

QUICK GUIDE

TO IMPROVING DOCUMENT ACCESSIBILITY

Creating accessible digital documents ensures that everyone, including people with disabilities, can effectively access and understand your content. This guide highlights ten simple yet impactful steps you can take to make your documents more inclusive. By implementing these practices, you'll help eliminate barriers and create content that works for everyone. For more advanced accessibility guidelines, check out UND's [Accessibility Checklist](#) webpage.

1 Set Title and Language

Set a meaningful title in the document properties to help users identify the document's purpose. Additionally, specify the document's primary language to support assistive technologies in reading the content correctly.

2 Apply Proper Heading Levels

Use structured heading levels (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2) to create a clear outline for your document. Descriptive headings help readers, especially those using assistive technologies, navigate the content efficiently.

3 Apply Styles to Lists

Use built-in list styles to create numbered and bulleted lists instead of manually formatting with numbers, symbols, or tabs. Avoid excessive bullet levels, as each level is announced by screen readers (e.g., "list level 1, list level 2") and can overwhelm users, making navigation difficult.

4 Add Alternative Text to Images

Provide concise and meaningful alternative text for all images. This text should convey the same information to a user that an image would. This ensures that users who rely on screen readers understand visual elements in your documents.

5 Provide Captions

Ensure all multimedia (e.g., video and audio) content includes captions and/or transcripts. This makes your content accessible to individuals with hearing impairments and/or those who cannot access audio.

6 Use Descriptive Links

Write link text that clearly describes the destination or purpose of the link (e.g., "[Download the accessibility checklist](#)" instead of "[Click here](#)"). This ensures all users can easily understand and navigate your document.

7 Create Accessible Tables

Keep tables simple by using headers to define rows and columns. Avoid using tables for layout purposes. Additionally, avoid merged cells and complex table designs that can confuse assistive technologies.

8 Ensure Sufficient Color Contrast

Ensure that text, diagrams, charts, and other meaningful content meet a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for regular text. For large text (18+ pt or 14+ pt bold), a minimum contrast ratio of 3:1 is acceptable. Use online contrast checkers like [WebAIM](#) to ensure compliance with accessibility standards.

9 Select Appropriate Font and Size

Choose sans-serif fonts like Arial, Verdana, or Calibri, as they are easier to read. Use a font size of at least 12 pt for body text and 20 pt for presentations to ensure readability for people with visual impairments.

10 Ensure Text is Searchable

Convert scanned PDFs and images into searchable text using Optical Character Recognition (OCR). This allows users to find and read text with screen readers or search tools.