

Introduction

Good use of Microsoft Word Styles, headings and specific formatting rather than frequent tab characters, spaces and carriage returns to present a document make it much easier for a screen reader user or someone requiring Braille to work with your learning materials.

Text-to-speech and careful use of colour can also help those with specific learning difficulties and colour deficiencies.

All this can also make it easier for you to convert documents into accessible PDFs or Web Pages. If you are using Office 2007, ensure your files are backward-compatible with previous versions of Word by saving as Word 97-2003 Document.

Considerations

- **Use Styles.** Create headings and subheadings (Heading 1, 2, 3 etc.) using styles, not just bolded, enlarged or centred text. Using headings in a document allows you to create a DAISY digital talking book that is divided into sections; these sections can be navigated by the reader.

If you would like to change the appearance of a heading, select **Format > Styles and Formatting** (**Format > Style** in Mac). In Office 2007, right-click the Heading style in the ribbon and choose Modify. This will change the appearance of all instances of that heading in your document (e.g. every Heading 1). This can also save lots of time, as formatting needs to be done only once. Make sure your fonts are readable, preferably size 12 or 14.

- **Use picture descriptions known as ‘alternative (alt) text tags’ for all graphics** including graphs and clip art. Insert the image - **Right Click** on the image, select **Format Picture**, click the **Web** tab and enter the description in the box labelled **Alternative text**. In Office 2007, this is on the **Alt Text** tab. Make sure the text is short but conveys meaning. “*My tabby-cat Mittens*” is suitable, while “*Picture of my tabby-cat Mittens*” contains un-necessary text.
- **Do not forget page numbers and create bulleted or numbered lists** using the menu button and built in styles **not** just symbols and spaces.
- **Make sure all tables have headers across the top.** If you have one row across the top, you can set this row as a header by **right-clicking the four-directional arrow at its top-left > Table Properties > Row tab > Repeat as Header Row at the top of each page**. Tables should have a uniform structure with no merged cells as these can upset the reading order for someone using a screen reader. Table row and column titles should be concise and if possible provide a summary of important elements.
- **Ensure good colour contrast within charts and images and for text**, if this is important for explaining items. Check this by printing out in black and white.

Additional Resources

- **TechDis: Writing Accessible Electronic Documents with Microsoft Word** with further information about fonts, colour, styles, captions and linking to other documents.
<http://www.techdis.ac.uk/resources/sites/accessibilityessentials2/index.html>
- **Ten very basic rules for making a Word document** so it will look good and make good Braille, Large Print, DAISY, PDF etc. More in depth use of style sheets.
http://www.techno-vision.co.uk/10_Word_Guidelines.htm
- **WebAIM - Microsoft Word Accessibility Techniques** with useful screen grabs showing how each element is achieved:
<http://www.webaim.org/techniques/word/>
- **Microsoft Word product information:**
<http://www.microsoft.com/office/word/prodinfo/default.aspx>
- **Microsoft Word viewer**, for those who do not have Microsoft Word installed on their computer:
<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/891090>
- Check your work by downloading the **free WordTalk text to speech plug-in**
<http://www.wordtalk.org.uk/> or using the free downloadable Thunder screen reader
<http://www.screenreader.net/> - Try navigating around your document using just the keyboard!
- **Dolphin tutorials on making Word accessible for use with Daisy Readers** with links to the use of EasyProducer.
http://www.yourdolphin.com/online_tutorials.asp?id=91
- Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for versions 2003 and earlier, to allow opening of Office 2007 files.
<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/923505>