

# 10 Steps to Creating Accessible PDFs

*PDFs that will be posted on the web need to be accessible to people with vision problems.* Follow these basic steps to make an accessible document in Word, then convert to PDF format. Using the steps below will help you produce a document that is not only well-organized visually but that also makes sense to a screen reader device used by someone with vision problems.

These steps are taken from the short video "[10 Steps to Creating Accessible PDFs](#)" that UC IT has posted on YouTube. We highly recommend taking 6 minutes to view the video, and then using this sheet as a reminder.

1. **Use Headings.** Use the styles gallery in Word to designate hierarchical headings. The document title should be *Heading 1*, first level headings should be *Heading 2*, subheadings should be *Heading 3*, and so on. If you do not like the way the default style looks, you can change the appearance and they will still retain the heading level coding. Or create your own heading styles.
2. **Body Text.** Use *Normal* text from the styles gallery. As with headings, you can change the appearance of the body text while retaining the style coding.
3. **Paragraphs.** Do *not* hit the Enter key twice to add space between paragraphs. Instead, open the Paragraph dialog box and adjust the point size in the spacing *Before* or *After* fields to create your desired spacing between paragraphs.
4. **Images.** Add a brief description of key images by using *Alt Text*. Right click on the image, choose *Format Picture*, then choose *Alt Text*. Write a *brief* description in the *Description* field.
5. **Links.** Use meaningful display text for links instead of "Click here" or "More" or long, confusing URLs. Right click on the link, choose *Edit Hyperlink* then type your desired text in the *Text to Display* field.
6. **Lists.** Use the *Bullets* or *Numbering* functions in Word instead of typing numbers or bullet characters manually. This will enable your list to be understood by screen reading technology. Similarly, use the *Multilevel List* function to create an outline.
7. **Tables.** Use the *Insert Table* function to make accessible tables, rather than using tabs or spaces to arrange your items. You must designate a header row for your table, and add an Alt Text description of the table.
8. **Columns.** Use the columns function under Page Layout to create two or more columns of text.
9. **Test the document for accessibility.** Go to File → Info → Check for Issues → Check Accessibility. If there are errors, they will be displayed in the right-hand panel, and additional info and guidance will be provided below. When all errors are corrected, you will see a green check mark. Now you are ready to convert to an accessible PDF. *Note:* I have found that the checker doesn't always tag all errors (e.g. lack of headings/hierarchy). Best practice is to follow the guidelines above.
10. **Convert to Accessible PDF.** On the *Acrobat* tab, choose *Create PDF* to generate the PDF. In the PDF document, you can double-check accessibility by going to Tools → Accessibility → Full Check. Make any adjustments as needed.