

# MS Word accessibility checklist

The W3C **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) are an international standard for making websites, applications and other digital content (like MS Word and PDF files) accessible to people with disability. Accessibility is a mandatory standard for government agencies.

The following checklist maps WCAG accessibility techniques against the extensive WCAG 2.2 success criteria (updated October 2023). Techniques provide examples of various ways to meet the WCAG. Applying these techniques helps to meet user needs.

<b>Project</b>	
<b>Asset / File</b>	

<b>Date</b>	
-------------	--

## WCAG success criteria

Ref.	WCAG 2.2 criterion	Technique	✓ or Notes
1.1.1	Non-text content	Provide text alternatives for non-text content; photos and other graphics can't be interpreted by assistive technologies	
		Provide full descriptions of complex images and charts; use alt text, but expand body text if needed	
		Mark decorative non-text context as decorative	
		Avoid watermarks; they render text more difficult to read	
1.3.1	Info and relationships	Use in-built heading levels 1 to 6 only; assistive technology only reads 'true' headings	
		Use in-built list bulleted and numbered list styles; assistive technology only reads 'true' lists	
		Mark the first rows of tables as table headers	
		Bookmark data table column headers	
		Bookmark data table row headers	
		Avoid tables with merged cells or double column/row headers; simplify tables to be 'square' (one cell per column and row)	
1.3.2	Meaningful sequence	Apply plain language principles to sequence content logically	
		Run images in-line with text; floating images may not be read by assistive technology	
		Avoid text boxes; text boxes will not be read by assistive technology	



Ref.	WCAG 2.2 criterion	Technique	✓ or Notes
		Avoid multiple columns unless the output is intended for PDF only; subsequent columns will not be read by assistive technology	
<b>1.3.3</b>	Sensory characteristics	Use additional cues to distinguish components – consider shape, colour, size, location and orientation	
<b>1.4</b>	Distinguishable	Make it easy for users to see content; use white space to aid visual recognition	
<b>1.4.1</b>	Use of colour	Ensure colour is not the only means of conveying information	
<b>1.4.3</b>	Contrast (minimum)	Standard text (12 point) has a contrast ratio of at least 4.5: 1 to the background; 11 point text is OK for tables and notes	
		Large text (18 point) has a contrast ratio of at least 3:1 to the background	
		The colour scheme has a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1	
<b>1.4.4</b>	Resizing text	Text can be resized up to 200% without assistive technology (this doesn't apply to captions and images of text)	
<b>1.4.5</b>	Images of text	Don't use images of text	
<b>1.4.12</b>	Text spacing	Use a line height at least 1.5 times the font size; use paragraph spacing at least 2 times the font size	
<b>2.4</b>	Navigable	Include a table of contents generated from in-built heading levels	
		Provide document hyperlinks for ease of navigation	
		Use tables to set out form fields and checkboxes	
		Bookmark all form controls	
<b>2.4.2</b>	Page title	Add a descriptive document title that helps with the topic and purpose	
<b>2.4.4</b>	Link purpose (in context)	Purpose can be determined from link text alone or from link text plus context	
<b>2.4.6</b>	Headings and labels	Headings and labels describe topic or purpose	
<b>2.4.10</b>	Section headings	Use section headings to organise the content	
<b>3.1</b>	Understandable	Text content is readable and understandable	
<b>3.1.3</b>	Unusual words	Define and explain unusual words, idioms and jargon	
<b>3.1.4</b>	Abbreviations	Define and explain abbreviations	



Ref.	WCAG 2.2 criterion	Technique	✓ or Notes
3.2.3	Navigation mechanisms	Repeated navigational mechanisms and signposting use the same relative order	
3.3.2	Labels or instructions	Provide labels or instructions when content requires user input	

See <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/> and <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/quickref/>

## WCAG plain-text techniques

Ref.	WCAG 2.2 technique	✓ or Notes
T1	Use standard text formatting for paragraphs; web content uses fewer formatting styles than Word	
T2	Use standard text formatting conventions for lists	
T3	Use standard text formatting conventions for headings	

See <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Techniques/>

## MS Word strategies

Ref.	MS Word	Technique	✓ or Notes
W1	Forms	Use 'Legacy' controls when creating interactive forms; JAWS does not currently work with new MS form controls	
W2	Forms	Identify required fields (fields that must be filled); include 'required' in labels and help text	
W3	Forms	Put form instructions in sections that can be individually protected; lock form areas and leave instructional text unlocked	
W4	Link text	Make link text longer and more descriptive to minimise the need for fine motor control	
W5	Link text	Provide ScreenTip help text for links	
W6	Navigation	Remove consecutive blank paragraph marks (called pilcrows; this avoids empty artifacts in PDF conversion)	
W7	Navigation	Insert page breaks on the last line of text (this avoids empty artifacts in PDF conversion)	
W8	Table alt text	Add alt text to tables to provide further information	



**Comments on any techniques not applied**

Ref.	Comment



## PDF accessibility checklist

The W3C **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) are an international standard for making websites, applications and other digital content (like MS Word and PDF files) accessible to people with disability. Accessibility is a mandatory standard for government agencies.

The following checklist maps WCAG accessibility techniques against the extensive WCAG 2.2 success criteria (updated October 2023). Techniques provide examples of various ways to meet the WCAG. Applying these techniques helps to meet user needs.

<b>Project</b>	
<b>Asset / File</b>	

<b>Date</b>	
-------------	--

### PDF tests and techniques

Ref.	Topic	Technique	✓ or Notes
<b>Overview</b>	Accessibility tools	Use Adobe Acrobat Pro accessibility checks and tools	
	Properties	Use a descriptive filename	
		Description > Include a document title	
		Description > Advanced > Tagged PDF: Yes	
		Security > Document Restrictions Summary > Content copying for accessibility > Allowed	
		Initial View > Show: Document Title	
	Language	Advanced > Reading Options > Language: EN-AU	
	Portfolios	Test each PDF, file or attachment in a portfolio individually	
	Scripts	Remove or modify script or content that compromises accessibility	
<b>Media</b>	Audio	Provide complete and accurate transcripts for audio-only objects	
	Colour	Duplicate the meanings of colours and other sensory characteristics in the text	
	Colour contrast	4.5:1 contrast ratio for standard text (12 point)	
		3:1 contrast ratio for large text (18 point)	
	Flashing objects	No flashing objects	
	Multimedia	Include complete and synchronised descriptions	



Ref.	Topic	Technique	✓ or Notes
		Include correct and synchronised captions	
	Video	Include complete and accurate text description	
<b>Versions</b>	Alternative version	Provide an up-to-date alternative accessible version	

## WCAG PDF techniques

Ref.	Topic	WCAG 2.2 PDF technique	✓ or Notes
<b>P1</b>	Text alternatives	Apply descriptive text alternatives to figures, images and objects that convey their purpose and function	
		Captions describe the purpose and function of associated images or objects	
		Check that any MS Word alt text has imported correctly	
<b>P2</b>	Bookmarks	Review bookmarks – a PDF conversion may render bookmarks in unexpected ways or orders	
		Create further bookmarks as needed	
		Delete duplicate and empty bookmarks, including duplicate tags e.g. <Table><Table>	
<b>P3</b>	Reading order	Ensure correct tab and reading order	
<b>P4</b>	Decorative content	Tag decorative content as ‘Artifact’	
<b>P5</b>	Forms	Indicate required form controls	
<b>P6</b>	Tables	Mark up tables using table elements, including removing graphics tags on shaded table header rows	
<b>P7</b>	Scanned files	Use optical character recognition (OCR) on scanned documents to provide actual text	
<b>P8</b>	Text alternatives	Provide definitions for abbreviations using an expansion entry	
<b>P9</b>	Headings	Heading tags match document and follow the visual outline	
		Non-standard headings map to standard headings	
<b>P10</b>	Forms	Label interactive form controls to describe expected formats and values	
<b>P11</b>	Links	Links have unique names	
		Link names describe their destination and purpose	



Ref.	Topic	WCAG 2.2 PDF technique	✓ or Notes
		Mark links and link text with Link annotations and /Link structure	
		Tab order matches the visual and logical order of interactive elements	
P12	Forms	Form fields include name, role and value information	
		Form fields have a tooltip that matches the label or instruction	
		Tab order matches the visual and logical order of elements	
P13	Links	Provide replacement text using the /Alt entry for links if required	
P14	Headers	Provide running headers and footers	
P15	Forms	Include a submit button with the submit form action	
P17	Page numbers	Specify page numbers, including marking preliminary pages as e.g. i, ii and content as 1, 2 ...	
P19	Language	Mark sections in different languages with their own language attribute	
P20	Tables	Use the Table Editor to set up or repair tables	
		For complex data tables, define scope in table header for cell	
		For complex data tables, match row and column scope spans to layout	
		Delete graphics tags for table shading	
P21	Lists	Include a parent tag and nested tags for lists	
P22	Forms	Provide error messages when user input falls outside required formats or values	
P23		Provide interactive form controls	

See <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Techniques/>



**Comments on any techniques not applied**

Ref.	Notes

