# Microsoft Excel Accessibility Checklist

## Required

* Before distributing the file, address all warnings and errors in the Microsoft Excel Accessibility checker. Please see [Rules used by the accessibility checker](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/rules-used-by-the-accessibility-checker-HA101823437.aspx?CTT=5&origin=HA010369192) - http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/rules-used-by-the-accessibility-checker-HA101823437.aspx?CTT=5&origin=HA010369192  
  Rationale: The accessibility checker addresses a number of accessibility issues. The Accessibility checker is available in Microsoft Office 2010 and 2013.
* Specify column header information in Excel tables   
  Rationale: Having clear column headings can help provide context and assist navigation of the table’s contents.
* Avoid using blank cells, rows, or columns for formatting.  
  Rationale: Blank cells, rows, or columns could mislead someone using a screen reader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table.
* Provide meaningful names for the workbook and for each spreadsheet in the file.  
  Rationale: Screen readers will read these names, which aides in navigation.
* **Provide alternative descriptions for images, formulas, and other items that do not translate naturally into text.**  
  Rationale: Non-text elements such as pictures, graphs, charts, and other items require alternative text to describe the visual characteristics.
* Include closed captions for any audio or video   
  Rationale: Captions (videos) or transcripts (audio files) are essential components of multimedia access for individuals with hearing loss or auditory processing issues.
* If the permissions of the document are set to prevent editing, either allow formatting changes, or provide an additional copy of document as accessible PDF or HTML (web page).   
  Rationale: Students with poor visual acuity and those with certain learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, may need to alter text with poor contrast, small type, or fonts with serifs.

## Additional usability considerations (suggested but not required)

* (Optional) Text descriptions of links to websites should be explicit in describing what the reader will encounter when clicking the link (i.e. "Montclair State University Digital Policy website.")  
  Rationale: Screen reader users often list the hyperlinks in a document; a series of "read more" links is meaningless. “Mike’s Auto Shop” is more meaningful than <http://www.mikefixescars.com>.
* (Optional) Provide a general description of the spreadsheet contents and navigation in cell A1. It will be the first cell accessed by assistive technologies.   
  Rationale: Makes navigation much easier
* (Optional) If the workbook contains more than 4 worksheets, create a worksheet with links to each worksheet.  
  Rationale: This makes it easier for the user to navigate the workbook.
* (Optional) Use cell addressing (cell/range naming)  
  Rationale: When using the shortcut Ctrl + G a dialog box will open and the screen reader will read all of the defined making it easier to navigate.
* (Optional) Avoid merging cells.  
  Rationale: this can make it more difficult for users of assistive technologies and people navigating your spreadsheet using the keyboard.

## Sources and Additional Resources

The following resources are available to assist with creating accessible documents:

* [Accessible Digital Office Document Project](http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/) - http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/
* Health and Human Services ' [Making Files Accessible](http://www.hhs.gov/web/508/accessiblefiles/index.html) - http://www.hhs.gov/web/508/accessiblefiles/index.html
* Microsoft: [Rules used by the accessibility checker](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/rules-used-by-the-accessibility-checker-HA101823437.aspx?CTT=5&origin=HA010369192) - http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/rules-used-by-the-accessibility-checker-HA101823437.aspx?CTT=5&origin=HA010369192
* Web Accessibility In Mind (WebAIM) website: [Appropriate use of Alternative Text](http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/) - http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/

To help determine contrast ratios, it is recommended that you use a tool such as:

* Joe Dolson's [Color Contrast Spectrum Tester](http://www.joedolson.com/color-contrast-tester.php) - http://www.joedolson.com/color-contrast-tester.php
* The Paciello Group's [Colour Contrast Analyser](http://www.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastAnalyser) - http://www.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastAnalyser