the sole method to convey significance or meaning. To provide comparable access to people who are blind/colorblind or have low vision, a combination of visual and non-visual characteristics should be used.

Example: The following table uses three different colors to symbolize the current project status. The first column fully relies on color, while the second uses a combination of color and text to convey meaning, and the last column adds numbers to explain the meanings behind each color.

Figure 16: How to use text to describe the status and shapes and color for support.

Do not...	Do...	Do...
	 Not started	 1 Not started
	 In progress	 2 In progress
	 Complete	 3 Complete

Image example from Center for Excellence in Universal Design

Color Contrast

Documents where the text/backgrounds are black/white do not need to perform this test. Contrast and color use are vital to accessibility. Users, including users with visual disabilities, must be able to perceive content on the page.

Resources and Tools:

[Color Contrast intro and examples](#) in WebAIM

[Contrast Checker tool](#) by WebAIM

[Chrome DevTools and instruction](#) by Chrome

Audio, Video, and Synchronized Media

Documents that contain audio, video, or multimedia files must have accurate and complete alternate methods of interpreting the information. Multimedia files require a text transcript; audio files require text descriptions, and video files require synchronized captions and/or audio descriptions.

Resources:

[Video and Audio Media Instruction](#) by U of Arkansas

Forms

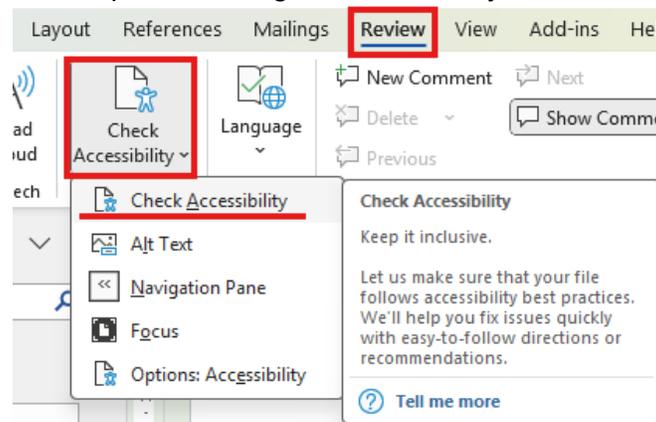
Fillable form fields, such as text fields, checkboxes, or drop-down menus, are not allowed in the document. If any fillable form fields are present, the document does not pass this accessibility requirement.

MS Word Accessibility Checker Tool

Instruction:

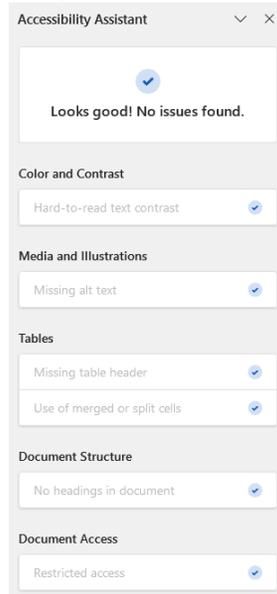
Open your file in MS Word > Review tab > Check Accessibility

Figure 17: Steps for running the accessibility check in MS Word.



A pane will appear with errors, warnings, and recommended actions. Manual testing is still essential to ensure your document is fully accessible.

Figure 18: A passed accessibility check.



Converting Word documents to PDFs

Now it is time to save it as a PDF. You can make tagged PDF files by creating a PDF from a Word document. PDF tags help software like screen readers to organize information in a clear structure. This includes headings, lists, images, links, and tables.

Instruction:

- [How to Convert a Word Document to an Accessible PDF by TAMU.](#)