Microsoft Word
Document Accessibility Checklist

This checklist is intended to support the creation of a fully accessible Microsoft Word document. The built-in Word accessibility checker will identify many issues, but not all, so it is important to use this checklist as a supplemental tool.

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Text Formatting with Styles

Use Heading Styles to Convey Structure

- ☐ Major headings in the document have been structured using Heading styles.
- ☐ Headings have been used to divide content into meaningful sections and not to format text.

Use Heading Levels in a Logical Order

- ☐ The Heading styles have been used and ordered correctly (Heading 4 is a child of Heading 3, not Heading 2).
- ☐ The Heading 1 style has been used for the **document title**.
- ☐ The Heading 1 style has been used only once in the document.
- ☐ The Heading 2 style has been used for each major heading.
- ☐ The Heading 3-9 styles have been used for each sub-heading and sub-subheading.

Use Short Titles in Headings

- ☐ Document headings are short (fewer than 20 words).

Use Styles to Format Text

- ☐ Styles have been used to format the text.
- ☐ When meaning is conveyed with formatting, the formatting toolbar buttons have not been used to format text.
- ☐ The *Emphasis* style and **Strong** styles were used to indicate importance instead of the use of the italics and bold buttons on the formatting toolbar.

Control White Space in the Document With Styles

- ☐ Document white space has been controlled within the styles that were used.
- ☐ The "Enter" key was not used to create white space within the document.

Use List Formatting

- Styles have been used to format lists in the document. The formatting toolbar buttons were not used to format lists.
- The List Number style was used for ordered lists (lists where order is important).
- The List Bullet style was used for unordered lists (lists where order is not important).

Generate a Linked Table of Contents and Add a Cover Page for Longer Documents

- An up-to-date and accurate linked table of contents has been provided if the document is more than eight pages.
- A cover page has been included if the document is more than eight pages.

Columns

Use Column Formatting Instead of Tabs and Spaces

- Columns have been created using the Column tool.
- Spaces and tabs were not used to create the appearance of columns.

Tables

Do Not Use Tables for Layout Purposes

- Tables have been used to display truly tabular data and not for layout purposes.

Do Not Draw Tables

- Tables have been created using the Table tool.
- The Draw Table tool was not used.

Do Not Use Heading Styles in Tables

- No Heading styles have been used in a table.
- Decorative formatting of the table headings (larger, bold font, etc.) has been accomplished with the formatting buttons on the toolbar.

Split Complex Tables Up Into Simpler Tables Where Appropriate

- Tables with complex structures (i.e., multiple heading rows) have been split up into smaller and simpler tables where appropriate.

Control White Space in Tables Using Table Properties

- White space within tables has been controlled by adjusting the cell margins or cell padding within the table.
- The "Enter" key was not used to create white space.

Rows of a Table Breaking Across Pages

- Every effort has been made to ensure that table rows are not allowed to break across pages.

Set Header Row(s) to Repeat in Tables

☐ The Header row(s) of a table have been set to "Repeat as header row at the top of each page" regardless if the table spans multiple pages.

Add Text Alternative for Tables

☐ Text alternatives for tables have been entered.

☐ All captions have been placed above their respective table.

Hyperlinks

Use Text for Hyperlinks Rather Than URLs

☐ Links within the document have descriptive text that describes the target destination of the link rather than the URL.

☐ The URL has been included in parentheses (but is not an active link) after the descriptive text if the document is intended for both electronic and print distribution.

Ensure Link Text is Descriptive and Makes Sense When Read Out of Context

☐ The link text used to describe the link destination makes sense when read out of context.

☐ "Click here" or "more" have not been used as link text.

Ensure Link Text Is Identical for the Same Destinations and Unique for Different Destinations

☐ Multiple links that have the same target destination have the same descriptive link text.

☐ Links with different purposes and destinations have different descriptive link text except where two links that serve different purposes need to point to the same destination.

Non-Text Elements (Pictures, Images, Charts, etc.)

Provide Text Alternatives for All Non-Text Content

☐ All non-text elements (pictures, images, clip art, shapes, SmartArt, charts) have alternative text descriptions that convey the same information to the user that the image or picture conveys except for the following:

  o The alternative text description for decorative images has been left blank.

  o If the non-text content is a test or exercise that would be invalid if presented in text, the text alternative should at least provide descriptive identification of the non-text content.

☐ Alternative text does not start with "Image of" or "Photo of."

☐ Alternative text has been put into the description field.

Watermarks: Ensure Adequate Contrast and Add Text in the Document

- Watermarks should only be used for a legitimate business purpose and must meet the following requirements:

  - When possible, text-based watermarks have been used instead of image-based watermarks.
  - The text of the watermark has been exposed by either adding the text of the watermark to the beginning of the document or by including the text in the file name.
  - Adequate contrast exists between the text color and the color of the watermark.

Provide Additional Descriptions for Complex Images/Charts

- Complex charts and graphs that require additional explanation (beyond what can be provided in the alternative text area) have been further described and explained in the surrounding text.

Place Graphics and Images "In Line With Text"

- The "wrapping style" of non-text elements has been set as "In Line with Text."

Avoid the Use of Images of Text

- Information has been presented as text rather than using images of text except where a particular presentation of text is essential to the information being conveyed (i.e., logotypes).

Do Not Use Text Boxes

- The visual effects of a text box have been achieved by using a bordered paragraph.

Provide Captions for Images When Appropriate

- Captions have been provided for all images when appropriate (e.g., when further explanation of complex images is necessary, when operating under a style guide, or when a document is optimized for print).
- All captions have been placed below their respective images.

Do Not Use Drop Caps

- Drop caps (where the first letter of a paragraph is a large decorative letter) have not been used.

Headers and Footers

Observe the Following Rules for Header/Footer Content

☐ Content within the header/footer area conforms to the following criteria:

- o **Acceptable:** running headers, logos, page numbers, and copyright messages.
- o **Unacceptable:** document title, author or contact information, date of document update or document version number (unless the information has also been included on the cover page or at the beginning of the first page of the document).

Appropriate Use of Color

Do Not Use Color Alone to Convey Information

☐ Information or emphasis conveyed with color is also available or conveyed without color.

Document Metadata

Use a Concise File Name

☐ The document file name is concise, generally limited to 20-30 characters, and makes the file's contents clear.

Insert Appropriate Document Properties

☐ The fields for Title, Subject, Author, and Keywords have been completed appropriately within the document properties.

Set the Language Properties for the Document

☐ The language properties for the document have been set.

Accessibility Checker

☐ The Accessibility Checker was run on the completed document.
☐ Identified issues have been addressed and corrected.

Tagged PDF

Create a Tagged PDF

☐ The PDF creation process was followed to ensure the output of a tagged PDF.

This document was adapted, with permission, from the CSU Accessible Microsoft Word 2010 Document Checklist 1.0 developed by the Accessible Technology Initiative California State University.