



Disability Inclusion Task Team



Accessible Word, PowerPoint and Excel Documents

Rationale

Persons with disabilities are the largest minority group in the world, representing an estimated 16 percent of the world's population, or approximately 1.3 billion people. About 80 percent are of working age. They are a diverse, heterogeneous population that face discrimination and barriers that makes it more challenging for them to access equal opportunities.

Mainstreaming disability inclusion means a consistent and systematic approach to disability inclusion in all areas of operations and programming. As technology covers a great part of the work environment, maintaining information access for persons with disabilities is something that should be taken into consideration. Considering that some persons with disabilities use assistive technology to receive information and work such as text-to-text speech, speech recognition software, screen readers and magnifiers, and braille devices, creating accessible content and office documents should be prioritized within the offices. For this reason, this checklist has been prepared to easily guide accessibility and disability inclusion efforts in our daily work. This checklist provides guidance on creating accessible online documents such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Key terminology and definitions

Accessibility: The degree to which both the built environment and information can be used or accessed by as wide a group of people as possible. Accessibility is a precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. Without access to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, persons with disabilities would not have equal opportunities for participation in their respective societies¹.

Assistive technology: Any information and communications technology, product, device, equipment, and related service used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with specific needs or disabilities².

Inclusive Design: Design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference³.

Persons with disabilities: Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others⁴.

¹ General Comment No. 2 - Article 9: Accessibility.

² ICT & Digital Accessibility for the BOS, 2021.

³ [What is inclusive design?](#), Inclusive Design Research Center, OCAD University.

⁴ CRPD, Article 1 – Purpose.



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Reasonable accommodation: Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms⁵.

Universal design: The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design⁶.

Standards/actions around implementing each thematic issue

General Tips for Creating Accessible Content on Word

- ✓ Use a hierarchical structure with headings/subheadings using the built-in “Styles”.
- ✓ Use clear and descriptive section titles.
- ✓ Do not use text boxes or floating objects.
- ✓ Keep text left-aligned to keep spaces between words even.

⁵ CRPD, Article 2 - Definitions.

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- ✓ Use a Sans Serif font (such as Calibri, Arial, Roboto).
- ✓ Use appropriate font size; a font size of 10 point and smaller is not accessible.
- ✓ Use the “Automatic” text colour.
- ✓ Use high foreground and background colour contrast, 4.5.1 for normal text (see how here).
- ✓ Do not use colour only to highlight. Add heading styles or underline etc.
- ✓ Use bold for strong emphasis.
- ✓ Provide alternative text (alt text) to all visual elements (images/illustrations/graphs/charts). Note: Alt text concisely describes what is shown in the graphic. Alt text should avoid beginning with “picture of” or “image of”. Alt text should be below 125 characters. Alt text will not automatically show in a document but will show when mousing over the image or if using screen readers.
- ✓ Mark as decorative visual elements that do not carry any meaning.
- ✓ Avoid showing URLs; display meaningful and concise hyperlink text.



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- ✓ Use simple document layouts.
- ✓ Remove blank lines and unnecessary tabs and spaces.
- ✓ Avoid using tables to create/control page layout.
- ✓ In tables, use descriptive headers for rows/columns in tables.
- ✓ In tables, avoid merging or splitting cells.
- ✓ In tables, avoid empty cells.
- ✓ Avoid putting valuable information in headers and footers, as screen readers will ignore them.

Tips for Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations

- ✓ Test your presentation with the built-in Accessibility Checker of PowerPoint.
- ✓ Use built-in templates.
- ✓ Chose "accessible template" when creating a new PowerPoint presentation.
- ✓ Give each slide a unique title.
- ✓ Avoid overcrowding the slide with text.



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- ✓ Mark pictures that do not add content as decorative.
- ✓ Do not use animations.
- ✓ Ensure correct reading order of slides and slides’ content.
- ✓ Avoid using tables.
- ✓ Use Sans Serif fonts (such as Arial, Calibri, Roboto).
- ✓ Use 18-point font or larger.
- ✓ Underline color-coded items or add verbal descriptions.
- ✓ Save your presentation in a different format (without pictures/smart art/visuals) if you intend to transfer that to a braille device.



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- ✓ Always test accessibility with screen readers, for activating the built-in Windows screen reader on Windows 10, press ctrl/windows/enter.
- ✓ For the free NVDA screen reader, go to: www.nvdaaccess.org.

Tips for Creating Accessible Excel Documents

- ✓ Avoid protecting/locking sheets, as it may present an accessibility issue.
- ✓ Use a simple table structure, avoid splitting or merging cells.
- ✓ Make sure tables do not have blank rows/columns.
- ✓ Give each spreadsheet tab a meaningful name.
- ✓ Use appropriate description and alt text for all images and tables.
- ✓ Adjust column widths and row heights.

Note: Make sure to share the document with persons with different disabilities to verify the document before releasing.

Useful resources/links/guidance on disability inclusion



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- [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy - Putting Words into Action, UNSSC Blueline Course](#) (only available for UN staff)
- [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [UN Training Package on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Useful resources/links/guidance on digital accessibility

- [WAI - Web Accessibility Initiative](#)
- [WebAIM - Web accessibility in mind](#)
- [CBM Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#)
- [Web Accessibility Challenges for the Deaf-Blind](#)
- [Inclusive Design Principles: Be Consistent \(TPGI\)](#)
- [Microsoft accessibility settings](#)
- [Apple accessibility settings](#)
- [UN Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines](#)
- [An Introduction to Accessibility and Inclusive Design](#)
- [Introduction to Web Accessibility](#)
- [Digital Accessibility for the Modern Workplace](#)
- [Accessibility for Web Design](#)
- [Creating Accessible PDFs](#)
- [UX Foundations: Accessibility](#)
- [Designing with the WCAG 2.2 Guidelines](#)