

# Creating Accessible Word Documents

Creating accessible electronic documents is important to ensure access by persons with disabilities and to protect George Mason against legal action. Accessibility to class documents is protected by both Federal and State law by all students; giving equal participation and opportunity.

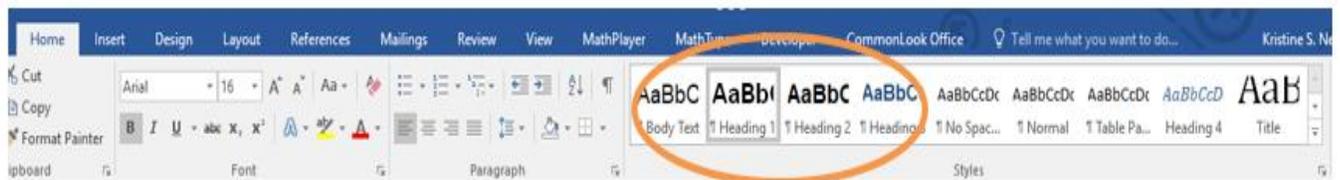
## Document Structure (Styles/Headings)

### Headings

Assigning headings in documents is an important accessibility feature. Headings act much like an outline. Moving from heading to heading is the number one way people who use assistive technologies navigate to the section or content they need. Use Headings to provide sequential and relational understanding.

#### Implement:

- Highlight text and select appropriate 'Heading' from top menu bar on HOME tab.
- The first Heading in a document should be assigned as a Heading 1.



- There should be no less than one heading per 2 pages (per built-in MS Office accessibility check guidelines)
- Additionally, the application of Headings in a document leads to the option of offering a 'linked' Table of Contents.

### Styles

Styles are simply pre-defined formats for how text appears in a document.

#### Implement:

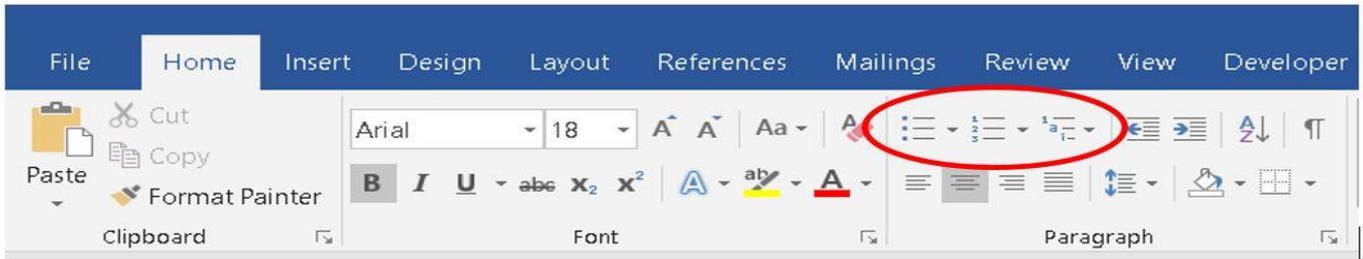
- Select the text you want to format or place your cursor at the beginning of the line.
- In the **Styles** group on the **Home** tab, click the **More** drop-down arrow.
- Select the desired style from the drop-down menu.

### Lists

Using the list formatting tool allows a screen reader to determine the list length, number and organization.

#### Implement:

- Select the type of list from the formatting menu.



## Appropriate Font and Size

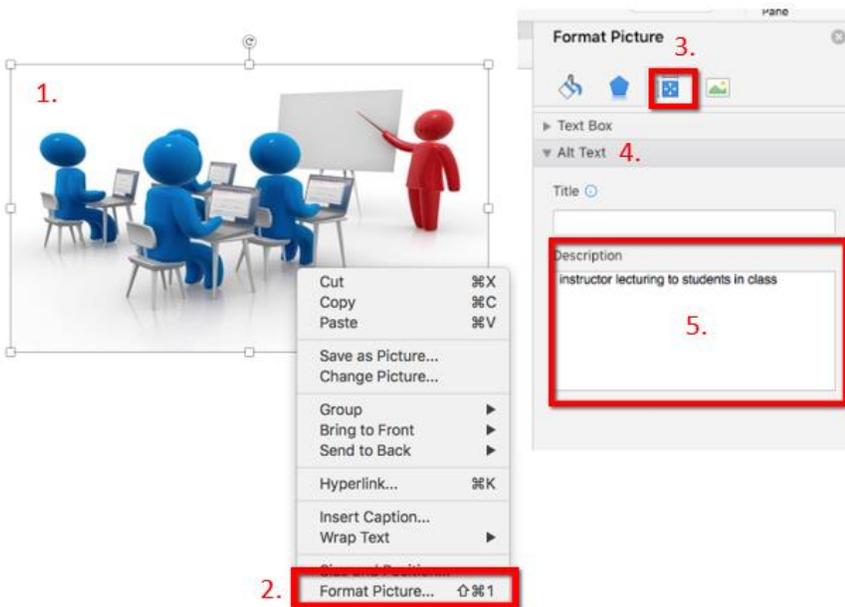
Although there are many fonts to select when creating a document, it is important to choose those that are recommended for both readability and availability across computer platforms. It is suggested that selecting one of the following sans serif font styles make documents accessible to the largest audience possible: ***Arial & Verdana in size 12 pt are good options.***

## Add Alternative Text

Images, charts, and objects within documents should be described using text. The alternative text is read aloud by assistive technology called *screen readers*. This provides an understanding of images and graphics for individuals who may have visual or cognitive disabilities.

### Implement:

- right click on image
- select alt text
- type description of image



## Use Appropriate Color Contrast

Text or iconic color that does not strongly contrast with the background make reading difficult for people who have low-vision or color-blindness.

### Implement:

- Never use color by itself to convey information that is important in a document. If color is used, always provide an alternative way to allow for understanding.
- Offering both ways allows people who have color vision issues the opportunity to distinguish meaning between colors.
- Use a color contrast checker such as [Color Contrast Analyser](#). This free software download will assist in selecting good color combinations.

## Accessible Tables

Tables can be difficult for individuals who use assistive technology to read. Creating structured tables is helpful.

### Implement:

- Select the row that includes the category titles.
- Right click the row and select '**Table Properties**'.
- Click the Row tab, and check the checkbox that says, "**Repeat as header row at the top of each page**".
- Do not merge or split cells.
- Make the Header row remain on each page if the table is long.

## Use Meaningful Hyperlink Text

A person who uses assistive technologies can navigate a document by moving from hyperlink to hyperlink, or by accessing a list of all the links in a document. Thus, hyperlinked text should provide a clear description of the link destination and avoid the use of phrases such as, 'Click Here' does not provide meaning.

### Implement:

- Highlight hyperlink.
- Go to Insert and then hyperlink.
- Add text to display.

## Check Accessibility

To check a document for accessibility, Microsoft Word provides a built-in accessibility feature.

### Implement:

- File Tab
- Info
- Check for issues
- Check Accessibility
- Results will appear with items needing attention

**Info**

Protect Document  
Control what types of changes people can make to this document.

Inspect Document  
Before publishing this file, be aware that the following items may not be visible to all recipients:  
■ Document properties and author information  
■ Characters formatted as hidden text

Check for Issues

Inspect Document  
Check the document for hidden properties or personal information.

Check Accessibility  
Check the document for content that people with disabilities might find difficult to read.

Check Compatibility  
Check for features not supported by earlier versions of Word.

**Accessibility Checker**

**Inspection Results**

**ERRORS**

- Missing Alt Text  
Table
- No Header Row Specified  
Table

**WARNINGS**

- Blank Table Rows or Columns  
Table Column  
Table Row

**Additional Information**

**Why Fix:**  
A table header row contains column headings that provide context and aid navigation of the data in the table.

Select and fix each issue listed above to make this document accessible for people with disabilities.