

Word and PowerPoint 365 Accessibility Evaluation Guide

This guide combines automated checks from the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office 365 with a series of manual checks to help you evaluate and repair common accessibility issues.

First, run the built-in [Accessibility Checker](#). The *Accessibility* panel will display: **ERRORS**, **WARNINGS**, **TIPS**, and **INTELLIGENT SERVICES**. Click on individual results to go to that issue in the document and make the necessary repairs. Then use the **MANUAL** review steps to identify any additional issues.

Headings (Word-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
Document contains Word Heading Styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.)	TIP: No Headings in Document (Document must be 3+ pages)	Add new headings or apply the correct style to visual headings with Home tab > <i>Styles</i> gallery.
Visual headings USE Word <i>Styles</i> (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.)	MANUAL: View tab > Navigation Pane > Headings tab (Document Map tab in Mac). Ensure the structure in the panel matches the visual heading structure.	Home tab > <i>Styles</i> gallery. Apply the correct heading style to visual headings.
Headings do not skip levels (e.g., Heading 1 to Heading 3).	MANUAL: Navigation Pane . Check for skipped levels.	Home tab > <i>Styles</i> gallery. Change the heading style to the correct level.
Headings are not empty	MANUAL: Navigation Pane . Check for empty lines.	Delete empty headings.

Section Names (PowerPoint-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
Section names are not generic (Untitled Section, Section 1, etc.)	ERROR: Default Section Name	Right click section name > Rename Section . Give the section a descriptive name.
Section names should be unique	TIP: Duplicate Section Name	Right click section name > Rename Section . Give the section a descriptive name.
Section names are accurate	MANUAL: View > Normal . Confirm that section names are descriptive.	Select the <i>Title placeholder</i> and update the text as needed.

Slide Titles (PowerPoint-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
Slides have titles (when appropriate)	ERROR: Missing Slide Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Title placeholder</i> is empty: Add a descriptive title. • Title text is not in a <i>Title placeholder</i>: Select the text > Accessibility tab > Slide Title > Set as Slide Title. • <i>Title placeholder</i> is missing: Accessibility tab > Slide Title > Add Slide Title. Add a= descriptive title. • Title is not needed: Delete the <i>Title placeholder</i> (the error will remain).
Slide titles should usually be unique	TIP: Duplicate Slide Title	Update the <i>Title placeholder</i> with unique text (when appropriate).
Slide titles are descriptive	MANUAL: View > Outline View. Confirm that titles describe the slide	Select the <i>Title placeholder</i> and update the text as needed.

Slide Reading Order (PowerPoint-only)

Principle	Review	Repair
The reading order of the contents of a slide is logical.	WARNING: Check Reading Order	Home tab > Arrange > Selection Pane . Ensure reading order is <i>bottom to top</i> .

Images

Principle	Review	Repair
Images and other non-text objects have Alt Text or are marked as decorative.	ERROR: Missing Object Description	Right click > View Alt Text . For objects that require Alt Text , add appropriate text; otherwise check Mark as decorative .
Images or objects that require Alt Text are positioned <i>In Line with Text</i> (Word only).	WARNING: Image or Object Not Inline	Right click > Wrap Text > In Line with Text

Alt Text generated by Office is equivalent or is changed to be equivalent.	INTELLIGENT SERVICES: Review Auto-Generated Description. Determine if the Alt Text value is appropriate.	Right click > View Alt Text. If the Alt Text value is appropriate, check Approve alt text . Otherwise update the text or check Mark as decorative .
Image or object has equivalent Alt Text or is marked as decorative.	MANUAL: Determine if the Alt Text value is appropriate.	Right click > View Alt Text. Update the text in the Alt Text or check Mark as Decorative .

Color and Contrast

Principle	Review	Repair
Document text has sufficient contrast with its background.	WARNING: Hard-to-Read Text Contrast (Does not detect contrast in graphics or some PowerPoint content)	Home tab > Font Color (text) or <i>Styles gallery</i> (headings). Increase text contrast.
Text in PowerPoint, text in images, and other vital information in images has sufficient contrast.	MANUAL: Scan for content with low contrast and test with a contrast checking tool .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For images: Update or replace images with sufficient contrast. For text: Home tab > Font Color > Increase text contrast.
Color is not used as the only way information is presented (color reliance).	MANUAL: Visually review the document for color reliance.	Add an additional method that provides the same information (e.g., document structure, text, icons with alternative text).

Tables

Principle	Review	Repair
The first row in a table contains correctly-defined column headers (when appropriate).	ERROR: Missing Table Header	Select table > Table Design > Check Header Row checkbox
Tables have a simple structure, avoiding merged cells or split cells when possible.	WARNING: Use of Merged or Split Cells. Use the Tab key to ensure the order of the cells in the table is logical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select table > Layout tab > Merge Cells, OR Select Layout tab > Split Cells. Set number of columns or rows to match the table structure before cells were merged.
When the first column of a table should contain headers, they are correctly identified as row headers.	MANUAL: Determine if the text in the cells of the first column function as row headers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select the table > Table Design. Check or uncheck the First Column checkbox to match the table's structure.

Avoid layout tables. Where they must be used, ensure that the content reading order matches the visual order.	MANUAL: Review the document for tables that do not present data. Determine if the content can be presented with an alternative method (e.g., columns). If not, use the Tab key to check the reading order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select table > Layout tab > Convert to Text to remove content from a table, OR • Rearrange the table's content to align the reading order with the visual order.
Tables should not use empty columns or rows for visual formatting.	MANUAL: Review the document for tables with empty columns or rows.	Right click empty column or row > Delete Cells > Choose Delete entire row or Delete entire column > OK

Other Principles

Principle	Review	Repair
Link text is descriptive.	MANUAL: Review the document for link text that is not descriptive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right click > Edit Hyperlink. Update text in <i>Text to display</i>.
All embedded media has equivalent captions and/or transcripts (PowerPoint only).	WARNING: Missing Audio or Video Subtitles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right click > Insert Captions > link to a VTT caption file OR • Ignore for media that has built-in captions or does not need captions (e.g., audio narration of on-screen text).
Bulleted and numbered lists are used correctly.	MANUAL: Click on text that looks like a list. On the Home ribbon, make sure that Bullets or Numbering is highlighted.	Highlight the text and go to Home > Apply Numbering or Bullets .
There are no spelling or grammar issues.	MANUAL: Proofread content using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word: Review tab > Editor • PowerPoint: Review tab > Spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use <i>Word's Editor</i> pane to locate and correct issues • Use <i>PowerPoint's Spelling</i> pane to locate and correct issues
Document has a descriptive file name.	MANUAL: Determine if the filename displayed in the title bar at the top of the application window describes the document.	File > Save As > <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File Name field in Windows • Save As field in Mac Update the filename as needed.
Document has a descriptive Title.	MANUAL: Verify that the document has a descriptive Title. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows: File > Info > Title • Mac: File > Properties > Summary tab > Title 	Add text that describes the document (often the same as the <i>Heading 1</i>), or update the existing text as needed.