Creating Accessible Documents

Demo Document

This is a test document to illustrate inaccessible concepts in Microsoft Word.

Headings

Headings are essential for the structure of the document and for ease of navigation using a screen reader. They are assigned using styles. Heading must be used in a hierarchical manner. Unlike in HTML, multiple Heading 1's can be used in a PDF.

Text

Paragraph Spacing

Indentations and paragraph spacing should be used in a Word document for structure. This prevents the screen reader from reading blank spaces and lines and avoids the need, upon conversion to PDF, to artifact those elements.
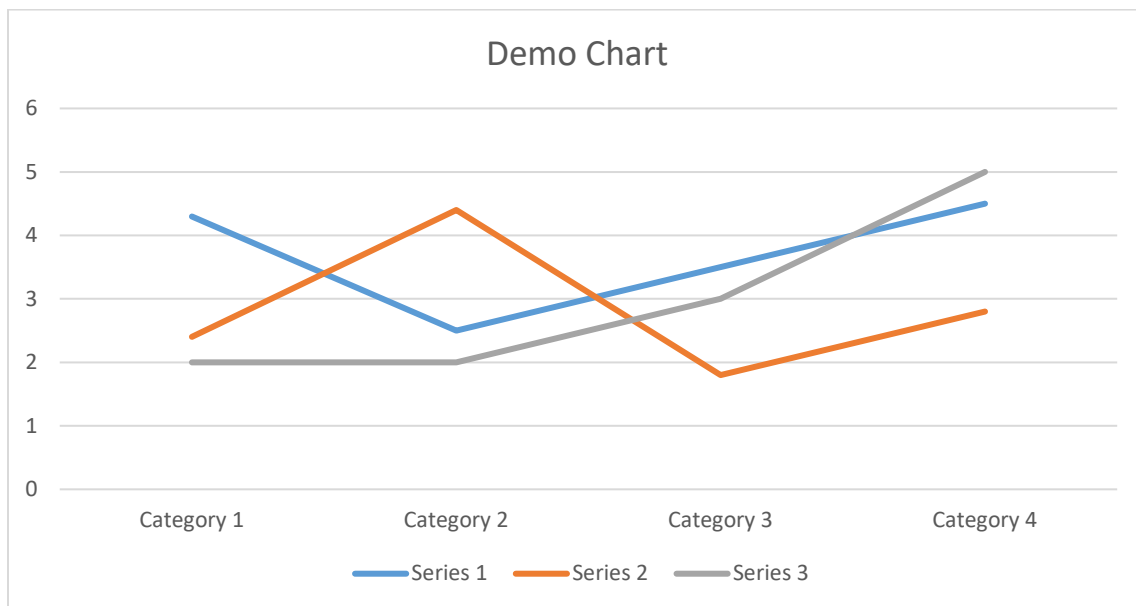
Color Contrast

It is always best to address color contrast issues in the original Word document. Although it may be possible to change text color in the PDF, it is difficult and may cause additional tagging issues.

Color Use

Important information about color use is in red.

Don't use color alone to convey information.

Demo Chart

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Series 1	4.3	2.5	3.5	4.5
Series 2	2.4	4.4	1.8	2.8
Series 3	2	2	3	5

Lists

A correctly formatted list makes it easier for a screen reader user to understand the context within which the list is presented. Both bulleted and numbered lists, when created using the appropriate method in Word, will convert cleanly to well-tagged lists in a PDF.

Bulleted List

Bulleted lists are used commonly to delineate a list of information that may be too long or too detailed to present in sentence format. It's important to use the built-in Word bulleted list structure. Types of bulleted lists include:

- A list of non-prioritized items.

- A list of resources which may be links (e.g. AT3 Website Accessibility page)

- A subset of detailed information that fleshes out a higher-level comment or outline item.

- Other information that doesn't need the hierarchy provided by a numbered list.

Numbered List

Numbered lists are frequently used to list things in priority order, such as a list of countries to visit, as shown below. Just like with bulleted lists, the numbered lists should be created using the Numbered list tool.

1. United Kingdom

2. Italy

3. New Zealand

4. Australia

5. Japan

6. China

Tables

Tables present unique challenges for screen reader users. Some tables are created by simply tabbing to create a table, as shown below. This will negatively affect reading order.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
5	3	3
4	1	5

When creating a table in Word note that although column and row headers can be identified, the scope for the relative header cells will need to be set. Below is a table of dog breeds that has a both a column and row header.

Merged Header Column/Row		Merged Header Column 1					
		HC1	HC2	HC3	HC4	HC5	HC6
MHR1	HR1	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
	HR2	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12
MHR2	HR3	D13	D14	D15	D16	D17	D18
	HR4	D19	D20	D21	D22	D23	D24

Layout Tables vs. Columns

Layout tables can present issues with reading order for screen readers. Things that are put in tables for layout can probably go into columns instead.

Up

Goes

This

Links

Link text should make sense in context at a minimum. If you can, avoid "read more" or "click here" and instead use descriptive link text. Avoid putting the entire web address (URL). [(Read more)](#)

More on links:

- https://www.accessibilityoz.com/2014/02/links-and-accessibility/
- https://accessibility.oregonstate.edu/descriptivelinks

Images

Information conveyed in images needs to be conveyed in text as well. This can be done either through alt text or by using captions. When using captions, the author may want to artifact the image (set as background) if the document is made into a PDF so that the screen reader isn't reading duplicate information.