# **Temple University Center for the Advancement of Teaching Logo**

# **Accessibility How-To:**

# **Creating Clear Structures in Documents, Tables, and Presentations**

The structure and organization of documents, tables, and slide presentations ensure that students can navigate and understand the materials we provide using their preferred tools. Clear structure and consistent navigation support students who rely on screen readers to access and understand the content. This guide will show you how to create headings, accessible PDFs, and tables, as well as how to create accessible and well-structured PowerPoint Presentations.

## **What are Headings?**

Headings are structural elements that:

* Organize information into clear sections.
* Enhance readability by breaking up large text blocks and making documents easier to skim.
* Assist readers in quickly finding relevant content.
* Are titles or phrases that mark the beginning of a new section within a word processing document.
* Is a text label used to define sections and subsections of content within a document.

### **The Hierarchy of Headings**

A document’s heading structure serves as an outline, organizing content in a logical sequence that guides the reader. This heading hierarchy helps readers understand the relationships between sections of text and ensures screen readers read content in the correct order.

### **Heading Ranks**

**H1** is used for the main title of a page or document (usually only one per page).

**H2** is used for major sections of content.

**H3** is used for subsections within an H1 section.

**H4, H5** are used for further divisions of content, but are generally less common.

### **Best Practices for Using Headings in Word Docs**

* Use a logical hierarchy
* Only one Title per document
* Descriptive, meaningful titles
* Be consistent. Use the same capitalization, color, and formatting for headings throughout your document.
* Keep headings short.
* Do not overuse headings.

## **Adding Headings**

### **Steps for adding headings in Word**

To add a heading style:

* Type the text you want into a Word document.
* Select a sentence that you want to add a header to.
* Select Home > Styles (or press Alt+H, then L), and then select the heading you want, such as the Heading 1 button.
* Word applies a font and color change to help make it clear that this is Heading 1 of the article. The next heading type is Heading 2.



 [Adding a heading in a Word Document (link)](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-a-heading-in-a-word-document-3eb8b917-56dc-4a17-891a-a026b2c790f2)

### **Creating Headings in Word Processing Applications Other than Word**

#### **Google Docs**

* Google Docs does not have a built-in accessibility checker, but there are third party apps you can use.
	+ For example, [Grackle Docs Extension (link)](https://workspace.google.com/marketplace/app/grackle_docs/1085622905455)
* If you open an accessible word document as a Google doc it may not be fully accessible due to limitations in Google Docs' accessibility checker and potential issues with complex table structures, so it is best to double-check and adjust in Google Docs to ensure full accessibility, especially if you need to make significant edits to the document.
* When you download an accessible Word document from Google Drive it downloads as a Word doc and maintains its accessibility. However, if the Word doc was edited while it is in Drive, it is always a good rule to recheck the accessibility in Word.
* [Inserting Proper Headings in Google Docs (video link)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cCAUcLPI0c&list=PLCRRhQ4ae_Abn1oDlhMQAE63YG7Ur-O0F)

#### **Apple Pages**

* Apple Pages does not have a built-in accessibility checker.
* You can save a Pages document as a PDF file and use Adobe to check the accessibility.

## **Creating Accessible PDFs**

* The fastest way and easiest way to make sure your PDF is accessible is to run the Accessibility Checker before you generate or save your document as a PDF.
* [Save Microsoft Word Documents as an Accessible PDFs (website)](https://www.msudenver.edu/teaching-learning-design/instructional-accessibility/guides-resources/word/save-microsoft-word-documents-as-accessible-pdfs/) is a resource from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Design at Metropolitan State University of Denver. IT contains videos and step by step instructions for saving an accessible word document as an accessible pdf.
* [Create and verify PDF accessibility](https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/create-verify-pdf-accessibility.html#:~:text=Open%20the%20PDF%2C%20and%20then,panel%2C%20select%20Check%20for%20accessibility.) (website) using Adobe. At Temple University the Adobe Creative cloud (a set of applications and services from Adobe) is available on the TU Portal under the TU Application tab.

## **Creating Tables with Accessible Headings**

Accessible tables are important because they allow people with disabilities, particularly those using screen readers, to easily navigate and understand the information presented within a table, ensuring equal access to data and content on a website or document, which is crucial for inclusivity and user experience.

### **Accessible Tables Do’s**

* Clearly mark the first row and column of a table as headers to help screen readers navigate the data properly.
* Add a table Caption
* Use header rows and columns:
* Fill empty cells.
* If a cell is meant to be empty, include a placeholder text like "N/A" to avoid confusion for screen reader users.
* Logical reading order.
* Ensure that the table data can be read linearly and makes sense when navigated with a screen reader.
* Use appropriate font size and contrast.

### **Accessible Tables Don’ts**

* Do not repeat headers in caption.
* Do not rely solely on color to convey important information in a table as users with visual impairments may not be able to see the distinction.
* Don't use screenshots of tables
* Don’t Merge Cells

### **Sample Table**

**Title:**
Philadelphia Weather Data



**Summary:** *This table shows the average temperature for Philadelphia April 10 to 14, 2025 and the amount of precipitation.*

### **Descriptive Alt Text for a Table**

Provide alternative text to describe the table content for screen reader users.

* Example Alt Text for Table above:
	+ *A table showing average temperatures and precipitation for Philadelphia, PA in April*

## **Clear Structure in PPTs**

The article [Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible for people with disabilities](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25#bkmk_bestwin) gives you step-by-step instructions and best practices for making your PowerPoint presentations accessible and unlock your content to everyone, including people with disabilities.

### **Use an Accessible Template in PowerPoint**

Use one of the accessible PowerPoint templates to make sure that your slide design, colors, contrast, and fonts are accessible for all audiences. They are also designed so that screen readers can more easily read the slide content.

1. To find an accessible template, select **File** > **New**.
2. In the **Search for Online templates and themes** text field, type accessible templates and press Enter.
3. In the search results, select a suitable template.
4. In the template preview, select **Create**.

### **Slide Titles**

* Sets the tone and conveys the main point of the slide.
* Slide titles should be unique, descriptive, and clearly state the content of each slide
* Allows users with screen readers to easily navigate and understand the presentation structure



### **Adding a Slide Title**

* Select a slide layout option with a title.

**Or**

* Insert a text box that will function as the title for the slide and enter a title.
* Click Review and select Check Accessibility
* Click Missing Slide Title and select the appropriate slide.
* Go to the Slide Title dropdown menu and select “Set as Slide Title.”

### **Reading Order**

The reading order in PowerPoint is a way of putting the various elements on each slide into the correct order. This enables students with a screen reader to read information in the correct order. In PowerPoint, the preset layouts all have the correct reading order already. However, if you have added any content or rearranged the content on the page, it is important that you check the reading order again before sharing the document.

* The content in your slides needs to be in the correct reading order for when it is read aloud. You can view and edit the reading order under Review > Check Accessibility > Reading Order Pane.
* Objects are listed in the order that the screen reader will read them. The number next to each object tells you which order they are in.
* Objects without a number will be skipped because they are marked as decorative.
* If the objects are in the wrong order, people using screen readers will have a difficult time understanding them.
* Drag the objects up and down to rearrange them.

### **View and edit the reading order:**

* Review > Check Accessibility > Reading Order Pane
* Objects are listed in the order that the screen reader will read them.

 [Make slides easier to read by using the Reading Order Pane.](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-slides-easier-to-read-by-using-the-reading-order-pane-863b5c1c-4f19-45ec-96e6-93a6457f5e1c)