­­­­­­­­Uplift Logo



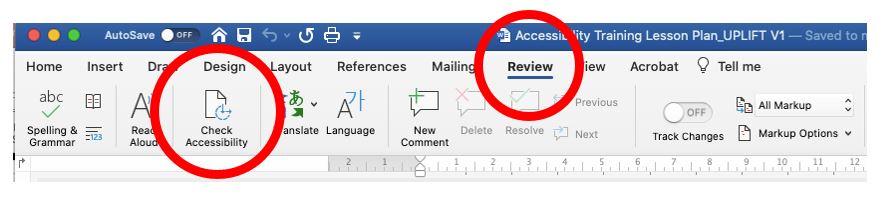
Accessible Documents Fundamentals

Computer screen showing the review tab and Check Accessibility button.

An accessible document is prepared in a way that people using assistive technology can understand the information. Use these tips and best practices to UPLIFT your content.

Accessibility features are integrated into all Microsoft documents including Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint.

Before finishing any document or sending any email, press Check Accessibility! Microsoft will alert you to anything in your document that is not accessible, and why and how to fix it.



The concept and branding graphics included in this document were created by Bahaa Harmouche and Jenna Lange. For any inquiries email Bahaa.Harmouche@gov.bc.ca or Jenna.Lange@gov.bc.ca

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# Use Contrast

For clear visibility in your document there needs to be enough of a contrast between the text and the background colour.

## What to do:

1. Avoid poor colour combinations

* Green & Red, Green & Brown, Green & Grey
* Blue & Purple, Blue & Green, Blue & Grey
* Light Green & Yellow, Green & Black

1. Use both colours and symbols

Example of colour and symbol usage a green circle with a check mark in it and a red circle with a cross check in it.

1. Use patterns and textures to show contrast
2. Avoid busy background
3. Keep it minimal

## Who does it affect?

**Mei** has astigmatism which causes blurred vision. Light grey font on a white background is difficult for her to read.

**Amari** is colour blind. They have difficulty seeing links that are written in blue but are not underlined. Underlining a link makes it easier for them to see.

**Jeff** likes to read outside. The glare from the sun makes it hard for him to read the screen on his phone. Higher colour contrast text is easier for him to see.

## Resources

[Accessibility & Inclusion Toolkit – Colour and Contrast](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/home/accessible-government/toolkit/document-creation/colour-contrast)

[Colour Contrast Analyser](https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/)

[Microsoft PowerPoint Grayscale Feature](https://www.webucator.com/how-to/how-change-the-view-grayscale-microsoft-powerpoint.cfm)  
[NoCoffee Vision Simulator](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/nocoffee/jjeeggmbnhckmgdhmgdckeigabjfbddl)

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# Plain Language

Using plain language helps you write clear, easy to understand content for every audience and helps people find what they need and understand what they find.

## What to do?

1. Be clear and concise:

* Cut unnecessary words
* Use short, everyday words
* Avoid jargon & acronyms
* Use the active voice
* Write in short sentences

1. Use the present tense
2. Use action verbs
3. Explain difficult words
4. Keep paragraphs to one topic
5. Be consistent
6. Be specific

Use inclusive language only. Write for grade 6-8 level. Use technical or specialized language only when your audience needs or expects it.

## Who does it affect?

**Joowon** has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). He has a hard time reading long documents and remembering the details. Plain language helps him recall what he has read.

**Salma** speaks 3 languages. English is her third language. Plain language in emails helps her respond faster and more accurately.

**Sandra** is a slow reader. Bullets and short sentences help her go through a document faster.

## Resources

[Content Metrics](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/policies-procedures/web-content-development-guides/writing-for-the-web/content-design/content-metrics)

[Hemingway App](http://www.hemingwayapp.com/) & [Readable](https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/)

[Gender Decoder](http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/)

[Inclusive Language and Terms](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/home/accessible-government/toolkit/audience-diversity/inclusive-language-and-terms)

[Plain Language Course](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/policies-procedures/web-content-development-guides/writing-for-the-web/plain-language-guide/plain-language-course)

[Plain Language Guide](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/policies-procedures/web-content-development-guides/writing-for-the-web/plain-language-guide)

[Web Style Guide](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/policies-procedures/web-content-development-guides/writing-for-the-web/web-style-guide)

[Words Matter](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/careers/all-employees/working-with-others/words-matter.pdf)



# Links

## What to do?

Use meaningful hyperlinks – hyperlink the keywords that describe where the link goes:

* Use specific and descriptive language
* Make it part of the content/context
* Do not use “click here”
* Do not use the word “link” in your hyperlink
* Do not use ”read more”

**For example:**

Poor link: There are several things to consider when creating accessible link text. Learn more. Meaningful link: There are several things to consider when creating accessible link text.

Insert screen tips that provide a description when your cursor hovers over a hyperlink.

How to:   
Insert > Link > ScreenTip > ScreenTip Text > OK

## Who does it affect?

**Yazmin** is blind and uses a screen reader to read documents. She needs hyperlinks to be descriptive so she knows how to navigate the content.

**Alejandro** is a very busy ADM, and needs to scan a document quickly. Screen tips helps him decide if he needs to click on a link.

**Maika** is a university researcher. Meaningful hyperlinks help her collect important resources to embed in her research document.

## Resources

Microsoft’s video on creating accessible links

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# Images

## What to do?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Insert only meaningful images:**   * Choose relevant and clear images * Only use images that add to the text content * Make sure the images are not culturally insensitive to any audience * Do not use images of text unless it is essential to do so for visual presentation (logos and infographics are considered essential) * Think about contrast | **Add alternative text to all images:**   * Alt text describes the information or function of digital images. * When writing alt text:   + Convey content & function   + Be succinct   + Avoid “image of” or “photo of”   + Think how you would describe the image to someone over the phone * All images must have alt text, unless they are purely decorative (then click “mark as decorative”) |

## Who does it affect?

**Kala** has low vision and uses a screen reader to read web pages. Alternative text provides her with details that explain images.

**Dorota** lives in a rural community and doesn’t have a fast internet connection. They don’t download images because it takes too much time and data. Alt text allows them to understand the image without seeing it.

**Mike** is looking for an image using a search engine. Using descriptive alt text improves his search results.

## Resources

[Accessibility & Inclusion Toolkit - Using Images and Alt Text](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/home/accessible-government/toolkit/document-creation/images)

Microsoft’s video on [improving accessibility with alt text](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/video-improve-accessibility-with-alt-text-9c57ee44-bb48-40e3-aad4-7647fc1dba51?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)



# Fonts + Headings

Some text is easier for people to read:

* Use a size 11pt or larger (& size 18pt or larger for PowerPoint)
* Use a Sans serif font such as BC Sans, Calibri or Arial
* Increase line spacing (i.e. 1.25 or greater)
* Fonts with line spacing, letter spacing (BC Sans) and right size are more readable and legible. Easier on the eye for people who have low vision and/or dyslexia.

## Hierarchy & Headings:

People and assistive technologies scan written content looking for headings. Headings provide context for the reader to decide if the information is relevant.

* Use a ‘Heading 1 (H1)’ at the start of your document. Only use H1 once
* Break content into manageable chunks with ‘Heading 2 (H2)’ to create sub-headings
* Write short headings that describe the content using keywords
* Use sentence case for headings (start with a capital letter and the rest should be lower case)
* Use bullet point lists to make content easier to scan. Only use numbered lists to show ordered steps

## Who does this affect?

**Alex** has low vision due to age and small fonts are hard for them to read.

**Fernanda** is blind and uses a screen reader to read Word documents. She needs documents to include headings and structure, so she can easily find the information she is looking for.

**Aliya** has dyslexia. Serif fonts and all caps words are illegible and hard for her to read. Sans Serif fonts with good letter spacing like BC Sans makes reading easy.

## Resources

BC Sans Typeface

Microsoft’s video on improving heading accessibility



# Tables

## What to do?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Use table headers to clearly identify the content in rows and columns * Avoid merging, splitting or leaving blank cells in a table * Add alt text to your table * Add titles to tables | **\*Tip:** To check the accessibility of your table, try navigating all the way through your table using only the tab key. If you can tab smoothly through the table, cell by cell, and row by row, in the right order, a screen reader should have no trouble with it. |

Examples of 3 types of table headers: a table with a header raw, a table with a column row header and lastly a table with a row and column header.

## Who does it affect?

**Greg** is colour blind. He is looking at a table that only uses colour (red, yellow, and green) to separate data. Without text in the table he can’t tell the different parts of the table apart.

**Anju** is blind and uses a screen reader. She is using a budgeting spreadsheet that doesn’t have proper column headings. She doesn’t know if the amounts are expenses or not so she doesn’t know if the total is correct.

**Rowan**’s eyes are strained and he’s trying to look at his computer screen less often. He is using a screen reader to listen to content in a table. There are no merged or split cells so he is able to understand everything clearly in the right order.

## Resources

[Accessibility & Inclusion Toolkit - Using Tables in Excel](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/home/accessible-government/toolkit/documents/microsoft-excel" \l "tables)

Microsoft’s video on [Creating accessible tables in Word](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/video-create-accessible-tables-in-word-cb464015-59dc-46a0-ac01-6217c62210e5?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)