

Digital Content Accessibility Checklist: How-To

All **digital** documents, regardless of format (e.g., Microsoft Office, PDF, etc.), **must** apply the standards of [Section 508 of the American Disabilities Act](#) and the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG).

Disclaimer: Not all standards may be applicable to your digital content, and there may be outlier cases not covered in this document.

Types of Digital Content

Text and Presentation

Word (e.g., Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Pages) & Presentation Documents (e.g., Microsoft PowerPoint (PPT), Google Slides, Keynote)

When creating your content, are you following the standards below?

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	Current Filetype <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Word - .docx• PPT - .pptx	Required by assistive technology to correctly deliver or read the content
	Unique Titles <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descriptive title• Set Title Property (title is not just in text)• Differentiate slide titles (PPT, Google Slides)• Use Master slide title placeholders (PPT, Google Slides)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Microsoft How to Set Document Properties (PC)• Built-in Slide Layouts/Titles for PPT (UW)• Google Title/Headings
	Using Plain, Concise Language <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid unreadable walls of text• Write clearly and simply• 7x7 rule for presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing Clearly and Simply (WebAIM)• Example of Wall of Text Slide• Example of 7x7 Slide
	Font is Readable <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select fonts where letters and words do not bleed together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Font Readability (DO-IT)• WebAIM Font Readability

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sans Serif font examples: Open Sans, Tahoma, Verdana, Trebuchet MS, Helvetica Neue • Serif font examples: Book Antiqua, Georgia, Times New Roman 	
	<p>Font is Resizable and Selectable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use built-in fonts • Choose large font sizes 18pt or larger (PPT, Google Slides) • Avoid saving text as graphic (e.g., scanned book pages create unselectable text) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Content Scaling (WebAIM) • Using Magnifier on Windows 10
	<p>Using Built-in Formatting and Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headings and Styles • Lists (bullets or numbers) • Columns and Layout 	<p>Headings and Styles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word Document Headings • Google Docs Headings <p>Lists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Word Lists • PowerPoint Lists • Google Docs or Slides Lists <p>Columns and Layout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Word Columns • PowerPoint Columns • Built-in Slide Layouts/Titles PPT (UW) • Google Docs Columns
	<p>Strong Color Contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Text (foreground) to Background Contrast Ratios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4.5:1 (fonts less than 18pt) ○ 3:1 (fonts 18pt and larger or 14pt if bold) • Text to adjacent or inline content (links, images, charts, shapes, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrast and Color Accessibility (WebAIM) • Contrast Checker (WebAIM) • Color Safe (Color Palette Generator) • Contrast Checker (WCAG) • Accessible Color Contrast Examples (STUDIO)
	<p>Convey Meaning or Importance Using More than Color Alone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add secondary formatting to color (bold or italics) • Add text explanation of visual color cues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Color (WebAIM) • Visual Disabilities (WebAIM)
	<p>Descriptive Text Links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use descriptive language instead of a long URL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links and Hypertext (WebAIM) • Word Add Hyperlink Text • PPT Add Hyperlink Text

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid meaningless link text like “click here”, “the website”, “link”, etc. • Link titles should be unique • If the same title must be used, they must be distinguishable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Docs and Slides Add Hyperlink Text
	<p>Underlines for Links Only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlines should only be used to indicate a hyperlink • Remove underline formatting from all other text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link Appearance (WebAIM)
	<p>Avoid Using All Caps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use all caps for acronyms only • Identify the acronym’s expanded form the first time it appears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Example: Center for Learning & Teaching (CLT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Text in All Caps Is Hard for Users to Read • Font Variations (WebAIM)
	<p>Table Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use for data, not layout (use built-in layout features; see above) • Use logical, linear data structure • Specify column header rows • Do not merge or split cells • Do not use text wrapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word Use Table Headers • PPT Use Table Headers • Google Docs and Slides Add or Edit Table • Make Your Document or Presentation More Accessible (Google Drive)
	<p>Alternative Text Added to Non-Text Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required for pictures, shapes, charts, embedded objects, video, etc. • Be specific • Avoid meaningless words like “image” or “image of” (screen readers already identify this) • If text within image, include it in the Alt text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Text (WebAIM) • What constitutes good alt text? • Word Add Alt Text • PPT Add Alt Text • Google Docs and Slides Add Alt Text
	<p>Content is Scalable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content or images remain legible (clear and crisp) when zoomed or magnified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Content Scaling (WebAIM) • Using Magnifier on Windows 10

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	<p>Text Not Saved as Graphic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text and numbers available to assistive technology • Example: save data tables as text, not an image (e.g., screenshot of table) 	<p>Scanned documents (e.g., textbook pages, old worksheets, etc.) are not readable by assistive technology and should be converted to searchable PDFs as separate documents.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technique: Text and Images of Text (Harvard) • Foxit Create Searchable PDF/OCR • Adobe Acrobat Pro Create Searchable PDF/OCR
	<p>Verify Slide Elements Read Order (PPT and Slides)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify slide contents are set to read in the order intended • Table cell reading order will need to be adjusted 	<p>When adding slide elements (e.g., text box, images, etc.), these added items are not always read in the order you intended them to be or at all.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPT Set the Reading Order of Slide Contents • Google Slides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Grackle Add-on Accessibility Checker (Virginia Tech) ◦ Grackle Slides Download
	<p>Eliminate Decorative Animation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid animation transitions • If animation is required, it should be simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint Accessibility (WebAIM) • Animations (WebAIM)
	<p>Run Accessibility Checker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Accessibility Checker • Grackle Docs • How to Use Grackle Docs (UH)

Audio

Audio Only Pre-Recordings (e.g., Microsoft PowerPoint Slide Audio, Google Slides Audio, Audio Only)

When creating your content, are you following the standards below?

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	Provide a Transcript <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text version of the speech and non-speech audio information needed to understand the content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does My Media Need a Transcript (Audio Only)? Checklist (W3C)
	Recording Clear Audio <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crisp audio• No, or low, background noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audio (W3C)

Video

Video Only Pre-Recordings (e.g., Animation, Silent Video)

When creating your content, are you following the standards below?

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	Descriptive Text Transcript <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe visual components	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Example Descriptive Transcript Files (W3C)Does My Media Need a Transcript? (W3C)

Video Pre-Recordings

When creating your content, are you following the standards below?

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	Human-Generated Closed Captions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Text version of the speech and non-speech audio information needed to understand the content displayed within the media player and are synchronized with the audioAutomatically generated transcripts must be edited	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does my Media Need Captions (W3C)Automatic Captions are Not Sufficient (W3C)Captions, Transcripts, and Audio Descriptions (WebAIM)
	Audio/Text Description <ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide an audible description of content elements, the SRT will include this information allowing learners with processing difficulties to comprehend recorded contentExamples:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are you verbally explaining your equations?"As you see in this table..." does not provide enough context for comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Example Descriptive Transcript Files (W3C)
	Provide a Transcript <ul style="list-style-type: none">Text version of the speech and non-speech audio information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does My Media Need a Transcript (Audio Only)? Checklist (W3C) – suggested but not required for W3C AAA

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	needed to understand the content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert SRT to Word Transcript (happyscribe)
	<p>Annotation Strong Color Contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text to adjacent or inline content (links, images, charts, shapes, etc.) • Minimum Text (foreground) to Background Contrast Ratios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4.5:1 (fonts less than 18pt) ○ 3:1 (fonts 18pt and larger or 14pt if bold) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrast and Color Accessibility (WebAIM) • Contrast Checker (WebAIM) • Color Safe (Color Palette Generator) • Contrast Checker (WCAG) • Accessible Color Contrast Examples (STUDIO)

General Accessibility

Overarching Accessibility Considerations

When creating your content, are you following the standards below?

Complete	Accessibility Standard	Resources
	<p>Works with Assistive Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples: screen reader, keyboard with large keys, special mouse, screen magnifiers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Assistive Technology (DO-IT)
	<p>Multi-Use Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital content works on multiple platforms: computer, tablet, mobile phone, etc. 	<p>Save base files for adjustments for future technological advances (e.g., Microsoft products rather than PDFs, editable video footage, etc.)</p> <p>Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Four Principles of Accessibility (W3C)
	<p>Users Control Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners control start/stop • Ability to pause/rewind • No automatic slide advancement • Volume adjustment available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an Accessible Media Player (Harvard) • User Control Over Timing (WebAIM)