# Word Accessibility Checklist

## Step 1: Run the Accessibility Checker:

While no automated accessibility checker fully ensures compliance with Title II regulations, there are accessibility checkers that help reduce the number of issues you will need to fix manually.

### If you are working directly in Word...

* Open the document in the Desktop version of PowerPoint, not in the web version. Some of the accessibility features do not work in the web version.
  + [How to open the Desktop version from the web version](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/open-a-onedrive-or-sharepoint-file-in-the-desktop-app-instead-of-the-browser-761c66d2-7bc3-490e-a536-b3f71f41636b)
* [Use the built-in accessibility checker](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/improve-accessibility-with-the-accessibility-checker-a16f6de0-2f39-4a2b-8bd8-5ad801426c7f#picktab=windows)
* If you are creating a new document, it can be helpful to keep the accessibility checker open to notice and fix common accessibility issues as you work.

### If the Word document is in Canvas...

You can use the Ally accessibility checker in Canvas to check the accessibility of PowerPoint documents that are posted within your Canvas course. To get started, view the  [Ally Quick Start Guide for Instructors](https://help.blackboard.com/Ally/Ally_for_LMS/Instructor/Quick_Start) and check out this two-minute  [video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljqOwhd1xtU).

Note that Ally will only evaluate items that have been uploaded to the course, not items that have been embedded or linked within Canvas using OneDrive or SharePoint. Those items should be assessed using the 'Working directly in Word' section above.

## Step 2: Implement Each Title II Standard

The categories below are the general features that need to be implemented. Click on each category to see the specific items that need to be completed and instructions for how to complete that item. For each item, the relevant [WCAG 2.1 AA standard](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/) is indicated. Items with no standard are best practices that are not specified in the WCAG standards. This [WCAG in Plain English Guide](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/) explains each standard in more depth. To meet these requirements, the answer to all the following questions should be **"yes”**.

This recording of a [Word Accessibility Workshop](https://unl.yuja.com/V/Video?v=12325527&node=53876411&a=34647724) shows how to implement many of the items below.

### Links

1. Are all URLs given as hyperlinks embedded in meaningful text that clearly indicates the link’s purpose or destination? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/); [2.4.4](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/2-4-4-link-purpose-in-context/)
   * [How to create links](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-a-hyperlink-to-a-slide-239c6c94-d52f-480c-99ae-8b0acf7df6d9#OfficeVersion=Windows&officeversion=windows)
   * The full URL should not be given. Avoid links that include verbs or verb phrases like “click here” or “go here for more information”. Email addresses can be written out (i.e., [iteach2@unl.edu](mailto:iteach2@unl.edu)).
2. Is underlining used only for hyperlinks and not for other textual emphasis?
   * To emphasize text, bold the text.

### Images

1. Do all images either have alternative text giving an accurate and concise description **or** have a ‘decorative image’ designation if the image is non-informative? [1.1.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-1-1-non-text-content/)
   * If the image has alt text of something non-descriptive like the file name, the accessibility checker will not flag the image. This means you need to manually examine the alt text for all images, not just those flagged by the checker.
   * [How to add alt text](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-alternative-text-to-a-shape-picture-chart-smartart-graphic-or-other-object-44989b2a-903c-4d9a-b742-6a75b451c669#PickTab=Windows)
   * [How to write good alt text](https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/120076/pages/stem-alt-text)
   * [How to tell if an image is decorative](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/digital-accessibility/toolbox/best_practices/alternative_text/decorative-images)
2. Are equivalent alternatives to complex images like graphs and infographics provided?  [1.1.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-1-1-non-text-content/)
   * The accessibility checker will only tell you if alt text is missing entirely, it will not tell you whether the alt text is a sufficient description. Complex images should have a short description in alt text **and**a longer description, which can be a description on the slide, a caption, a link, or in the notes area.
   * [How to write good long descriptions](https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/120076/pages/stem-long-descriptions)
3. Do charts contain axis labels, legends, titles, and alt text? [1.1.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-1-1-non-text-content/)
   * [Add axis labels](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/change-axis-labels-in-a-chart-in-office-1efa2bd8-2b46-4db1-b15e-c8fd12e39a8c)
   * [Add a legend](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-a-legend-to-a-chart-eccd4b70-30ec-429d-8600-6305e08862c7)
   * [Add or remove a title](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/add-or-remove-titles-in-a-chart-4cf3c009-1482-4908-922a-997c32ea8250)
   * [Add alt text](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/add-alternative-text-to-a-shape-picture-chart-smartart-graphic-or-other-object-44989b2a-903c-4d9a-b742-6a75b451c669)
     + Alt text should describe the type of chart and what it demonstrates. For complex charts, a [long description](https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/120076/pages/stem-long-descriptions) might also be needed.
   * Consider changing the colors of the chart elements so they have a high color contrast. Online color contrast checkers, such as [WebAIM's contrast checker](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/), can help. You should also add a secondary element such as patterning so the elements can be distinguished without relying on color.
   * When elements of the chart are touching (such as bars or pieces of a pie chart), a line in a different color between the elements helps visually distinguish between them.
4. Is text presented as text rather than an image including text? The only exception to this is when the text is part of a logo or other branding. [1.4.5](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-5-images-of-text/)
   * To fix this issue, the image should be replaced by text rather than adding alt text to the image.
   * If the image is a logo, give that information in the alt text.

### Structure

1. Does each document have a unique title that tells the reader a general description of the content of the document? [2.4.2](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/2-4-2-page-titled/)
   * Add the title in the [document properties](https://help.illinoisstate.edu/accessibility/website-and-digital/accessible-digital-documents-with-microsoft-products/accessible-documents-in-microsoft-word/adding-a-document-title-in-microsoft-word) and on the title slide. The file name is not considered a title.
2. Was a descriptive heading structure added to the document using the “Styles” feature with headings in order and no heading levels skipped? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/); [2.4.6](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/2-4-6-headings-and-labels/)
   * Headings should describe the content in that section
   * The accessibility checker will only tell you if Styles are used and if heading levels are skipped but will not tell you if the appropriate heading levels were used.
   * [How to create headings using Styles](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/video-improve-accessibility-with-heading-styles-68f1eeff-6113-410f-8313-b5d382cc3be1)
   * [How to use heading hierarchies](https://webaim.org/techniques/word/#headings)
3. Are all lists created using the numbered or bulleted list feature? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/); [1.3.2](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-2-meaningful-sequence/)
   * [How to create lists](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-bullets-or-numbers-to-text-a6f1b87e-fca8-47da-ade9-5d99b7f41f04)
4. Is the majority of the text left-aligned if the text is in English? For other languages the text should be aligned based on the norms for that language. [1.4.8](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-8-visual-presentation/)
   * Is center-aligned text used only for short pieces of text such as headings, quotes, or invitations. [1.4.8](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-8-visual-presentation/)
   * Does the document avoid using full justification of text? [1.4.8](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-8-visual-presentation/)
   * To change the alignment of text, click on **Home** in the top tool bar and select the alignment you would like in the Alignment section.

### Tables

1. Are tables formatted as tables rather than pictures? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/); [1.4.5](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-5-images-of-text/)
   * If a table is a picture, [recreate the table](https://www.perkins.org/resource/creating-accessible-table-word/) in Word
2. Do all tables have a title? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/)
   * You can add a title before the table and/or [add a caption](https://www.wikihow.com/Add-a-Caption-to-a-Table-in-Word) with a title or short description of the information in the table.
3. Do all tables have headers? Are all the column headings unique? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/); [1.3.2](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-2-meaningful-sequence/)
   * [How to add table headers](https://accessibility.psu.edu/microsoftoffice/microsofttableheaders/)
4. Do tables avoid using merged cells?  [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/)
   * [How to split cells that have been merged](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/merge-or-split-cells-in-a-table-8b458deb-0fc5-4c8d-8d94-2d4da98193f8)
5. Are tables only used to organize data with a logical relationship rather than being used for layout structure or organization?  [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/)
   * Format tables so that both the first (header) row and column contain meaningful labels, and each cell’s content depends on the intersection of those labels. If the table is just used for layout or organization, then table formatting should not be used.  [See examples of the differences between these two types of tables.](https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/120076/pages/examples-of-data-vs-formatting-tables)
6. Do tables avoid having any empty data cells? [1.3.2](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-2-meaningful-sequence/)
   * In empty cells, put a dash or write NA, no data, not applicable, or no value. If you do not want sighted users to see it you can change the text in the cell to the same color as the background.

### Supplements

1. Are the font type and size adjustable (ie, is the file editable and not ‘read-only’)?  [1.4.4](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-4-resize-text/); [1.4.8](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-8-visual-presentation/); [1.4.12](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-12-text-spacing/)
2. Is the correct language set for the document? [3.1.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/3-1-1-language-of-page/)
   * Word may default to English or detect the language used. If the correct language is consistently being used, you do not need to check this each time you create a document.
   * [How to set the language](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-an-editing-or-authoring-language-or-set-language-preferences-in-office-663d9d94-ca99-4a0d-973e-7c4a6b8a827d)
3. Is there sufficient color contrast? [1.4.3](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-3-contrast-minimum/); [1.4.11](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-11-non-text-contrast/)
   * If you plan to use colors within your content, be sure there is sufficient contrast between text colors and background colors, as well as within visual elements such as images and graphs.
     + Text must have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5 to 1. Large text can be a 3 to 1 ratio if it’s over 24px, or bold and over 19px.
     + Usable components like form fields and buttons, and graphics like pie charts and line graphs must have a ratio of 3 to 1.
   * The accessibility checker does not necessarily catch all color contrast issues. Online color contrast checkers, such as [WebAIM's contrast checker,](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker) can help you determine whether there is sufficient contrast.
   * In Windows operating systems, you can further check the accessibility of your colors by enabling the grayscale color filter by clicking on **Settings,**then**Ease of Access,**then**Color filters**(left sidebar). In Macintosh operating systems, click on **System Preferences,** then **Accessibility,** then **Display**(left sidebar), then**Color Filters**(a tab), then**Enable Color Filters**(checkbox). Visually check each slide that the information is still discernible on each slide when color is not present.
4. Is any information or navigation (such as grouping, importance, directionality, etc.) conveyed by visual cues (i.e., color, size, font, position, grouping, shape) also communicated in another non-visual way? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/); [1.4.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-4-1-use-of-color/)
   * If text needs to be emphasized, is it bolded rather than relying solely on visual formatting such as color or font.
   * When color is used to convey information, is there another non-visual method to convey that information (such as text, which can be ready by a screen reader)?
   * If spatial relationships between pictures or shapes communicate information, is this information included in another non-visual form (such as text description, which can be ready by a screen reader).
5. Is any information (such as importance, when to perform an action, if an answer is correct, etc.) conveyed by audio cues (i.e., sounds effects, music) also communicated in another non-audio way (such as text)? [1.3.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-1-info-and-relationships/)
6. Is nothing referred to just by its visual or audio characteristics, such as color, size, position, shape, or sound? [1.3.3](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-3-3-sensory-characteristics/)
   * For example, rather than saying "As you can see in the red box..." you could say "The red box in the lower right-hand corner entitled 'Outcomes' shows...".
7. When sharing the file, was it saved as a Word document rather than being converted to a PDF?
   * Word documents are easier to make accessible than PDFs and several
8. Is the use of all capital letters used only for acronyms and not other textual emphasis?
   * If you want to emphasize text, bold the text.
9. Are sans serif fonts such as Courier, Arial, Verdana, and Calibri used?
10. Are equations and formulas presented in an accessible format? [1.1.1](https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/1-1-1-non-text-content/)
    * [Write an equation or formula](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/write-an-equation-or-formula-1d01cabc-ceb1-458d-bc70-7f9737722702#ID0EAACAAA=Ink_equations) in Word (particularly note the ink to math feature).
    * [Guide to making equations accessible](https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/120076/pages/stem-math-equations)