

# Accessible WORD File

(v1: updated on 17 Jun 2021)

## Remarks added on 29 Sep 2021

1. Format updated, content unchanged
2. If your final document output is in PDF Format, you may skip this file and directly refer to file **“Accessible PDF File in Adobe Acrobat Pro DC”** for steps and details.

# List to Follow:

Key practices (of topics) to help maximizing the accessibility of **Word documents**:

- 1) [Headings](#)
- 2) [Alternative Text for Images](#)
- 3) [Data Tables](#)
- 4) [Links](#)
- 5) [List & Columns](#)
- 6) [Identify Document Language](#)
- 7) [Specify Document Title](#)
- 8) [Others Points-to-note](#)
  - [White Space](#)
  - [Insert An Object](#)
- 9) [Accessibility Checker](#)
- 10) [Export to PDF](#)

Best practice is to work on accessibility concepts as you build a document

# 1) Headings (Slide 1 of 3)

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- A good heading structure is often the most important accessibility consideration in Word documents.
- Screen reader users can navigate Word documents by headings (e.g. access a list of all headings in the document, jump from heading to heading etc.).
- **DO NOT** “create a heading” by just highlighting the text and applying the font styles you prefer for “visual headings”.

# 1) Headings (Slide 2 of 3)

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## Step by Step Guide – Formatting Styles of Headings

Use the built-in Heading styles like “Heading 1” (document title/main content heading) and “Heading 2” (major section heading)... “Heading 3”..., available under **Styles** in the **Home** tab. Remember, making text larger and bold DOES NOT make it a heading.

Do not skip  
heading levels!

To apply built-in heading styles:

1. Select the text you want to turn into a heading.
2. On the **Home** tab, in the **Styles** group, select a heading style, for example, **Heading 1** or **Heading 2**.

Ref: [Apply built-in heading styles \(Microsoft\)](#)  
[Improve Heading Accessibility \(Microsoft\)](#)



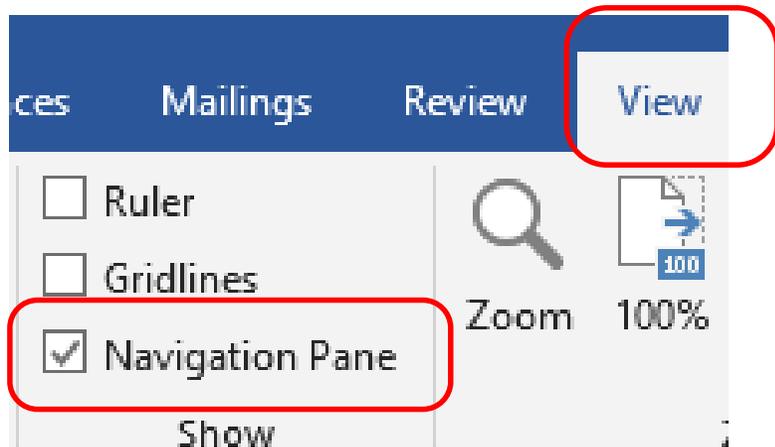
# 1) Headings (Slide 3 of 3)

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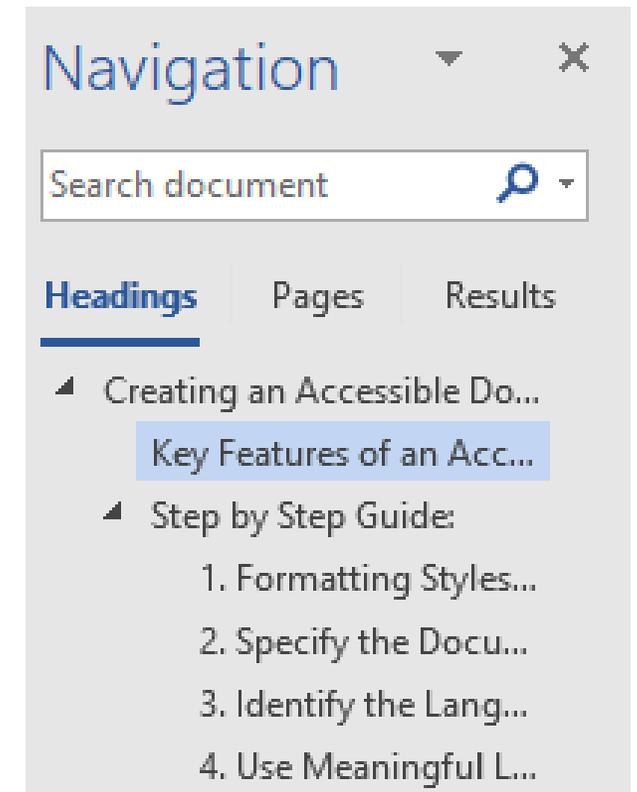
## Step by Step Guide – Formatting Styles of Headings

To display all headings and allow to navigate throughout the document:

1. Click on the **View** tab.
2. Check the **Navigation Pane** box in the **Show** group.



Make sure the headings  
are in correct order



Ref: [Creating Accessible Word Documents \(Academic Algonquin\) \(YouTube From 0:49 to 1:10\)](#)

## 2) Alternative Text for Images (Slide 1 of 3)

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- If an image presents content or has a function, you must provide an equivalent alternative text for this image.
- Use "**Alt text**" functionality in Word. Add "Alt text" text to Pictures, Shapes, Charts, SmartArt etc.
- For complex images like charts, you will often need to provide succinct "Alt text" **plus** a table or lengthier text alternative near the image.
- DO NOT use descriptive phrases – screen reading software identifies images, so do not use phrases such as "image of..." or "graphic of...".

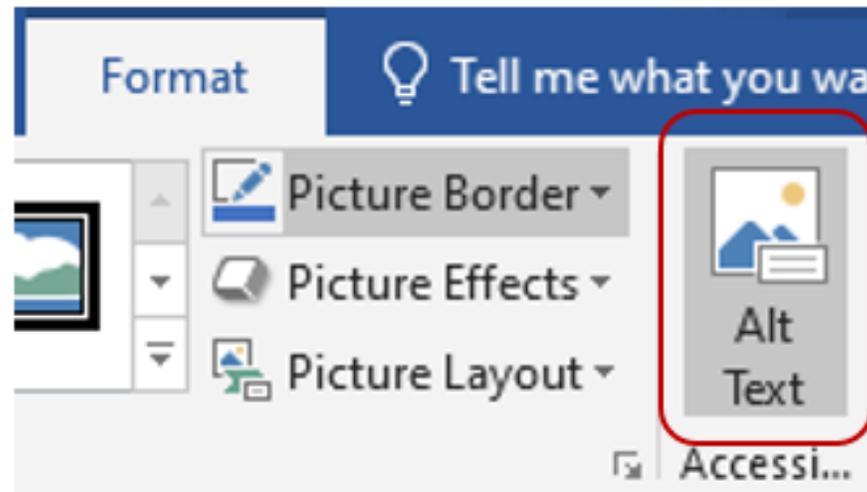
# 2) Alternative Text for Images (Slide 2 of 3)

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## Step by Step Guide

1. Click on the image > **Format** tab > Select **Alt Text**
2. Insert alt text describing the image.
3. Check the option “Mark as decorative”  
if the image is solely decorative.

Do not use “image of...”  
or “graphic of”!



**Alt Text** [Close]

How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind?  
*(1-2 sentences recommended)*

[Text input area]

Mark as decorative

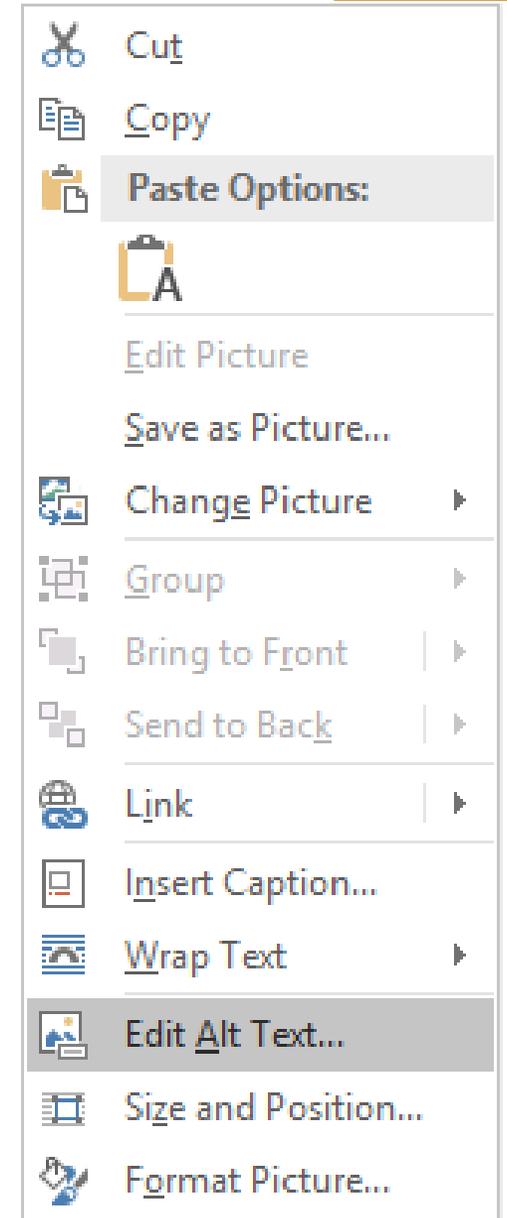
# 2) Alternative Text for Images (Slide 3 of 3)

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## Step by Step Guide

(Alternatively)

1. Right-click the image/ shape/ chart and select “**Edit Alt Text**”, the Alt Text pane opens on the right side of the document body.



Ref: [Add alt text to visuals \(Microsoft 365\)](#)  
[Improve Accessibility with Alt Text \(Microsoft\)](#)

# 3) Data Tables (Slide 1 of 3)

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- Sighted users scan a table to make associations between data in the table and their appropriate row and/or column headers. Screen reader users make these same associations if tables are structured correctly.
- Screen readers keep track of their location in a table by counting table cells. If a table is nested within another table or if a cell is merged or split, the screen reader loses count and can't provide helpful information about the table after that point. Blank cells in a table could also mislead someone using a screen reader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table.

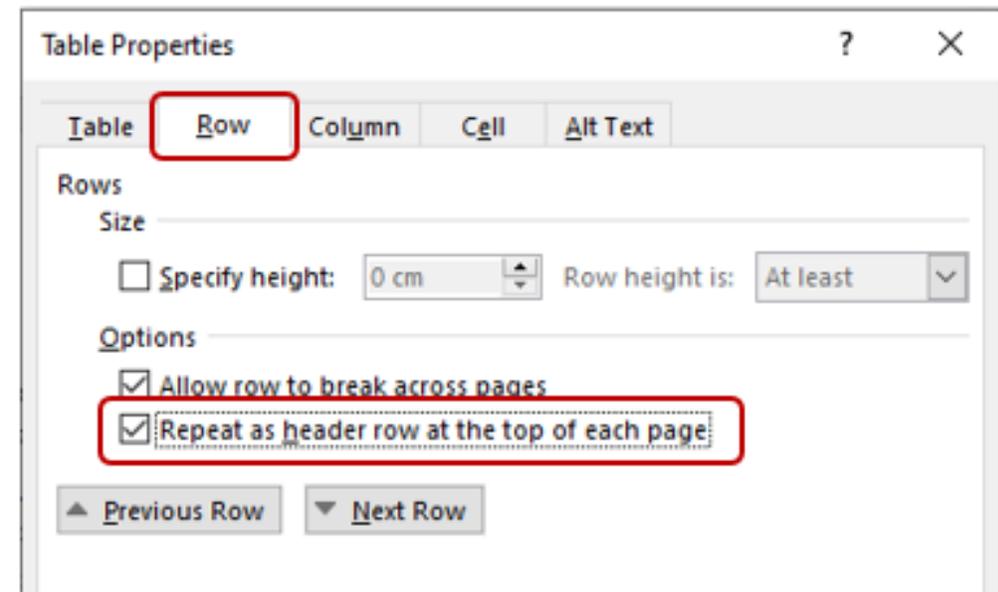
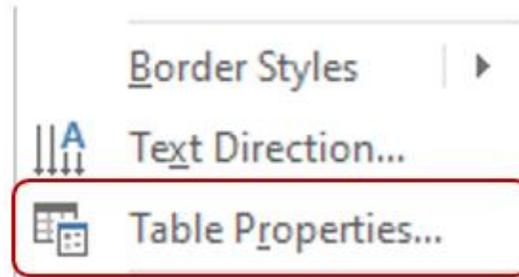
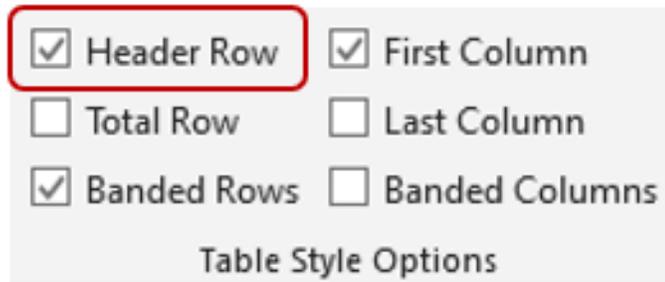
Ref: [Creating Accessible Documents \(WebAIM\)](#)  
[Use Table Headers \(Microsoft\)](#)

# 3) Data Tables (Slide 2 of 3)

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## Step by Step Guide

1. Define a header row: Click on a table > **Design** tab under **Table Tools** > check the option **Header Row** in **Table Style Options** section.
2. Right click on the table > choose **Table Properties**.
3. Go to **Row** tab > check the option “**Repeat as a header row at top of each page**”.



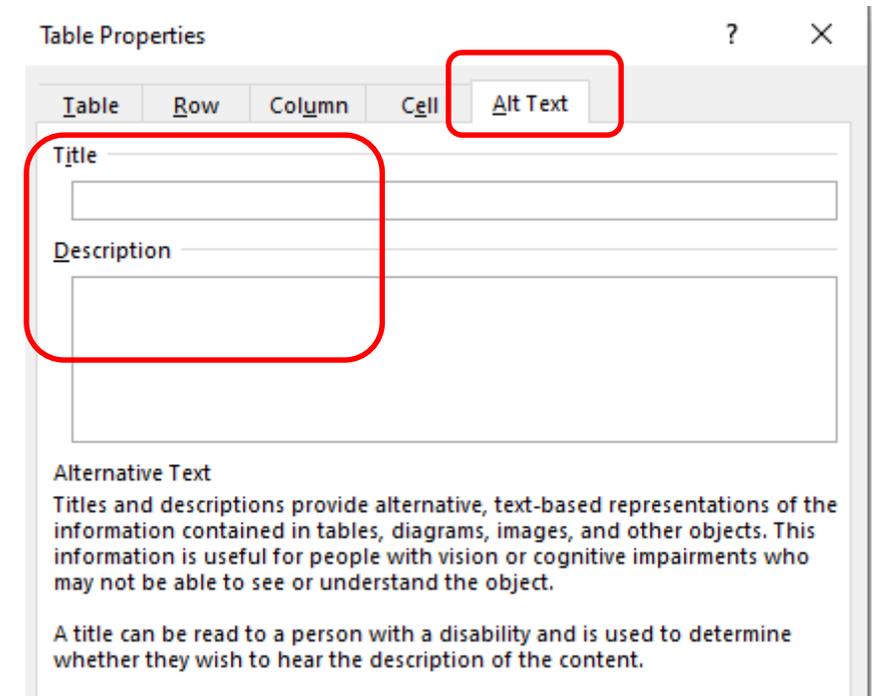
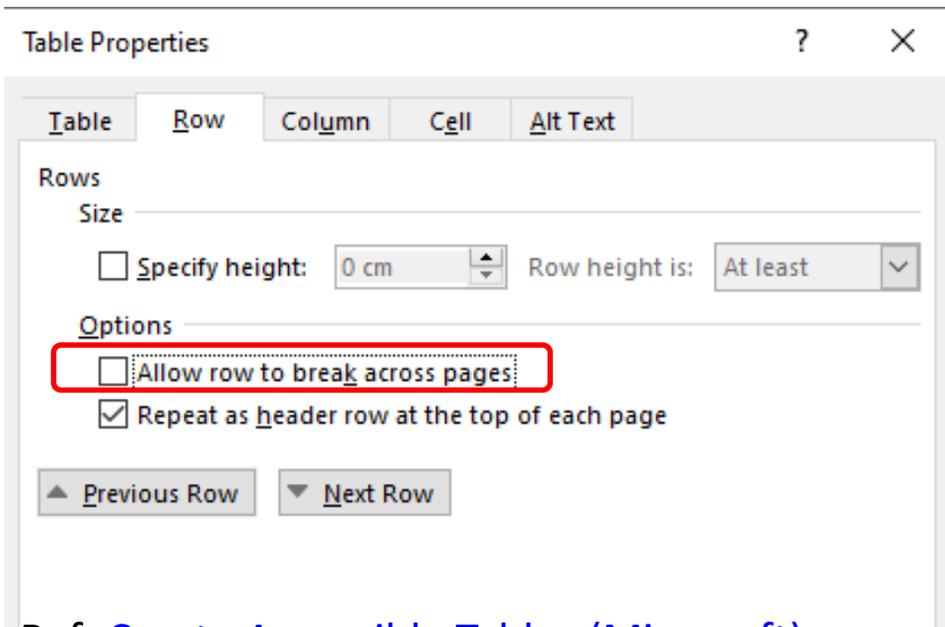
Ref: [Create Accessible Tables \(Microsoft\)](#)

# 3) Data Tables (Slide 3 of 3)

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## Step by Step Guide

4. Be sure “**Allow row to break across pages**” is unchecked.
5. In the same Table Properties window, select the **Alt Text** tab and make sure the alt text is clear, descriptive, and concise.



Ref: [Create Accessible Tables \(Microsoft\)](#)

# 4) Links (Slide 1 of 3)

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- It is usually best to give the link a more descriptive text.
- Avoid ambiguous link text that is difficult to understand out of context (e.g., "click here").
- People who use screen readers sometimes scan a list of links. Links should convey clear and accurate information about the destination. For example, instead of linking to the text **Click here**, include the full title of the destination page.

(Tip: If the title on the hyperlink's destination page gives an accurate summary of what's on the page, use it for the hyperlink text)

Ref: [Creating Accessible Documents \(WebAIM\)](#)  
[Add Hyperlink Text and ScreenTips \(Microsoft\)](#)

# 4) Links (Slide 2 of 3)

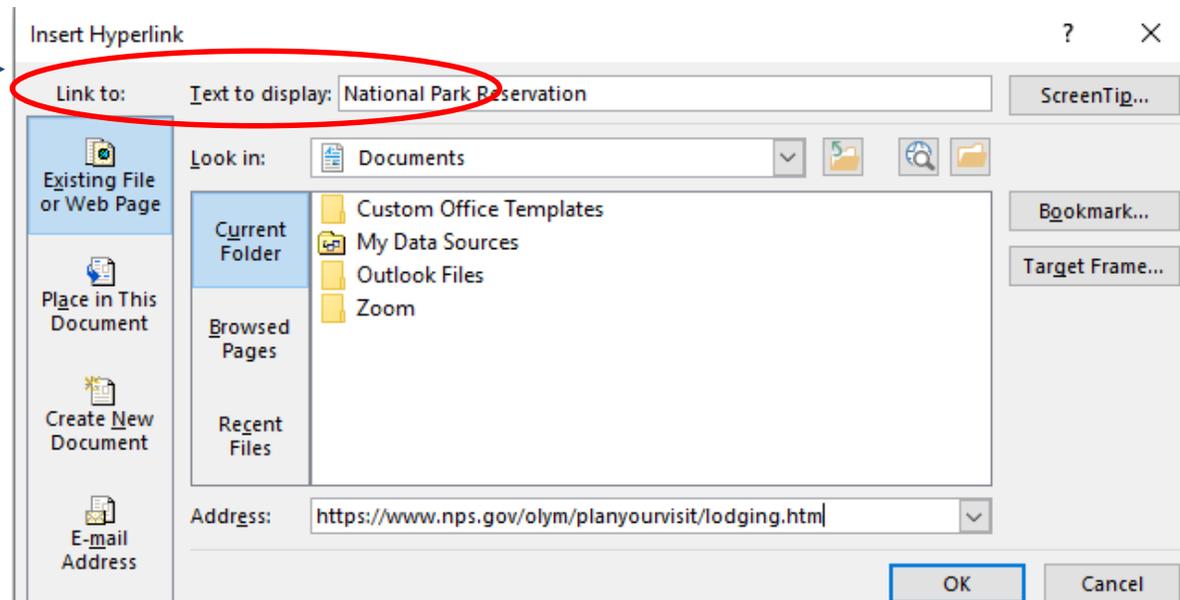
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## Step by Step Guide – Add hyperlink text and ScreenTips

1. Select the text to which you want to add the hyperlink, and then right-click.
2. Select **Link**. The text you selected displays in the **Text to display** box. This is the hyperlink text. If necessary, change the hyperlink text.
3. In the **Address** box, enter the destination address for the hyperlink.
4. Select the **ScreenTip** button and, in the **ScreenTip text** box, type a ScreenTip.

ScreenTip appears when  
Your cursor hovers over  
text or images that include  
a hyperlink  
Adding ScreenTip is optional

E.g. Instead of using  
<https://www.cedars.hku.hk>,  
use CEDARS website



Ref: [Add Hyperlink text and ScreenTips \(Microsoft\)](#)  
[Create Accessible Links \(Microsoft\)](#)

# 4) Links (Slide 3 of 3)

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## Tips

Example (3 “links” below are dummies only):

(Avoid) Click here to access the Microsoft Office Website: <http://.....>

OR

For more information about Microsoft tools [Click here](#)

(Consider) For more information about Microsoft tools please visit the [Microsoft Office Website](#)

Ref: [Creating Accessible Word Documents \(Academic Algonquin\) \(YouTube From 2:36 to 2:57\)](#)

# 5) Lists & Columns (Slide 1 of 2)

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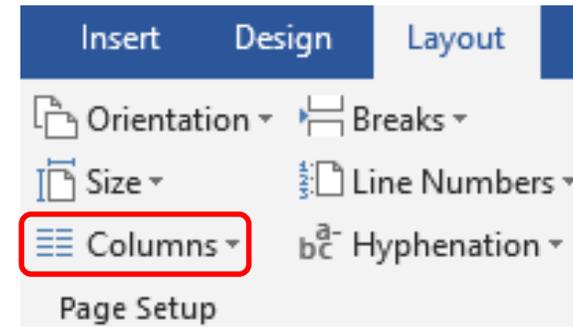
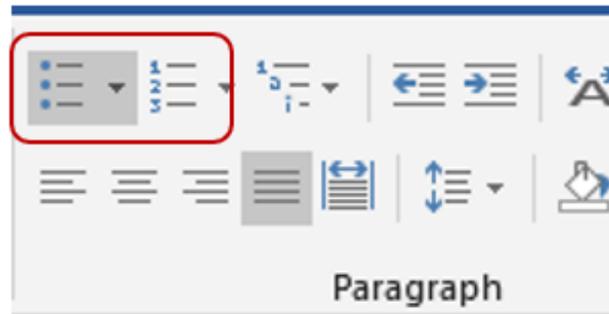
- 2 types of lists used in Word: bullets (unordered list) and numbers (ordered list).
- DO NOT create "lists" and "columns" manually by hitting the **Tab** to indent content. While this provides visual structure for sighted users, it does not provide the document structure needed for assistive technology users.

# 5) Lists & Columns (Slide 2 of 2)

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## Step by Step Guide

- Use the built-in tools in the **Paragraph** section under the **Home** tab/ **Columns** under **Layout** tab for document formatting.



Ref: [Creating Accessible Documents \(WebAIM\)](#)

## 6) Identify Document Language (Slide 1 of 2)

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- To use the proofing language settings to programmatically set the document language and enable assistive technology to read and correctly pronounce content.
- Should also identify the language of any content written in a language other than the document's default language. With this information, supporting screen readers will switch between language profiles as needed.

Ref: [Identify Distinct Languages \(U.S. General Services Administration\)](#)  
[Overview of Accessible Documents \(University of Washington\)](#)

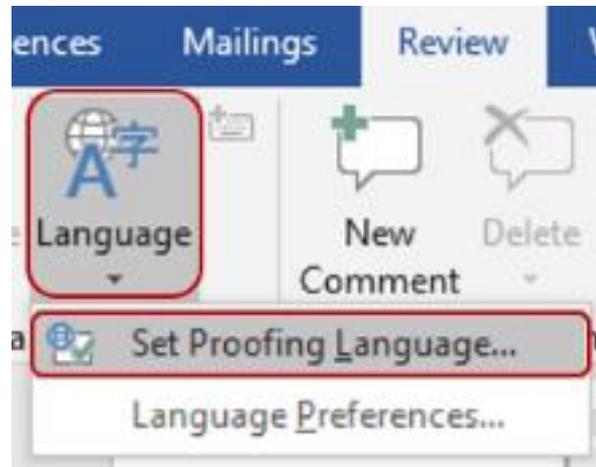
# 6) Identify Document Language (Slide 1 of 2)

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## Step by Step Guide

- Highlight the paragraph/text for which you would like to change the language
- Go to **Review** tab > **Language** > **Set Proofing Language**
- Select the specific language for the paragraph/text

*(you may be asked to install language accessory pack for a foreign language, please seek assistance from IT Team)*



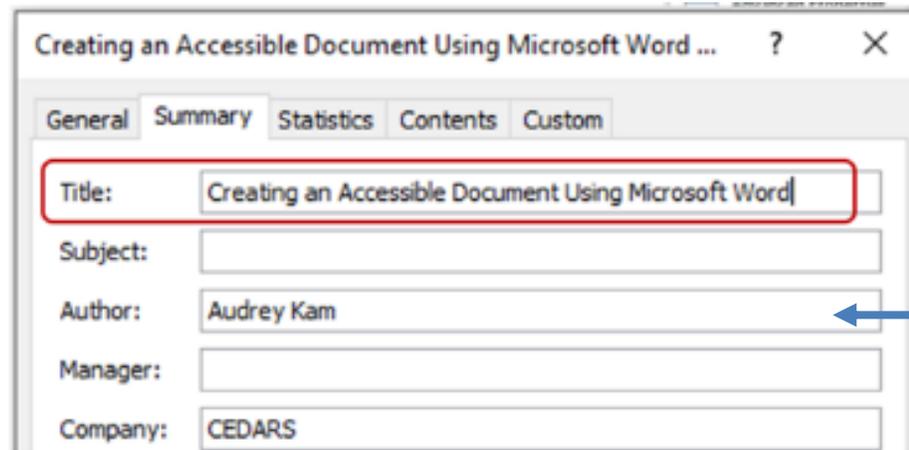
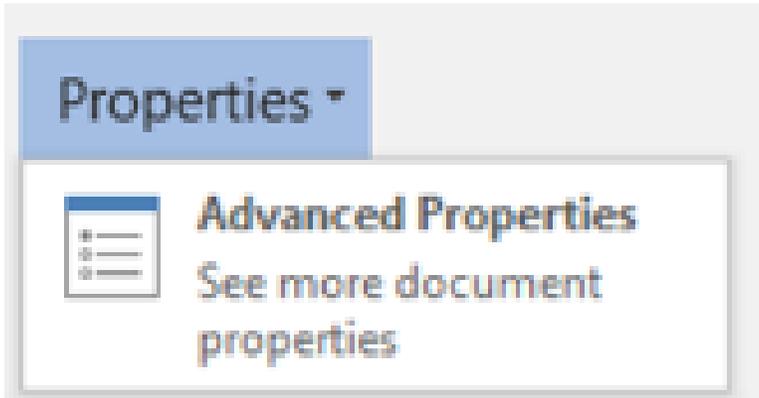
# 7) Specify Document Title (Slide 1 of 1)

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Document titles inform users of a document's purpose

## Step by Step Guide

- Go to **File** tab > **Info** > select **Properties** > **Advanced Properties**
- Under the **Summary** tab, insert a title



Optional:  
Enter an Author

# 8) Other Points-to-note (Slide 1 of 5)

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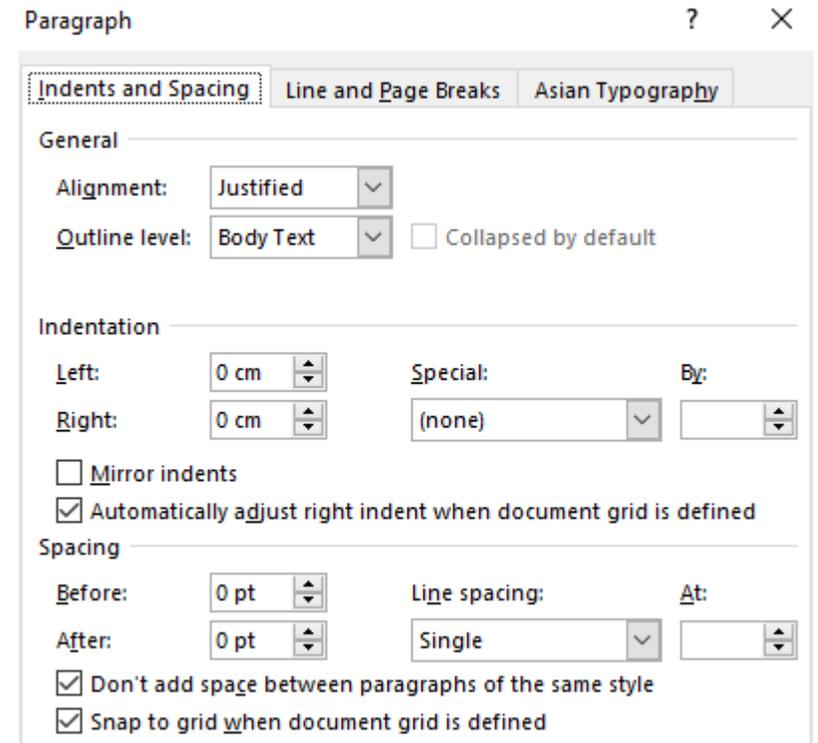
- Use simple language.
- Ensure that font size is sufficient.
- Provide sufficient contrast between text colors and background colors.
- Do not use color as the only way to convey information.
- Be careful with the use of watermarks. They can impact readability and create low contrast.
- Provide a table of contents for long documents.

# 8) Other Points-to-note (Slide 2 of 5)

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## Document White Space

- Avoid creating blank spaces. Extra spaces, tabs and empty paragraphs may be perceived as **blanks** by screen readers. After hearing “blank” several times, users may think that they have reached the end of the information.
- Use formatting, indenting, and styles to create white space.
- Use Page Break to start a new page etc.



# 8) Other Points-to-note (Slide 3 of 5)

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## Document White Space

When used properly, documents with white space work well with assistive technology, reduce the potential confusion of where one document element ends and when the next element begins.

### Step by Step Guide – Turn on formatting view

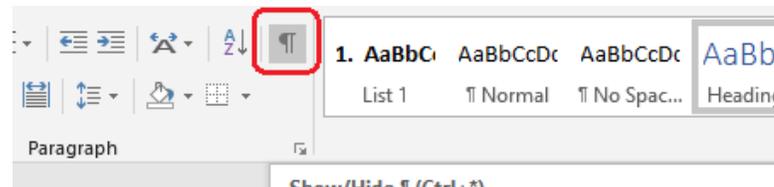
- **Home tab > Show/ Hide Formatting in Paragraph section**

#### Creating an Accessibl

#### Key Features of an Access

##### 1. Page Structure

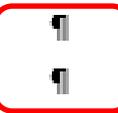
- Organize content website visitors ur



#### Show/Hide ¶ (Ctrl+\*)

- Microsoft-Office¶ Show paragraph marks and other hidden formatting symbols.
  - Word¶
  - Excel¶
  - PowerPoint¶
  - Outlook¶
  - Access¶
  - InfoPath¶
- This is especially useful for advanced layout tasks.

#### Creating an Accessibl



#### Key Features of an Access

##### 1.→ Page Structure¶

- Organize content website visitors ur

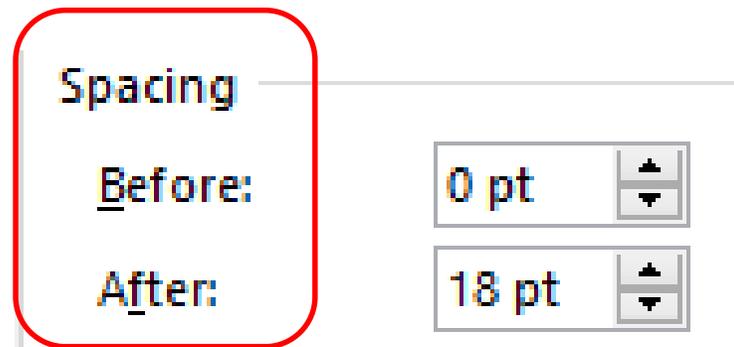
Every time you press ENTER, you are actually creating a paragraph

# 8) Other Points-to-note (Slide 4 of 5)

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## Step by Step Guide – Remove the Empty Paragraph

- Highlight the Pilcrow markers ¶ and delete them
- Modify the line spacing (before/after) in **Paragraph** Properties window



Creating an Accessible

Key Features of an Accessible

Pilcrow removed >  
same visual outcome achieved

# 8) Other Points-to-note (Slide 5 of 5)

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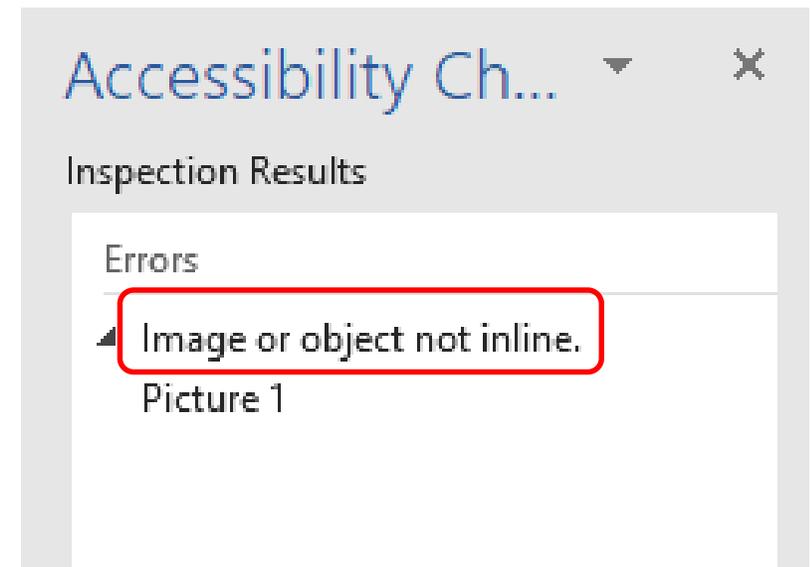
## Insert An Object

Whenever you insert an object into Word, it defaults to being an **in-line object**

Step by Step Guide - Ensure your objects are properly positioned

- select the object> **Layout** tab> **Position** in Arrange group and choose “**In Line with Text**”

If the object is not positioned as “In Line with Text”,  
Error will appear in the inspection results as  
“Image or object not inline” in accessibility check

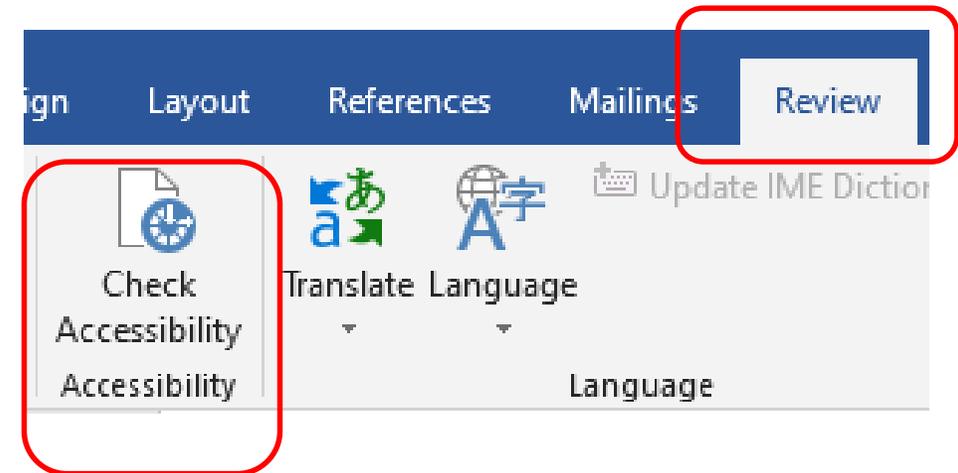


# 9) Accessibility Checker (Slide 1 of 1)

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Word has an Accessibility Checker for identifying and repairing many accessibility issues. The checker's **Inspection Results** classifies accessibility issues into three categories:

- **Errors:** content that makes a document very difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to access.  
*Example: an image with no alt text.*
- **Warnings:** content that in most—but not all—cases makes the document difficult for people with disabilities to access.  
*Example: a link with text that is not descriptive of its function.*
- **Tips:** content that people with disabilities can access, but that might be better organized or presented. *Example: skipping from a first-level heading to a third-level heading.*



Ref: [Creating Accessible Documents \(WebAIM\)](#)  
[Check document accessibility \(Microsoft\)](#)

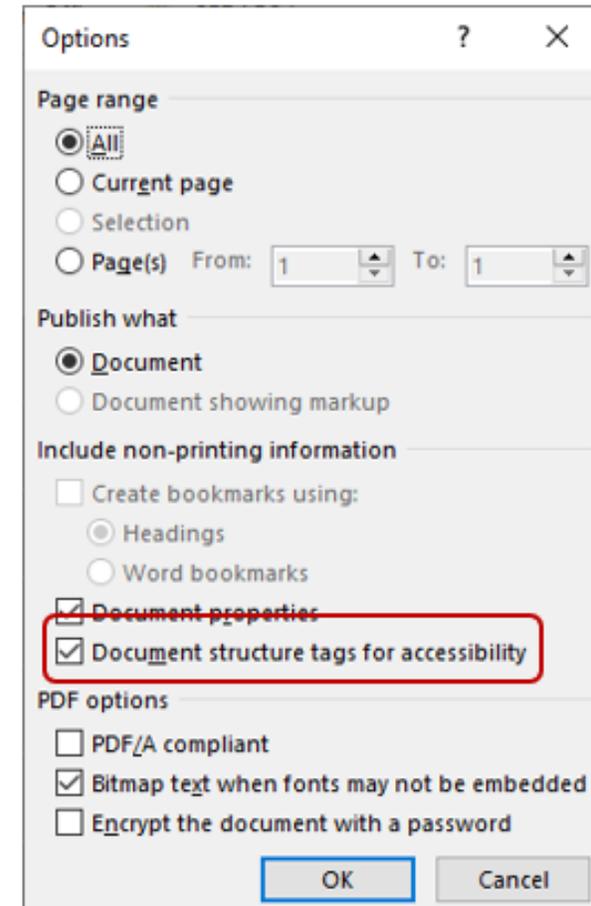
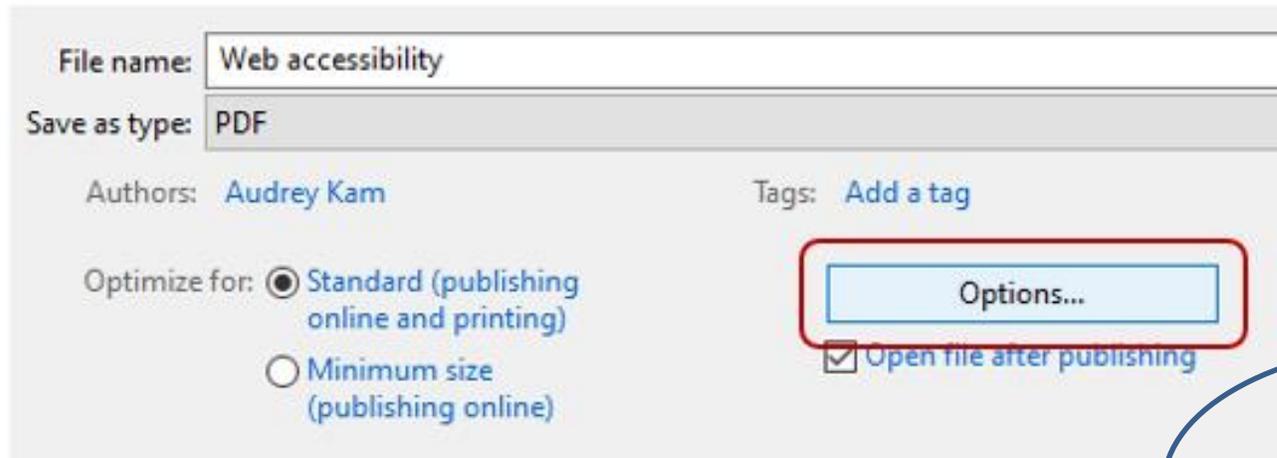
# 10) Export to PDF (Slide 1 of 1)

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## Step by Step Guide

- Go to **File** tab > **Save As** > choose PDF
- Select **Options** in the pop-up window
- Make sure “**Document structure tags for accessibility**” option is checked.

By default this produces a PDF that preserves the document's accessibility features



**DO NOT  
Print to PDF!!**

Ref: [Exporting to PDF \(University of Washington\)](#)

Thank You!