

Making Your Word Documents Accessible

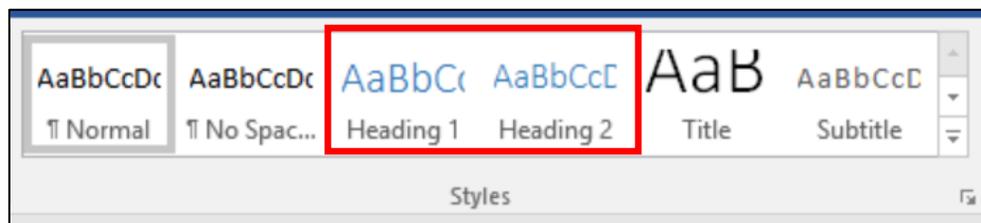
Montclair State University is committed to making our digital content accessible to people with disabilities (required by Section 508). This document will discuss the best practices for making Word documents accessible. Information is based off Microsoft Word versions 2013 and 2016.

Structure

A document with good structure contains logical headings for all of its sections. To make it easier for screen readers to read your documents, use a logical heading order and the built-in formatting tools in Word. For example, organize headings in the prescribed logical order. Use Heading 1, Heading 2, and then Heading 3 and organize the information in your documents into small chunks. Ideally, each heading would include only a few paragraphs.

Apply Built-in Heading Styles

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



To test if structure is available in your document, open the **Navigation Pane**.

1. Click **View**
2. Select **Navigation Pane** in the **Show** group
3. Click **Headings**

If there are no Headings listed, your document has no structure.

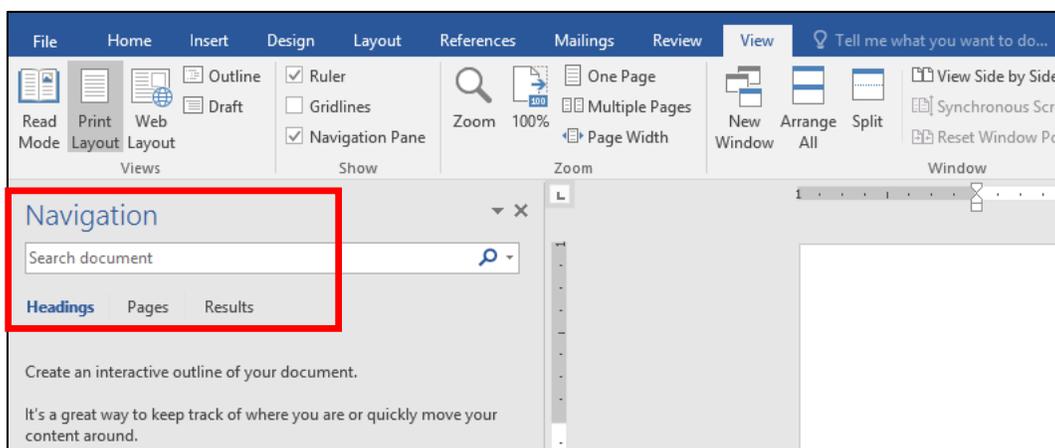
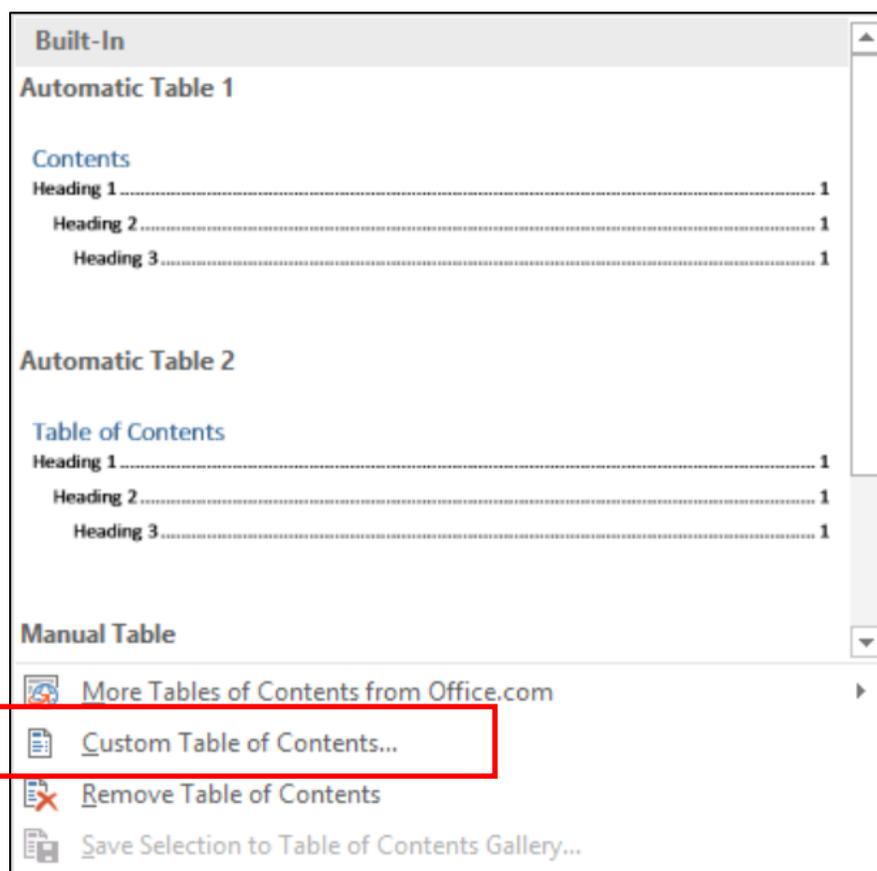


Table of Contents

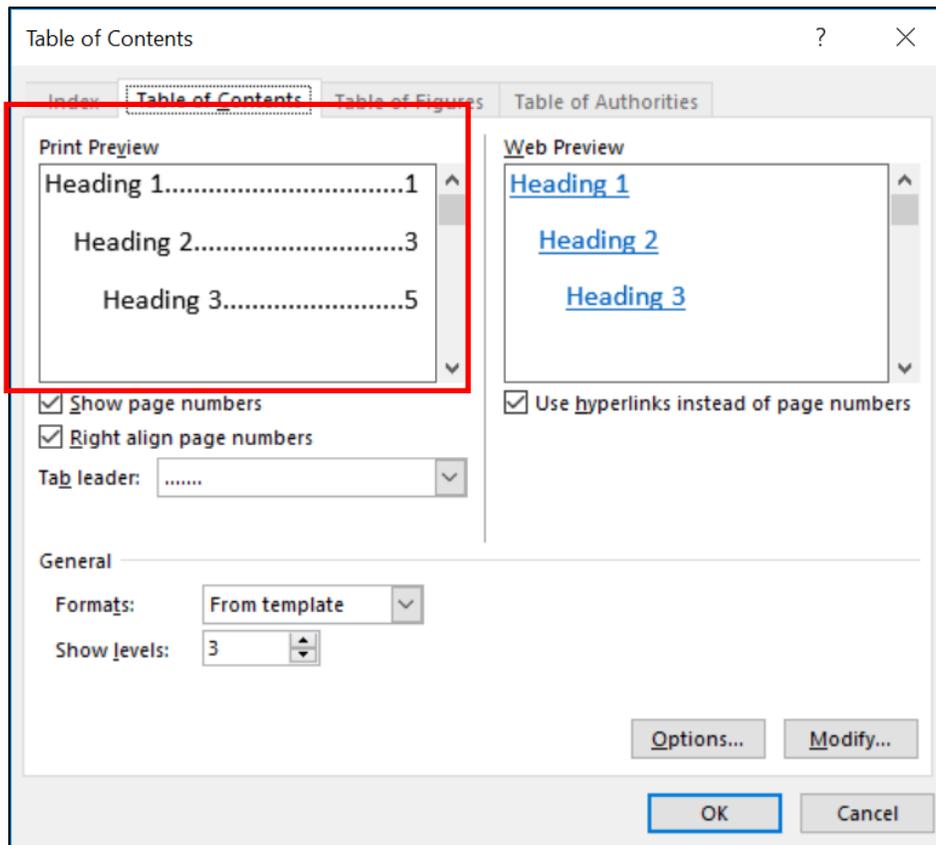
A Table of Contents (TOC) aids in the document navigation for those using assistive technologies. TOCs are created using the styles Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.

1. Apply the Heading styles to your document
2. Click the **References** tab and click on **Table of Contents**
3. Click **Custom Table of Contents**



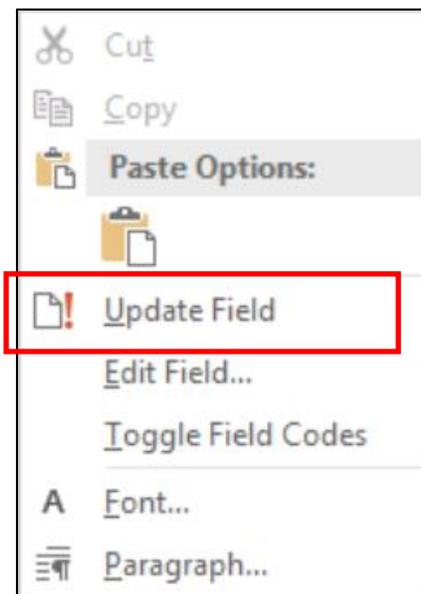
Note under **Print Preview** it displays Heading 1, Heading 2 and Heading 3 as your TOC structure.

4. Click **OK** to create the TOC



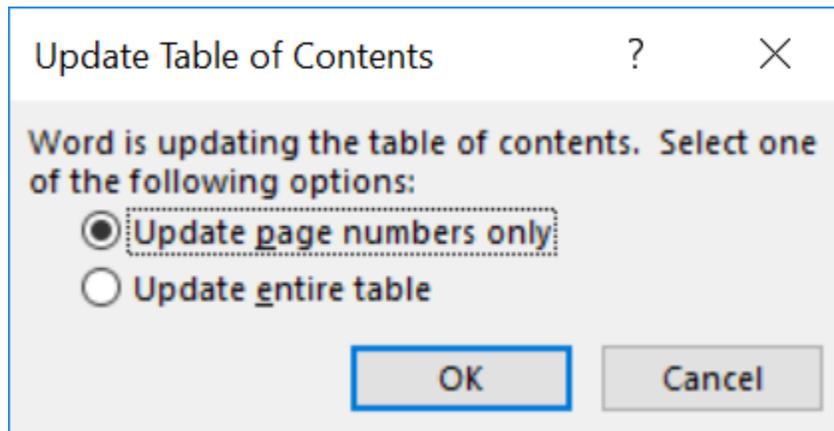
Update Table of Contents

1. Right-click anywhere in the TOC
2. Click **Update Field**



3. Select **Update entire table**

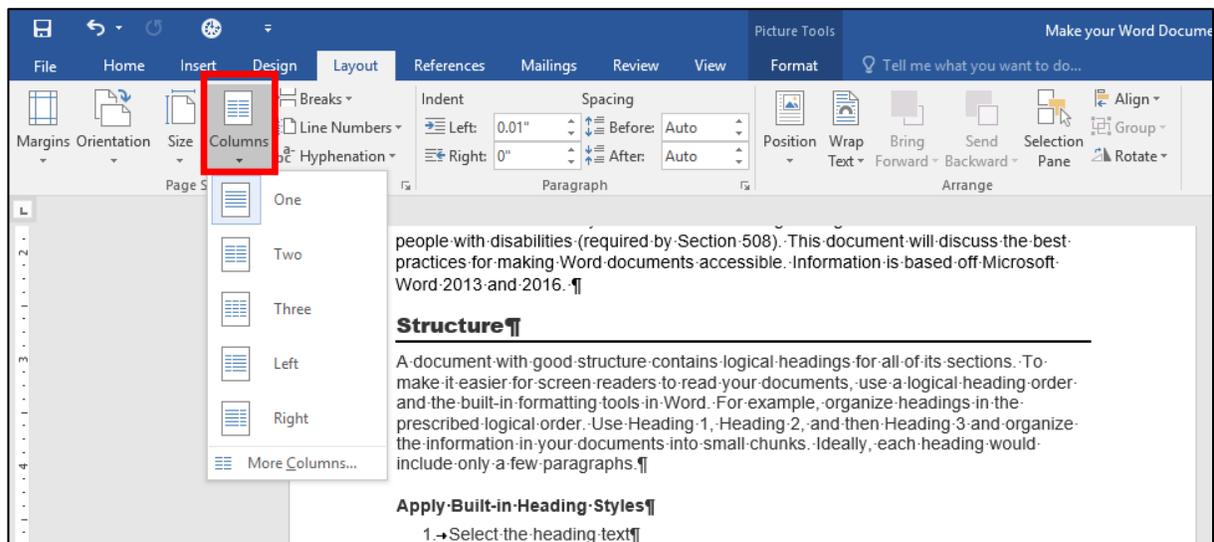
4. Click **OK**



Columns

For multi-column documents, use the Column layout feature instead of using text boxes and manual spacing to create columns. This will ensure that columns are interpreted correctly by screen readers.

1. Select the text
2. Click the **Layout** tab
3. Click **Columns** and chose the number of columns you wish

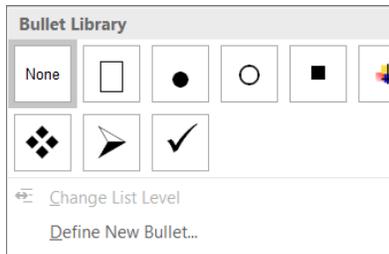


Lists

Use Word's lists features when creating lists in your document.

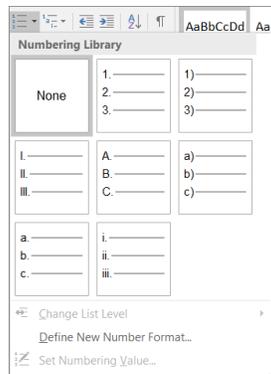
Bulleted Lists

1. Highlight the text
2. Select the **Home** tab
3. In the **Paragraph** group, select **Bullets** and select a bullet style



Ordered Lists

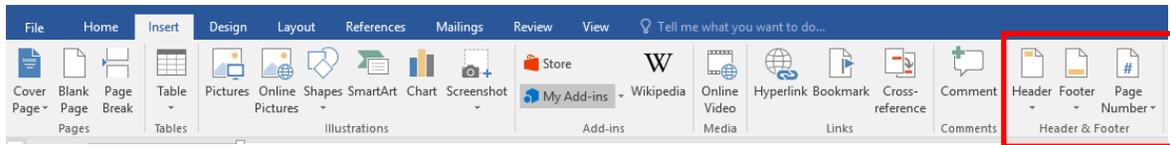
1. Highlight your text
2. Select the **Home** tab
3. In the **Paragraph** group, select the **Numbering** button
4. Select a numbering style



Headers & Footers

Headers and Footers must be formatted properly using the Header/Footer feature in order for users of assisted technologies to distinguish headers/footers from page content.

1. Position the cursor anywhere in your document
2. Select the **Insert** tab
3. Click **Header** or **Footer** in the **Header & Footer** group
4. Select a built-in Header/Footer or chose **Edit Header** or **Edit Footer** to create your own



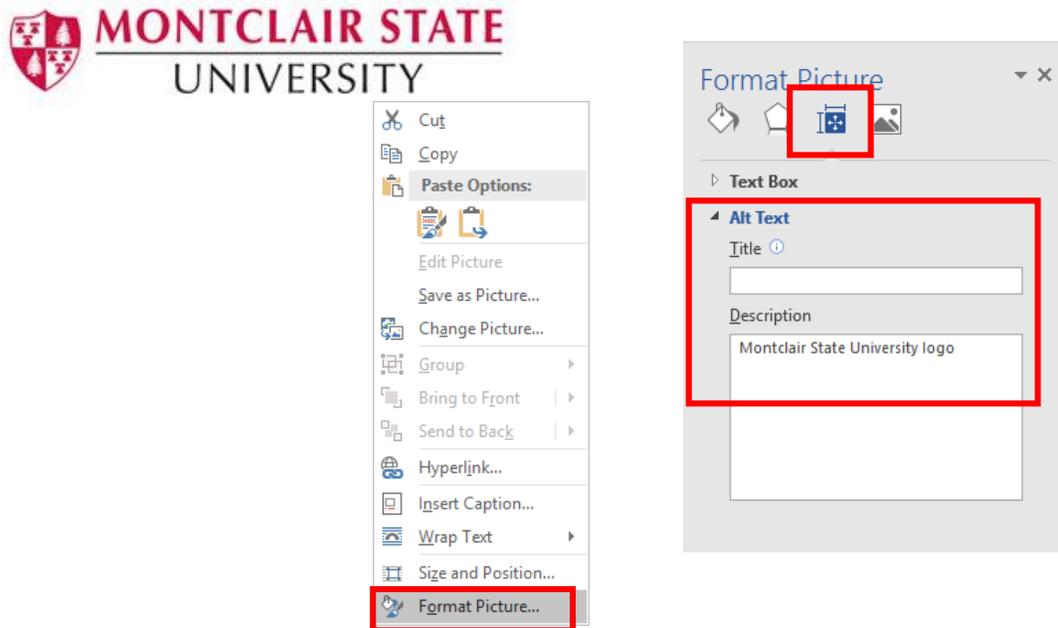
Some assistive technologies may not pick up headers/footers in your document so it is important not to include pertinent information in these areas.

Non-Text Elements

Non-text elements are the things in a Word document that are not text such as an image, graph, table, etc. In order for non-text elements to be accessible, alternate text must be added. Enter information that states the purpose and/or function of the object (in about 250 characters or fewer) for a meaningful image or object.

Adding Alternative Text to Images, Shapes and Charts:

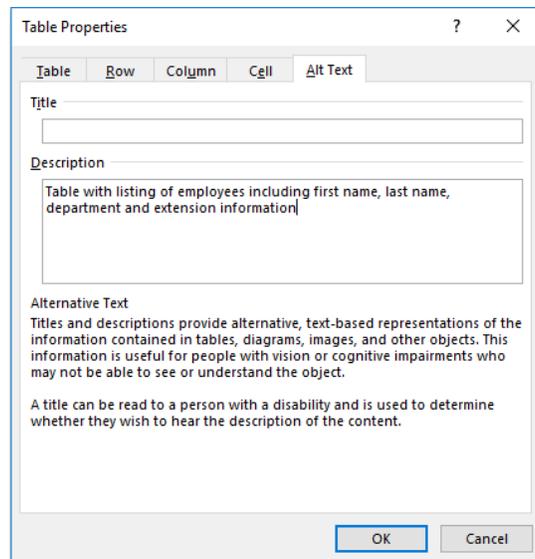
1. **Right-click** on the non-text element and select **Format Picture**
2. Under **Format Picture**, click on **Layout & Properties**
3. Click on **Alt Text**
4. Enter the descriptive text about the non-text element under **Description**. **Title** is not always read by screen readers so it is not necessary.



Adding Alt Text to a Table

First Name	Last Name	Department	Extension
Peter	Jones	HR	5555
John	Smith	IT	5555

1. **Right-click** on the Table and select **Table Properties**
2. Select the **Alt Text** tab and type a **Description**



Moving Objects Inline for Accessibility

Some types of objects (text boxes, word art, etc.) in Word are not part of the document's "normal structure". They are on a separate "Drawing Layer" that is unavailable to screen readers. In some cases, the objects can be inserted inline with the text, and can therefore be read in the flow of the document by screen readers, but the results will vary from one screen reader to another. Unfortunately, Smart Art is not directly accessible to screen reader users. The object would not be read when the user reads the document top to bottom. Therefore, it is not recommended to use Smart Art.

- Right-click on the object
- Click on **Wrap Text**
- Click on **In Line with Text**

Alternative Text
Titles and descriptions provide alternative, text-based representations of the information contained in tables, diagrams, images, and other objects. This information is useful for people with vision or cognitive disabilities who may not be able to see or understand the object.

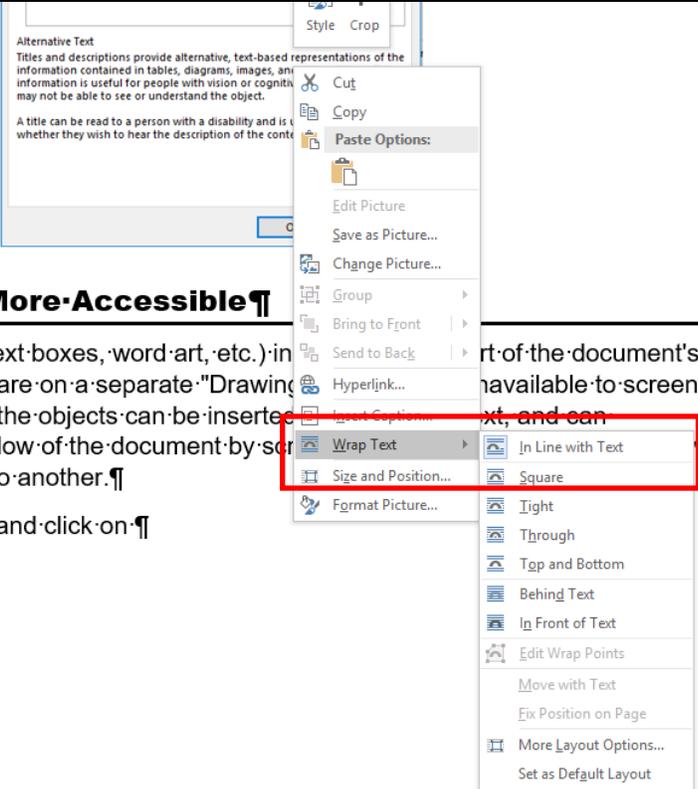
A title can be read to a person with a disability and is useful for screen readers. Whether they wish to hear the description of the content is up to the user.

Making Objects More Accessible ¶

Some types of objects (text boxes, word art, etc.) in a document are not part of the document's "normal structure". They are on a separate "Drawing Canvas" and are not available to screen readers. In some cases, the objects can be inserted into the document's flow, and can therefore be read in the flow of the document by screen readers. ¶

Right-click on the object and click on ¶

¶



Making Complex Charts and Graphs Accessible

Sometimes you need to use complex images like pie charts or bar graphs. Most types of objects in Word allow writers to add alt text, but alt text is generally meant to be short. There are several creative ways to provide long descriptive alternate text for complex graphics and objects.

- Describe the complex image in text below the image.



- Provide an equivalent data table below the image.



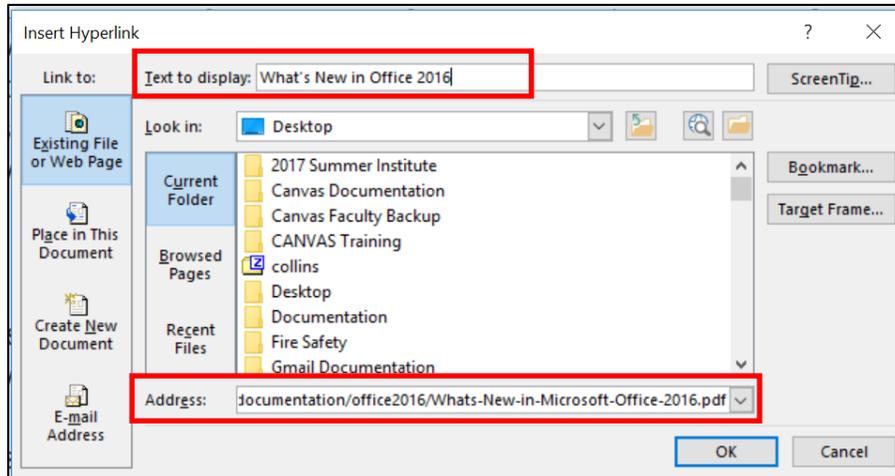
Color

- When using color to communicate information, make sure that color is not the only means of conveying the information. For example, include an * to the colored text or underline the text.
- Don't rely on highlighting alone to convey meaning. Screen readers do not convey any information about highlighting to blind users. Include text such as "Important", "Attention" before highlighted content.
- Be sure your document has a sufficient degree of color contrast. If your document has a high level of contrast between text and background, more people can see and use the content. You can download a free tool [Colour Contrast Analyser](#) to check your color contrast.
- When your document contains charts/graphs, use patterns along with color.

Links

When links exist in your document, ensure the link text is meaningful. Use the Word link tool instead of copying and pasting the URL.

1. Click on the **Insert** tab and click on **Hyperlink**
2. Type a descriptive title for the link under **Text to display**
3. **Paste** the URL under **Address**:

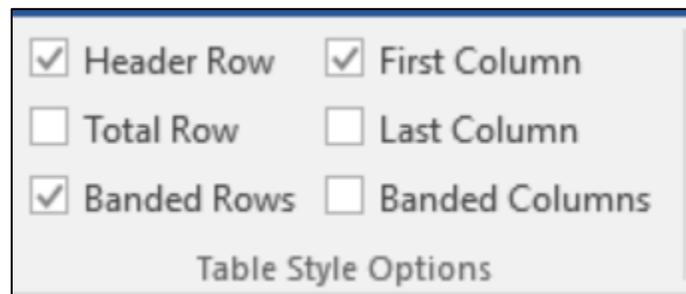


Data Tables

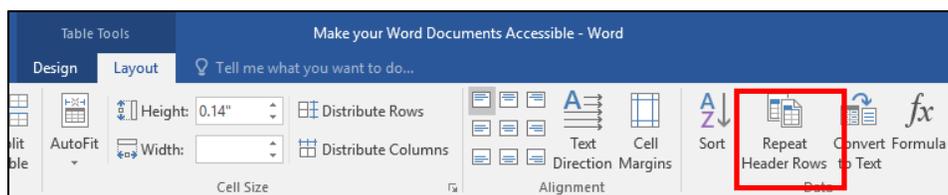
When working with tables in your document, use a simple table structure, and specify column header information.

First Name	Last Name	Department	Extension
Peter	Jones	HR	5555
John	Smith	IT	5555

1. Click in the first row of the table
2. Click the **Design** tab under **Table Tools**
3. Click the **Header Row** option under the **Table Styles Options** group to select it



4. Then click the **Layout** tab
5. Click **Repeat Header Rows** in the **Data** group



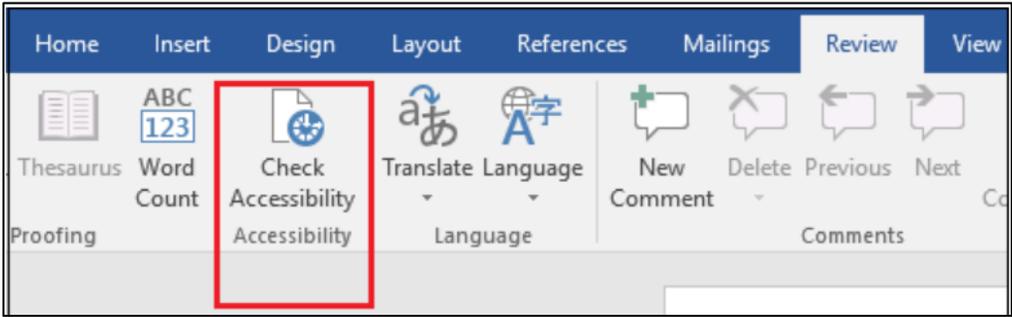
Also, when working with tables in your document it is important that the table does not contain merged or split cells.

Accessibility Checker

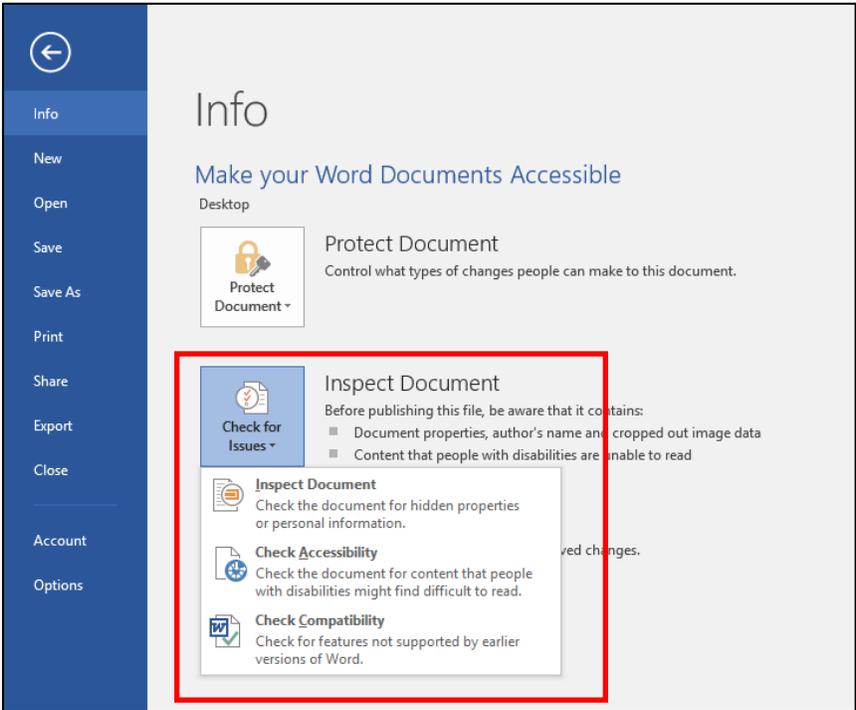
The Accessibility Checker tool in Word finds accessibility issues in your document. The tool generates a report of issues that could make your content difficult for people with disabilities to understand. **Accessibility Checker** also explains why you should fix these issues and how to fix them.

Start Accessibility Checker

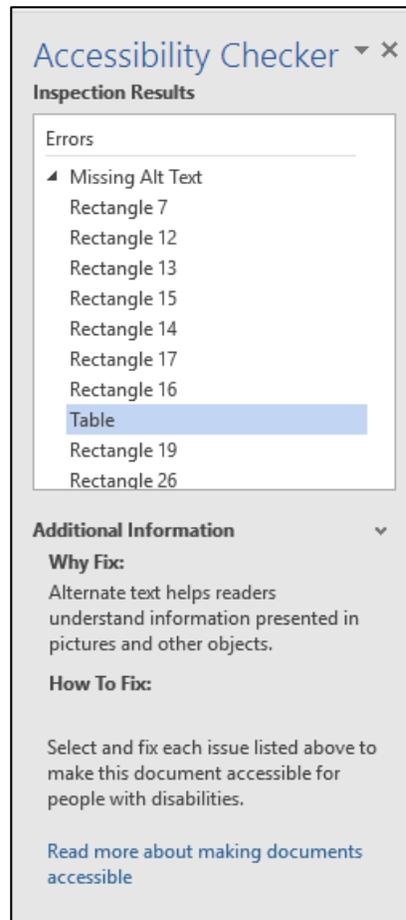
The **Check Accessibility** tool may be found on the **Review** tab depending on the version of Word you are using.



If your version does not have the option, click on the **File** menu, under Info click on **Check for Issues** and select **Check Accessibility**.



The **Accessibility Checker** pane will appear on the right. To see details of an **Error** or **Warning**, click on an issue under **Inspection Results**. Under **Additional Information**, you can get an explanation of why this issue should be fixed as well as how to fix it.



Understanding the Accessibility Checker Results

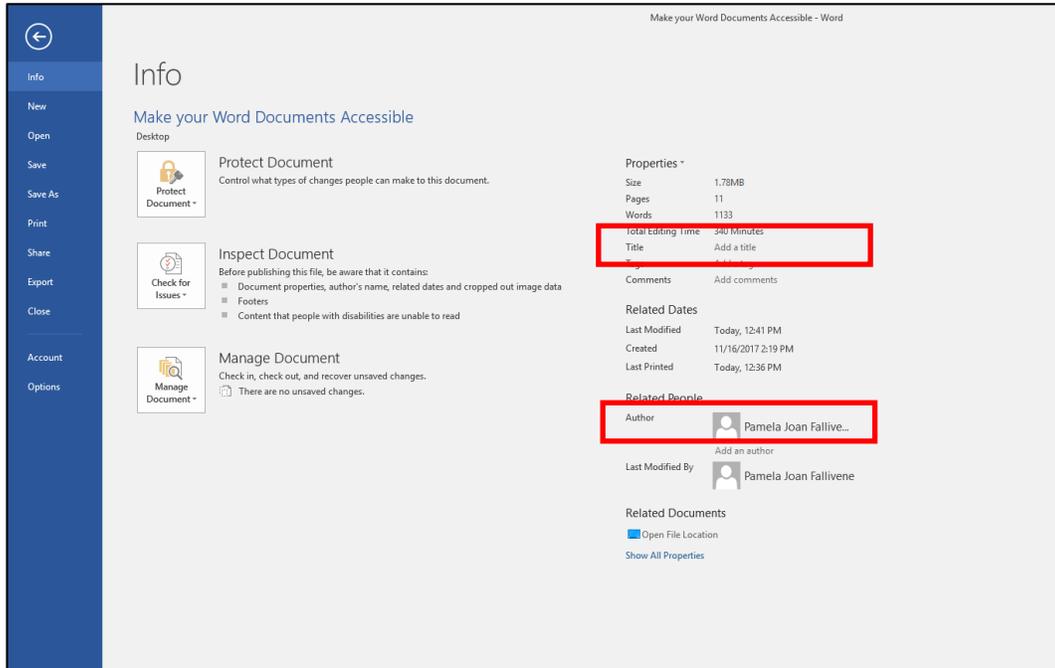
- **Error:** An error is for content that makes a file very difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to understand.
- **Warning:** A warning is for content that in most, but not all, cases makes a file difficult for people with disabilities to understand.
- **Tip:** A tip is for content that people with disabilities can understand, but that might be better organized or presented in a way that would improve their experience.

Document Formats

Adjusting the document's meta data can assist in making your document more accessible for those using assistive technology.

Giving the document a title:

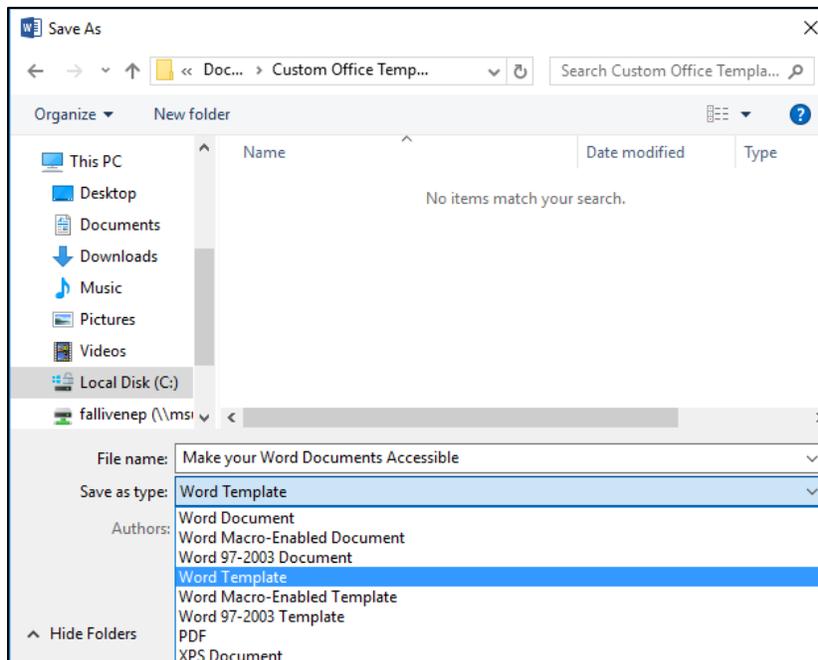
1. Click on **File**
2. Click **Info** and click in the **Title** field and enter a title
3. To edit the existing **Author**, right-click on the author's name



Saving Your Document as a Template

Once you have made your document accessible, saving it as a Template will help to preserve structure for future documents.

1. Click on **File** and select **Save As...**
2. Pick a file location
3. Select **Word Template** as the **Save As Type...**



Saving as a PDF

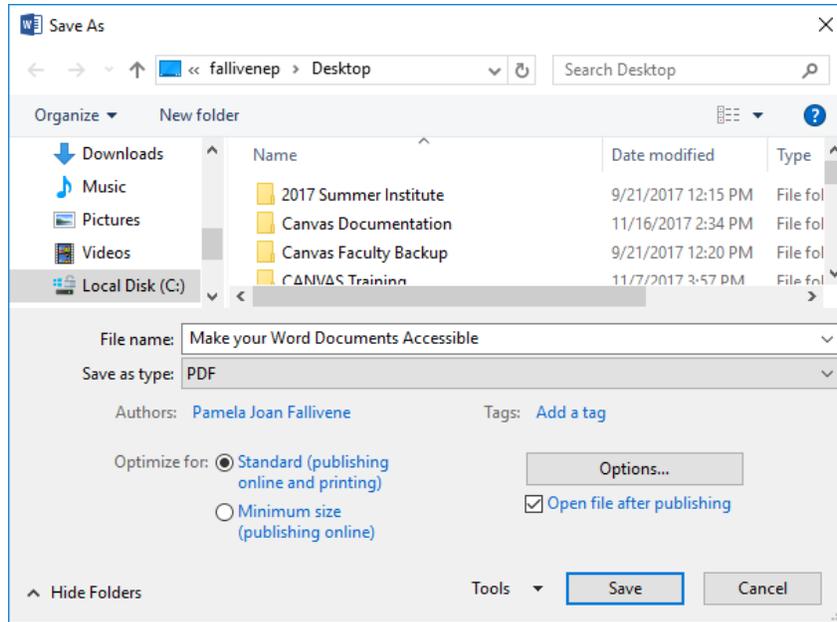
If saving your Word document as a PDF, making your document accessible will reduce the amount of time it will take to make the PDF file accessible. Headings, lists and table structures will automatically carry over to the PDF.

1. Click on **File** and select **Save As...**
2. Pick a file location
3. Select **PDF** as the **Save As Type...**

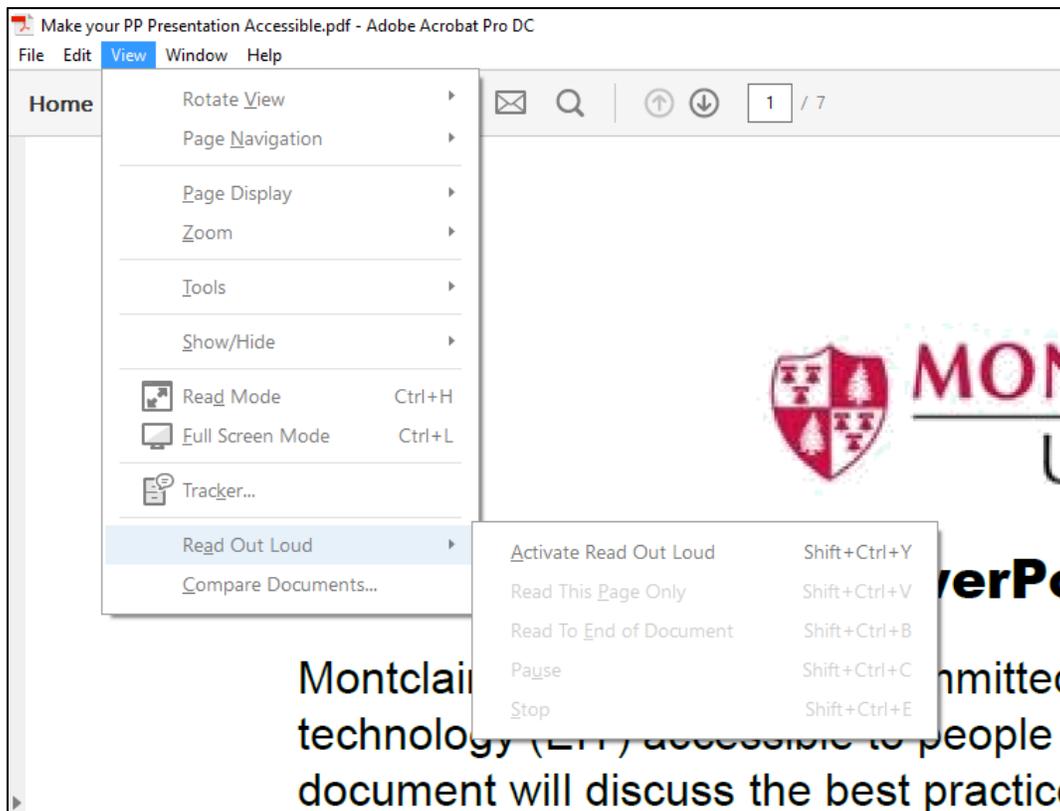
Test It

You can listen to your document to test if it is readable in the **Read Out Loud** feature in Adobe Acrobat Pro. **Read Out Loud** is a Text-to-Speech tool.

1. Click **File** and select **Save As**
2. Select a location
3. Choose **PDF** as the **Save as type:**



4. Open the PDF file in Adobe Acrobat Pro
5. Click on **View** and select **Read Out Loud / Activate Read Out Loud**
6. Click on **View** again and select **Read Out Loud** and click on either **Read this Page Only** or **Read to End of Document**



References:

“[Make your Word documents accessible.](https://support.office.com)” <https://support.office.com>