Instructional Tech Tip Sheet:
Accessible Word Documents

# Overview

Making Word Documents accessible does not take a lot of work and is a “best practice” for following Michigan State University Accessibly guidelines. This tip sheet outlines some easy to follow suggestions for making your work accessible and includes links to step-by-step tutorials.

# Formatting

* Bullets:When adding bullets use the pre-defined bullets in the paragraph editor of Word. Bullets will be read out loud to users of a screen reader.
* Color: Do not use color in text to convey a specific meaning.
* Font: Avoid formatting text with bold, italics or all caps. Screen readers may emphasize text in all caps as it is read.
* Font: Use at least a size 10 san serif type font (Examples: Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, Verdana). These font types magnify well for those with low vision.
* Review Options:Comments and track changes are not accessible.

# Headers



The Microsoft Word Headers found in the Styles area in Microsoft Word, as shown above, can be used to format sections within a Word Document and will be read by screen readers. You would not want to simply highlight text that you want to emphasize and manually Bold and Underline it.

# Hyperlinks

Screen readers will read the text within a hyperlink so names of links should be meaningful. You should not use text such as “click here to be directed to the Michigan State University home page.” Instead use a format such as this where the descriptive text is hyperlinked and the URL is listed after the link with no hyperlink: [Michigan State University](http://www.msu.edu) (www.msu.edu). Listing the actual URL is optional.

# Images

All images, photos, and charts should have alternative text associated with it. You can add alternative text to images in Word by right-clicking on the image, selecting Format Picture and Complete the Alt Text fields, as shown below.



# Accessibility Checker

Microsoft Word has a built-in Accessibility checker which will scan a document for any issues relating to accessibility. This is only available for .docx files. To access the checker select the File menu, Info, Check for Issues, and Check Accessibly. A window will appear on the right side of your document listing any issues.

# Resources/Tutorials

* [How to Make a Word Document Accessible](http://www.pcc.edu/resources/instructional-support/access/word.html), by Karen Sorenen, Portland Community College (expand titles on the web site by clicking on the plus icon for videos and more details): http://www.pcc.edu/resources/instructional-support/access/word.html
* [How to Make MS Word documents Accessible](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiKhayo4lXE&list=PLRfHZ9wXKs6duG9d5juBYnSLvJAT4bHVT)**: YouTube video by** Karen Sorenen, Portland Community College (a six video series on making MS Word documents accessible)
* [Michigan State University Web Accessibility Tutorials](http://webaccess.msu.edu/Tutorials/index.html): http://webaccess.msu.edu/Tutorials/index.html
* [Microsoft Word](http://webaim.org/techniques/word/), by WebAIM: http://webaim.org/techniques/word/
* [National Center on Disability and Access to Education Cheatsheets](http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/): http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/