Making Word, PowerPoint and PDF Files Accessible.

Through your work, you may be asked to write documents in Microsoft Word, make PowerPoint slide shows or to create PDFs. In doing so, you should ensure that your creations are accessible to all. Not everyone will rely on reading the content visually from the screen, or they may not use a mouse or keyboard to move around the document. The Disability Act 2005 requires organisations providing services and information to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 require providers of goods and services to reasonably accommodate people with disabilities. Making some quick and easy changes to the way you create files will ensure that they are accessible. Additional benefits of ensuring that all documents are accessible may include:

- HR: Accessible hiring practices, ensuring that people with disabilities can apply for advertised roles on a par with their peers.
- Increased efficiency in navigating documents for all: staff, service users and their families and corporate partners.
- Leading the way in promoting inclusive practices across the organisation from Services to Corporate (Finance, HR and IT), Retail and Fundraising divisions.

This guide provides a practical overview of how to make three kinds of products accessible:

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Powerpoint

PDF files

Each section includes a link to a tutorial video created by Microsoft, to help you make your document as accessible as possible.

Microsoft Word:

Within Microsoft Word, an accessibility checker can be used to review your document and make suggestions for changes that will help make your document more accessible. Ways to rectify the issues highlighted are shown below. Over time, while creating your document, you will hopefully be aware of the main issues that cause inaccessibility and automatically work remedial measures for these into your writing.

Below you will find links to videos showing how these features can be implemented, along with the reasoning why it is important to do.

1. [Accessibility Checker -Video](#)

Running the accessibility checker will highlight any areas of concern within your document and make suggestions as to how these can be resolved. Making your document accessible will mean that people using assistive technology will be able to read and extract information from the content (text, pictures, charts etc) within your document.

- Key points
  - Issues will be highlighted on a panel on the right of the document and categorised into three levels: Errors are categorised as serious and must be corrected; Warnings are less serious and it would be good practice to correct; Tips which are nice to know, and correction would be good for optimisation, but don't necessarily affect accessibility.
  - Underneath the issues highlighted, the panel also gives information on why it is important to fix the problem.

2. [Fonts and Sizes -Video](#)

Taking the time to choose a font, size, line spacing etc can greatly increase the readability of your document. Once you are happy with your font, you may want to set this as your [default font for all future documents](#).

- Key points:
    - Use sans serif fonts (a category of typefaces that do not use serifs, small lines at the ends of character) as these are less decorative and easier for screen readers and people with dyslexia to read.
    - To make documents accessible to people with visual difficulties, use a minimum size of font (i.e. 12 point font) and be aware of colour contrasts.
    - Use bold and italics sparingly, so that only important information is highlighted and easy to identify.
    - A minimum of 1.5 line spacing aids those with literacy and visual difficulties, as there will be less cluttering.

3. [Headings -Video](#)

Placing appropriate headings, in the correct format, will help with structuring your document and allow for navigation by screen readers for example.

- Key points
    - Use Styles from the ribbon, rather than manipulating manually, so that it is recognisable by screen readers/text to speech software
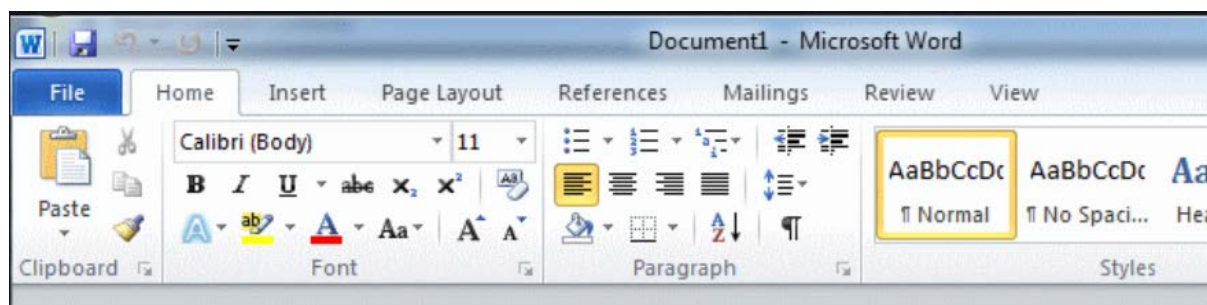
- Headings will be retained when files are converted to other formats, such as PDFs
- Keep headings short, specific and relevant, so that readers can find information easily.
- For documents over 10 pages, provide a table of contents. This is easily done if you have formatted your headings correctly this [video on inserting a table of contents](#) will show you how it is done.

4. [Images -Video](#)

Using a text alternative ("ALT Text") to describe a picture, chart or table will make the information presented visually available to those who are unable to see or extract information from the images.

- Key points
  - Essential information should be included in a precise, concise manner, there is no need to start with "image of..."
  - Decorative images (not conveying information) should be marked as such so that individuals using screen readers know what they are.

5. [Links -Video](#)

Using hyperlinks in documents will give easy access to websites, other documents and folders, by clicking on the underlined text.

- Key points
  - Avoid using the full URL in documents; this looks cumbersome and screen readers will read the entire link out. Instead, use a description to identify the link.
  - Avoid using generic phrases like "click here", "Learn more". Be more specific about where the link will lead.

PowerPoint

PowerPoint is an extremely useful tool to present information. However, not everyone who accesses a PowerPoint file will be able to extract the information by simply viewing the slides, so safeguards should be put in place for those with visual impairments.

1. [Accessibility Checker -Video](#)

Similar to Word, Powerpoint has an inbuilt accessibility checker, to highlight any issues that might affect accessibility. The video linked above will show you how to run the Accessibility Checker and the links below will help resolve any issues.

2. [Colours and Styles - Video](#)
- Key points
  - Use templates where possible, as these will give consistency to your presentation. Templates can be found under the Design tab on the ribbon.
  - Don't rely solely on colour to show information, as some people may have colour blindness. Use text and images as well as colour when presenting information in charts, tables etc.

3. [Images -Video](#)

Similar to Word, it is important to provide a text alternative to information presented in images, charts, tables etc.

- Key points
  - Essential information- again, the text alternative should contain enough information to describe the content without being superfluous.

- Decorative images should be marked as such, so that screen reader users know that they are not missing content.

4. [Reading Order – Video](#)

If you have different text boxes, images, charts etc. on your slide, you will want to make sure that screen readers will read the information in the correct order.

- Keypoints
  - Using preset layouts where possible will mean that the reading order of the slide will hopefully be correct
  - If you do need to insert your content holders (image boxes, text boxes etc), use the selection pane to order content manually and use the Tab key on your keyboard to check the order.
  - Each slide title should be unique within the presentation to make them navigable.

PDF Files

PDF (portable document format) files are used when you need to save files in a format that cannot be modified but still needs to be easily shared and printed.

The majority of people will be converting pre-existing files in different formats (i.e. Word, PowerPoint, Excel, publisher etc) to PDF. ***The original document must be fully accessible before converting it to PDF.***

To convert an existing Word or PowerPoint file to PDF on most computers (without additional software being installed) can be done one of two ways:

- When using the "Save As" option from the files tab, use the drop-down menu to choose to save as a PDF
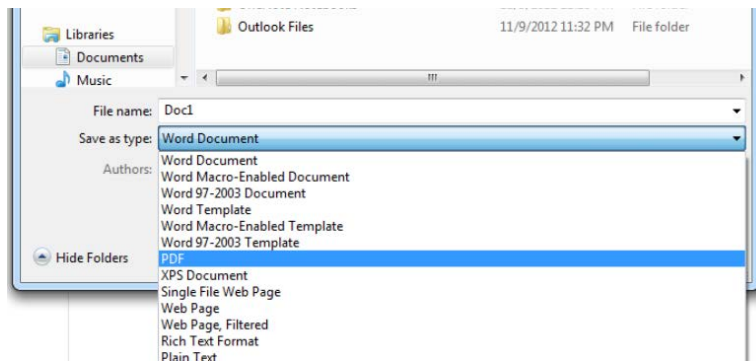
- Under the files tab, click on print. Under the drop-down menu to choose your printer, select the option to print to PDF (may appear different to the picture below)
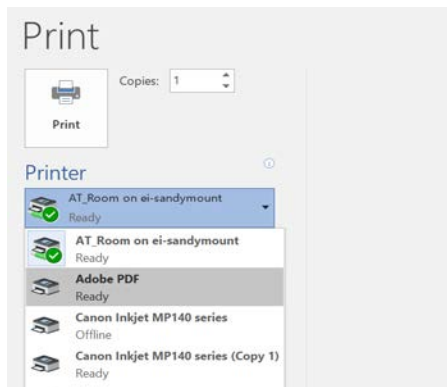
Adobe Reader

Most people will have access to Adobe Reader on their computer. This software will allow you to view, print and annotate PDF files. As it is not used to create files, rather it is just a viewer, the accessibility of the PDF document will be reliant on the accessibility of the original format (most commonly, Word). However, you may be asked to add an annotation to a document (such as your digital signature). This can be done by using the Fill and Sign option. To see how this is done, please view this [video on signing documents in Adobe Reader](#).

Adobe Acrobat Pro

If you are creating PDF files that need to be editable (as is increasingly desirable in this online world we live in), you must have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro. This

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software will allow you to view, create, manipulate, print and manage files in Portable Document Format. The following information is for those who are using Adobe Acrobat Pro to create editable forms:

1. Start with an accessible document – use the Accessibility Checker in whatever application you are using to create your document. Once you have attained accessibility in your source document, convert it to PDF.

2. Accessibility Checker - Video

   Adobe Acrobat Pro has an inbuilt accessibility checker that can quickly identify most accessibility issues.

   - Key points:
     - The Accessibility Checker will require you to carry out a manual check for reading order and colour contrast. The videos linked will show how to manually examine and correct any issues.
     - Other issues can be resolved using the information below.

3. Headings – Video

   If there are issues in the nesting order of headings in a PDF file, these will be flagged.

   - Key points:
     - If appropriate headings were used in the source document, there should be no issues here.

4. Images - Video

   Images, such as pictures, charts and tables will need to be given a text alternative or marked as a decorative image.

   - If the source document was given appropriate Alt text tags, these will be available here.
   - Please note that tables may need to have additional information added to make them accessible – see below.

5. Other accessibility issues that might be highlighted in the Accessibility Checker can include difficulties with [Navigational Tags](), [Lists](), [Tables](). The linked videos will help resolve these issues.

6. [Accessible Forms - Video]()

   If you are involved in the creation of interactive form fields, this comprehensive, one hour webinar will show how to ensure that your PDF form is accessible.

To further develop your skills in creating accessible documents, why not register for [Microsoft's online Accessibility Fundamentals course](). This course takes approximately two hours to complete.