

How to Create Accessible Word Documents

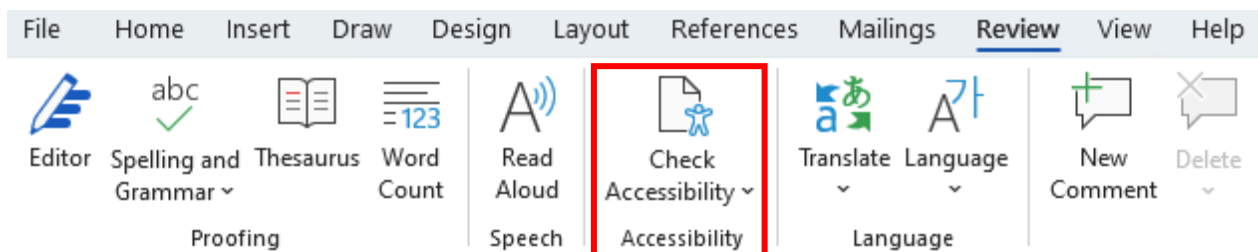
Purpose

Creating accessible Word documents is crucial to ensure your content is readable and engaging for all audiences. Microsoft Word provides many built-in features that help make documents accessible and easy to navigate for those who use assistive technologies like screen readers. Below are a few important steps to start making your Word documents accessible.

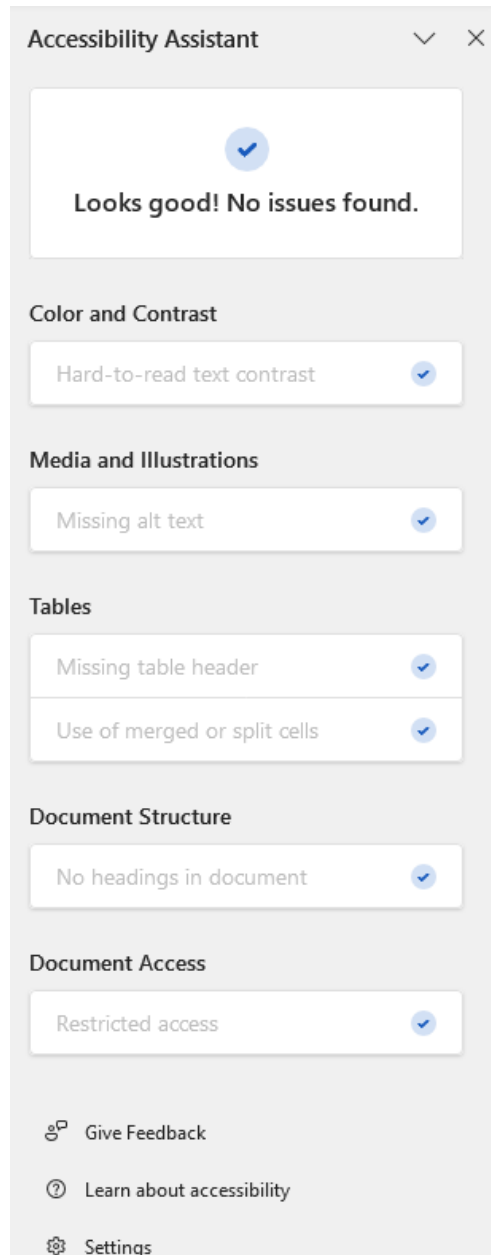
Tips for Making Word Documents Accessible

Use the accessibility checker

- This built-in tool will identify possible accessibility issues in your document and give suggestions on how to correct them.
- If accessibility issues are identified, remediating the source document is the best way to resolve barriers.
- ***Disclaimer:** Although good practice, it should not be assumed that the tool guarantees 100% accessibility compliance with WCAG 2.1, level AA.
- **To use the accessibility checker tool:**
 1. Go to “Review” tab -> “Check Accessibility”



2. A sidebar titled “Accessibility Assistant” will pop up on the right-hand side of the document and prompt any issues found to be fixed.

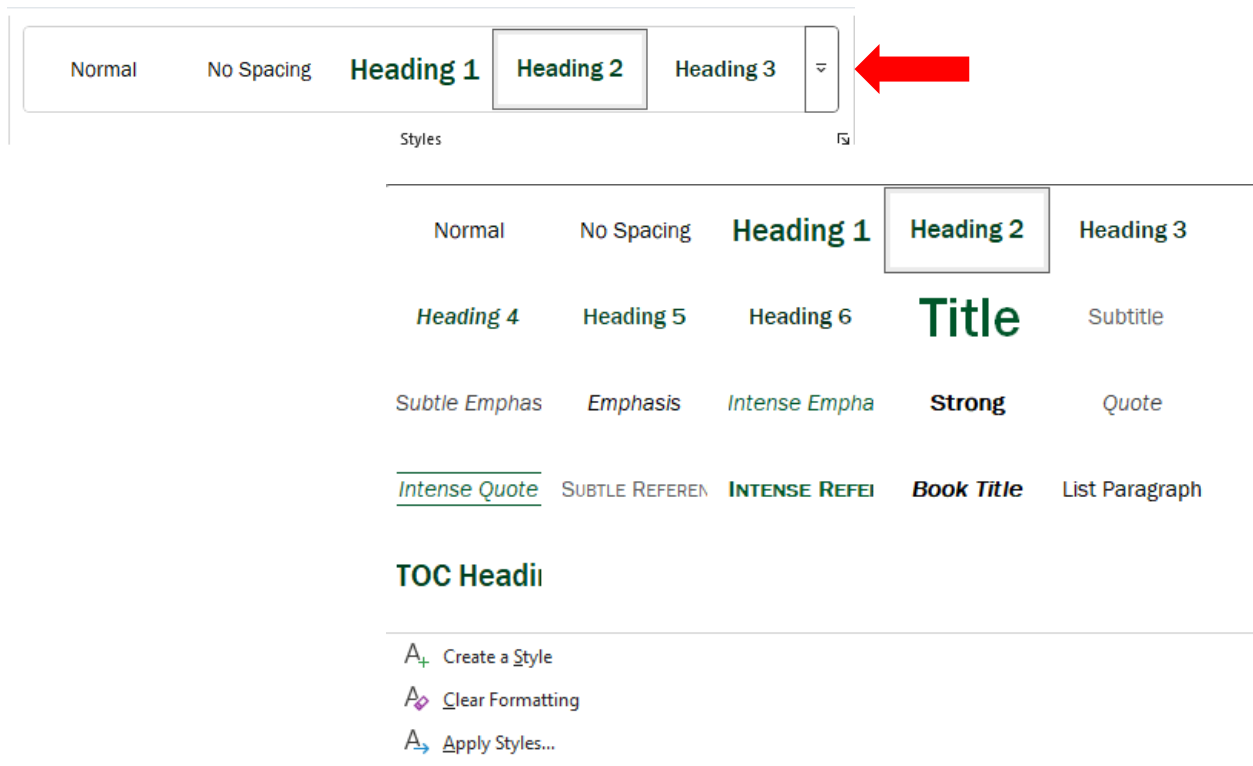


3. Fix any accessibility issues detected.

Use document styles

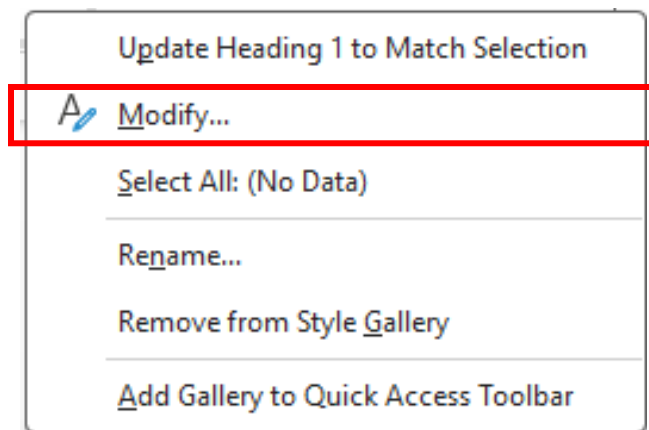
- Use heading and paragraph styles to structure your documents and optimize readability.
- Word offers various levels of heading and paragraph styles. You can apply these styles directly from the styles gallery on the home tab.
- **To set up styles:**
 1. Locate the “Styles” group on the home tab.

2. Click the drop-down arrow on the right-hand side of the preview list to view the full list of heading and paragraph styles.



- **To modify existing styles:**

1. To customize existing styles, right-click on the style name and select “Modify.”
2. Modify the font, size, color, spacing, and more.



Modify Style ? X

Properties

Name:

Style type:

Style based on:

Style for following paragraph:

Formatting

Franklin Gothic M 16 B I U

Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph

From there, you can modify the font, size, color, spacing, and more.

Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph

Font: (Default) +Headings (Franklin Gothic Medium), 16 pt, Font color: Accent 1, Space Before: 12 pt After: 0 pt, Keep with next, Keep lines together, Level 1, Style: Linked, Show in the Styles gallery, Priority: 10

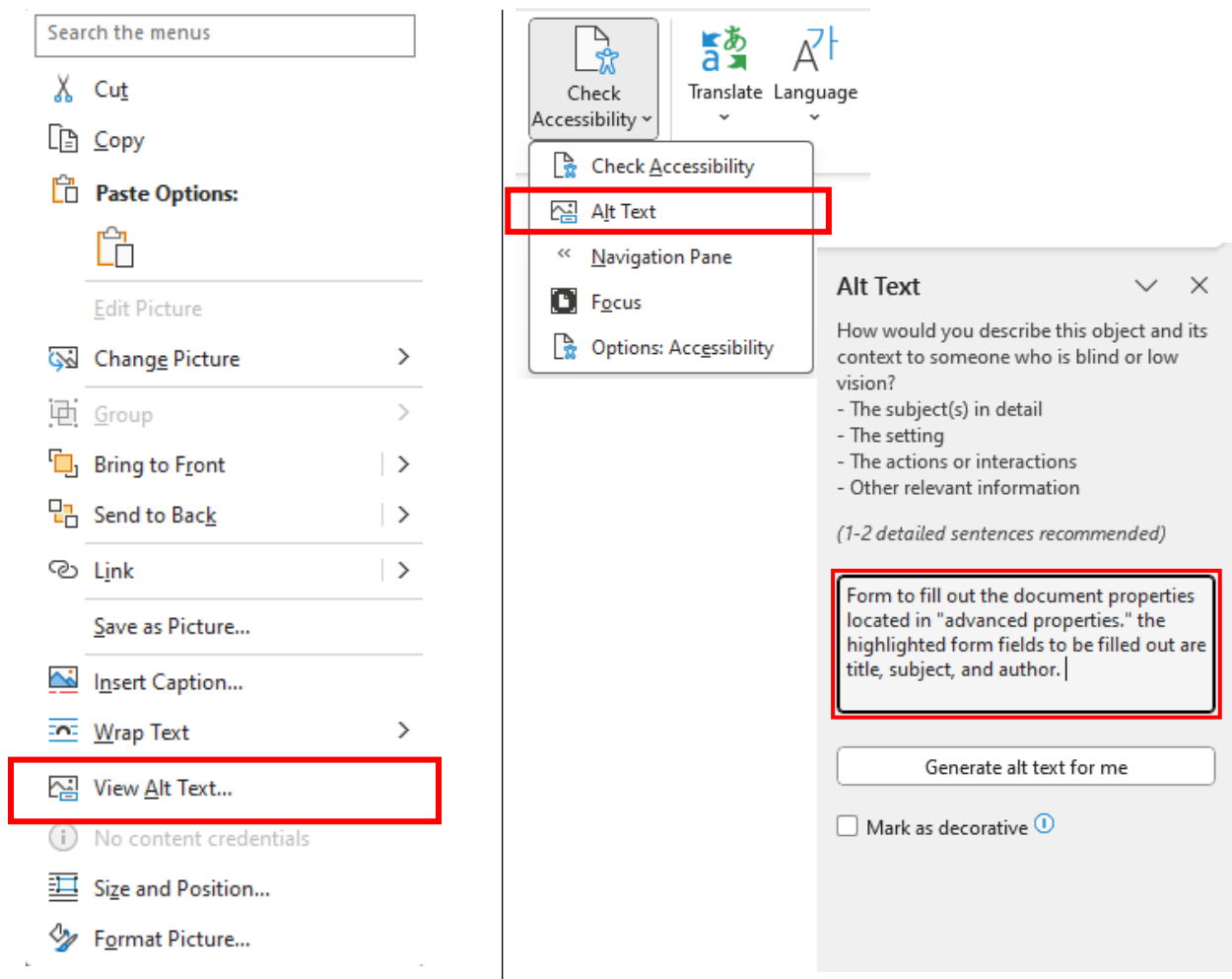
☒ Add to the Styles gallery
 ☐ Automatically update

☒ Only in this document
 ☐ New documents based on this template

Format OK Cancel

Add alt text to images and objects

- Add clear, concise descriptions to all images, charts, tables, shapes, embedded objects and SmartArt graphics.
- Assistive Technology will read “image” or “graphic” without alt-text.
- For a logo, simply use the description “Company Name Icon” or “Company Name Logo.”
- For a pie chart or graph, provide all data points and values for each section.
- **To verify alt text is added to an object:**
 1. Right-click on the image, chart, table, or other object and select “View Alt Text.”
 2. Another way to check is to navigate to the “Review” tab -> “Check Accessibility” -> select “Alt Text” from the drop-down menu.
 3. When using either method of verification, there should be alt text in the description box for each object. In the document.



Fill in document properties

1. Go to "File" -> "Info" -> "Properties" -> "Advanced Properties"
2. Enter information for title, subject, and author, click "OK."

How to Create Accessible Word Documents Prop... ? X

General Summary Statistics Contents Custom

Title:

Subject:

Author:

Manager:

Company:

Category:

Keywords:

Comments:

Hyperlink base:

Template: How%20to%20Create%20Accessible%20Word%20Dx

☐ Save Thumbnails for All Word Documents

OK Cancel

Name hyperlinks appropriately

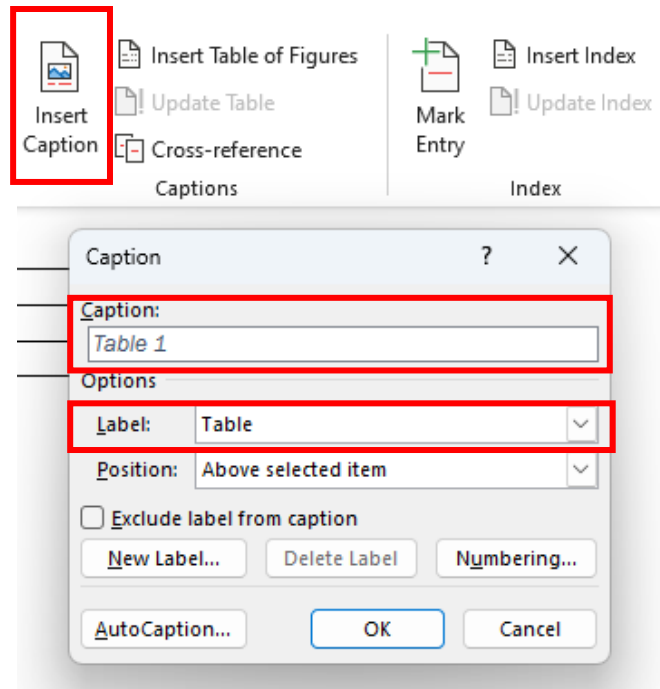
- Your link should contain descriptive, concise text that reflects the link destination, rather than simply saying “click here.”
- If you are linking to a webpage or document, use the webpage or document’s title as the hyperlink name.
- Use only necessary words to keep the hyperlink name short and easy to read.
- Example: Instead of using “Click here to view the full annual report,” use “View full annual report.”
- Avoid using URLs as the link text as they can be long and confusing to read, especially for screen readers.

Use short titles in headings

- Keep headings short (fewer than 20 words or one line long).
- Short titles ensure easy navigation of your document for assistive technology and readers.

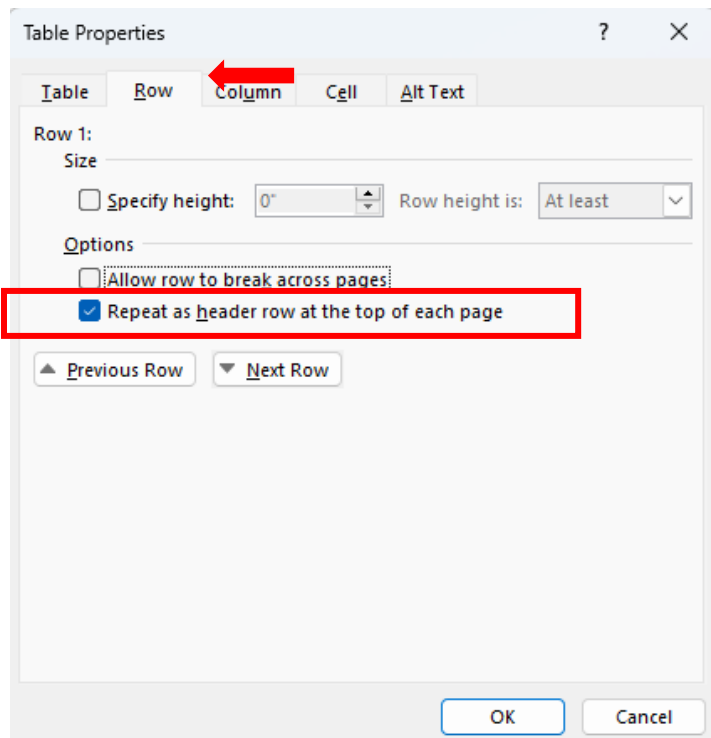
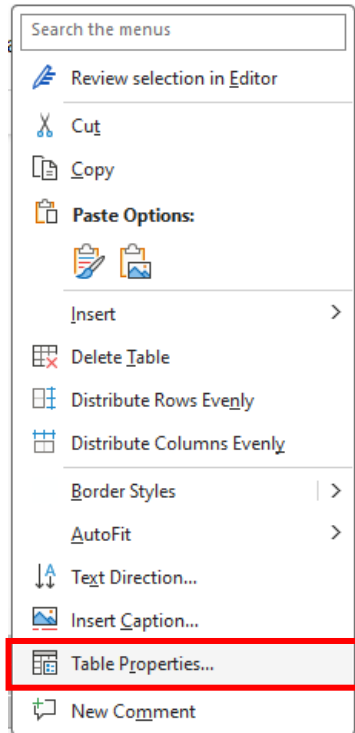
Create an accessible table structure

- Avoid using nested tables, merged or split cells, or blank cells for formatting.
- **Create and title your table:**
 1. Navigate to the “Insert” tab -> “Table” -> type in your data table.
 2. Title your table using the caption tool: Go to the “References” tab -> “Insert Caption.”
 3. Type the title of the table in the caption textbox -> select “Table” in the label textbox.



- **Identify the header row:**

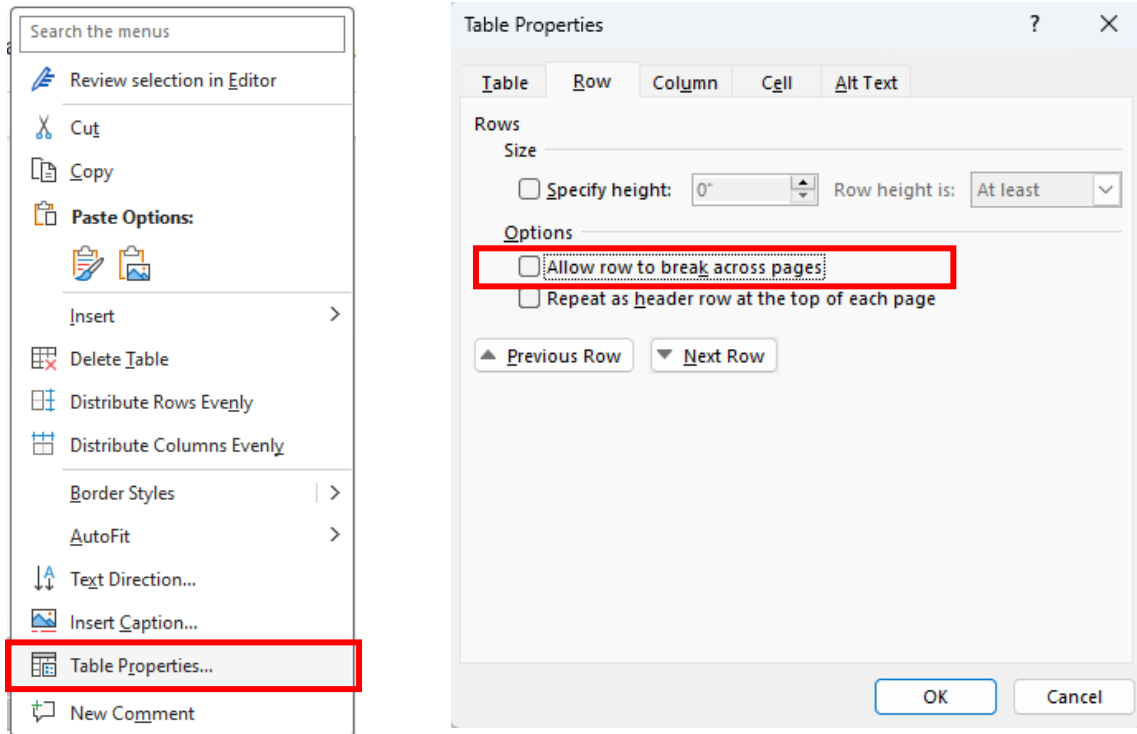
1. Select the top row of the table and right-click -> "Table Properties"
2. Select the "Row Tab" and check "Repeat as header row at the top of each page" -> select "OK."



- **Restrict the table to your page width:**

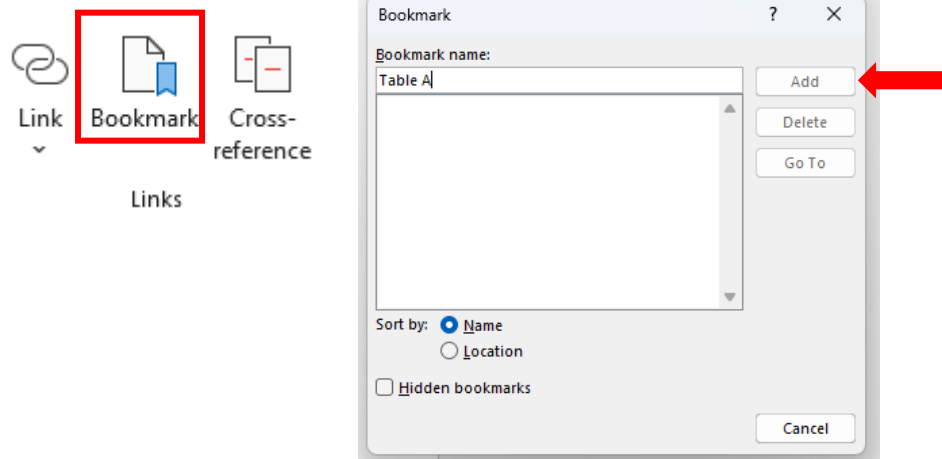
1. Select the entire table and right-click.

2. Select Table Properties” -> select the “Row tab” and uncheck “Allow row to break across pages.”



Set column header rows in tables

- Clear column headings provide context and assist navigation of the table contents.
- Bookmarks are also a useful tool.
- **Add a bookmark:**
 1. Place the cursor inside the first cell of the table.
 2. Go to “Insert” tab -> Bookmark
 3. Type a descriptive name for a bookmark (avoiding dashes, slashes, and special characters).
 4. Click “Add.”



Avoid using repeated blank characters

- Extra spaces, tabs and empty paragraphs can cause people using screen readers to repeatedly hear the word “blank.” Instead, use styles with formatting and indenting to create white space.

Avoid watermarks

- Watermarks and other background images may be hidden or confusing to people with vision or cognitive disabilities.
- Instead of using a watermark to identify a document as a “draft” or “confidential,” include the text in the document title or heading.