

### Sensory Service (Vision Impairment)

# Creating Accessible Word Documents

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## Headings

Create headings using Word’s styles labelled “Heading 1,” “Heading 2,” etc. Do not just make text big, bold, or underlined. You can modify the Microsoft headings to suit your preferences/ needs.

### Why Headings Matter

* Screen reader users will be able to hear which blocks of text are headings and what level each heading occupies in the hierarchy of the page.
* Screen reader users will be able to skim the page by jumping from heading to heading.
* It saves a lot of time because you can apply consistent formatting to your headings throughout your document without having to choose the font, size, weight, shading, and borders each time you make a heading.
* You will be able to change the formatting of all the headings of a given level at once.
* You can easily create consistent formatting from document to document.
* You can instantly insert a table of contents for your document, complete with page numbers, all based on your headings.
* In outline view, it is easy to rearrange your document just by dragging headings. All the text under that heading will move with it.
* You can use Word’s “Navigation” side panel to see a list of headings and jump to any part of the document by clicking its heading in the list.
* You can make a link in your document that jumps to a heading in another part of your document.

You get none of those benefits if you just make text big and bold or underlined without encoding the document’s structure with heading styles.

### Line spacing

Line spacing: Change from default of 1 to 1.5

* Home > Paragraph > Line Spacing > choose 1.5

## Font choice

Use accessible sans-serif fonts when creating documents. This means using Arial or other clear to read fonts like Verdana, Helvetica, or Tahoma. For students who have trouble distinguishing letters, Comic Sans is also a great choice. These sans serif fonts also display better on computers and mobile devices.

### Should I use bold text?

Every student is different, some students like having a bold Arial font they find it easier to read.

Use underscoring, quotation marks or bolding to emphasize text. Avoid **italics** and **highlighting.**

### Text size and alignment

Use a minimum 12-point (preferably 14 pt)

* 1. Font sizes:
* Standard: 12 point
* Enlarged Print: 14 or 16 point
* Large print: 18 point or larger
* Enhanced print: 18 point or larger plus enhancements

Please refer to the advice from your QTVI to ascertain the size of print your student requires.

Text should read left to right (left aligned) and top to bottom for clear structure and navigation purposes.

Avoid using text in graphics as this makes the text is difficult to see.

Avoid complex and cluttered layouts.

### Contrast

Best contrast is using black text on white background.

Using their assistive technology, students can adjust font size, contrast, brightness, etc. to be suit their individual needs

## Add extra space for writing

When enlarging text, make sure to leave space for students to write as well. No one likes suddenly running out of room because the text took up so much room on the page.

### Use of colour

Do not use **colour** as the only way to convey information. Avoid using **red, green and orange**. Consider using **textures/shading** instead of colours in graphs or charts.

## Enlarge pictures

Pictures may need to be enlarged by 250%. For images that are of lower quality and do not enlarge well, or that have poor contrast, they may need to be sent digitally in a separate folder.

## Captions/Alt text

Provide alternative text to help to communicate what is important in images and other visuals. Alt text provides a textual alternative to non-text content.Alt text is a hidden image attribute used by screen readers to describe images to the blind but can also be helpful to describe poor quality images. Here are examples of alt text inserted to describe images of George Washington and the Washington Monument:

Image of George Washington- a painting of George Washington with a stern expression, with white curled hair and a blue coat.

Image of Washington Monument - The Washington Monument, a tall and white pointed structure that overlooks the National Mall, a reflection pool.

### Single side pages

When printing items, consider printing them on single sided paper. This way, markers or pens do not bleed through and obstruct the view of the text on the other side.

### Accessibility checker

One of the great features in Microsoft Word is the accessibility checker, which helps document creators make their documents accessible to users quickly, usually in two minutes or less. The accessibility checker checks for alt text, blank rows, spacing, and other text attributes like size and colour. There are also many tips on creating the best documents possible for people with disabilities.

[Create accessible Office documents - Office Support (microsoft.com)](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/create-accessible-office-documents-868ecfcd-4f00-4224-b881-a65537a7c155)