

Key Considerations for Accessibility

Documents and digital resources such as websites should be accessible to all individuals. The Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal laws require compliance with standards for accessibility.

Document Format

- Use the template styles to create headings and subheadings. Screen readers and other assistive technologies rely on the hierarchy of headings to navigate a document.
- Make sure that headings accurately describe content.
- Use automatic list tools to create lists rather than manually inserting bullets, numbers, or asterisks.
- Do not wrap text around an image.
- Avoid text boxes because a screen reader may not read them at the appropriate time.

Language

- Consider the language needs of your audience.
- Set the language of a document so that assistive technologies know what language the document was created in.

Font

- Sans serif fonts (such as Arial and Verdana) are the most readable on screens. Serif fonts (such as Times New Roman) are most readable in print.
- Use 12-point fonts when possible.

Color

- Color should not be the only way to discriminate between items in a figure or illustration.
 - Convey information by context, markup, graphic coding, or other means in addition to color.
- Contrast: Foreground text must be easily readable against the background color. In technical terms, the contrast ratio between the color of foreground text and the color of the background must at least be 4.5 to 1 (or 3 to 1 for 18-point font or larger).
- Do not use red because some individuals may have difficulty seeing that color.
- Identify links in a document by a method other than color, such as underlining. When creating links in a digital document, use a descriptive link rather than a URL or embedded hyperlink.

Images

- Include a detailed description of an image in a surrounding paragraph. Also add alternative text, which describes the image in detail, so that a screen reader can explain the image.
- Replace images of text with the actual text so that a screen reader can read it.

Tables

- Create clear column headings to provide context.
- Use the “Repeat Header Rows” option.
- Create the simplest table possible. Have multiple simple tables instead of a single complex table.

Graphs

- Label data points.
- Use patterns or sufficient contrast to differentiate categories in the legend. Do not rely solely on color.
- Explain the data in the main body of the document in addition to the graph.

Federal Resources

- Guidance on creating accessible digital products from the U.S. General Services Administration: <https://www.section508.gov/create>
- Tutorial videos on making documents more accessible from the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials: <https://ncrtm.ed.gov/AccessibilityResources.aspx>
- Additional guidance, checklists, and resources from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs: <https://osepideasthatwork.org/resources-grantees/508-resources>

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