

# PDF Accessibility Checklist

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## Scanned PDFs:

PDF files that have been created by scanning a document might not be accessible. Scanned documents that do not include Optical Character Recognition may be modified in Adobe.

## Accessibility Checker:

Before sharing your document, run the built-in Accessibility Checker to help identify potential problems with your document. ([Accessibility Checker](#)) To initiate the Accessibility Checker:

1. Use the “Edit PDF” tool to upload your document.
2. Select the Tools Tab and launch the “Accessibility Checker” (earlier versions may refer to this tool as the “Full Check Tool”)
3. From the Accessibility Checker Options, choose “Start Checking”
4. Review the finding in the Accessibility Checker Panel (on the left)

## Reading Order and Tags:

Assistive devices rely on a document’s reading order to convey information to its operator. To ensure the intended reading order, appropriate tags must be applied to the document content. ([Reading Order Tool](#))

- **Heading & Paragraph Structure:** To make it easier for assistive devices to read or navigate through your documents, use logical heading order and the built-in formatting tools in Word. Be sure to follow logical order using Heading 1, Heading 2, and then Heading 3 etc. Organize the information in your documents into small chunks. Ideally, each heading would include only a few paragraphs. ([Apply a Heading Tag](#))
- **Figures, Figure/ Caption, and Background Artifacts:** You will need to add alt-text descriptions for all non-text elements in your document or mark them as Background/Artifacts. Avoid using text in images as the only method for communicating information. If you use an image with text, repeat that text in the document. In alt text, briefly describe the image and mention the existence of the text and its intent. ([Figure Alternative Text](#))
- **Tables:** Tables should be used to represent tabular data, not to modify layout. Avoid merging, nesting, or splitting cells. Cells in your table should be defined as either Table Headers or Table Data. ([Tables and Table Editor](#))

## Color Contrast

- **Contrast Ratio:** Documents with high level of contrast between text and background, more people can see and use the content. The WCAG AA guidelines state that the text and background colors should have a minimum 4.5:1 ratio. ([Web Aim Color Contrast Checker](#))

## Links

- **Clickable Descriptive Text:** Links should convey clear and accurate information about the destination. Avoid “click here”, “more”, “click for details” as they are ambiguous when read out of context. Do not leave the link text in its “https://www” format. The same goes for email addresses; you should embed the coding. ([Create and Edit Links](#))

## Text Readability

- **Text Justification:** Left aligned text is the most readable type of text.
- **Emphasizing Text:** Do not rely on color, bold, italics, or underline for emphasis. Assistive devices do not read this differently; this is only a visual cue. In all cases, reserve the use of underlining for web links.
- **Lists:** Use the built-in list tools. Consider using number or outline lists when order matters and bulleted lists otherwise.

## Document Title:

- A document’s title is the first thing assistive technology will recognize and read after opening a document. It can be but is not necessarily the same as a document’s file name. The title should be succinct and describe the purpose of the document. ([Document Properties](#))

## Document Language:

- Setting the language of the file allows some assistive devices to switch to the appropriate language before providing the content to the operator. ([Document Language](#))