Microsoft Word 2013 for Windows

Creating Accessible PDF Documents

The goal of accessibility is for all users to have the same experience, including people with disabilities. Creating a PDF that is accessible primarily involves ensuring that the format and structure of the document is defined so that it is presented the way the author intended, and that text alternatives via "tags" are provided for any non-text elements. An accessible PDF essentially looks the same, but is more accessible to a person using a screen reader.

Principles of Accessible Design for PDFs

- **Creating and Editing Headings**
- **Adding Alternative Text to Images and Shapes**
- **Creating Tables and Adding Alternative Text**
- **Editing Hyperlinks**
- **Creating Lists**
- **Creating Columns**

Microsoft Word provides an Accessibility Checker for identifying and repairing accessibility issues. The checker's **Inspection Results** classifies accessibility issues into three categories:

- **Errors:** content that makes a document very difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to access.
  - *Example: an image with no alt text.*
- **Warnings:** content that in most—but not all—cases makes the document difficult for people with disabilities to access.
  - *Example: a link with text that is not descriptive of its function.*
- **Tips:** content that people with disabilities can access, but that might be better organized or presented.
  - *Example: skipping from a first-level heading to a third-level heading.*

See **Using the Accessibility Checker** below.

Creating and Editing Headings

1. Select the **Home** tab from the ribbon.
2. In your document, select the text to convert to a heading.
3. Click on the appropriate heading level in the **Styles** in-ribbon gallery; e.g., **Heading 1**.
4. Headings 1, 2, or 3 can also be assigned using **Control** + **Alt** + **1**, **2**, or **3**, respectively.
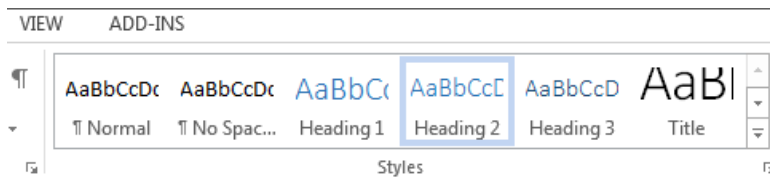
Adding Alternative Text to Images and Shapes

1. Right-click on the image (or shape) and select **Format Picture** (or **Format Shape**). A dialog box will appear.
2. Select the **Layout & Properties** icon and choose **Alt Text**.
3. Enter the appropriate alternative text only in the **Description** field, NOT the **Title** field. Alternative text provides a textual alternative to non-text content. It is especially helpful for people who are blind and rely on a screen reader to have the content read to them. The following link provides a helpful guide on choosing the appropriate alt text: **Alternative Text**
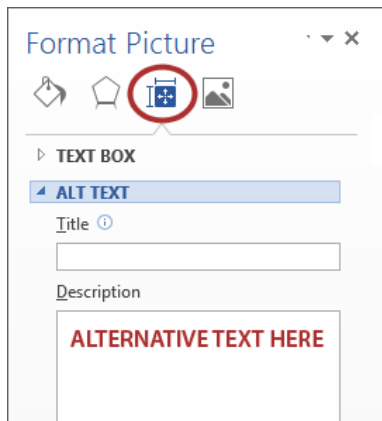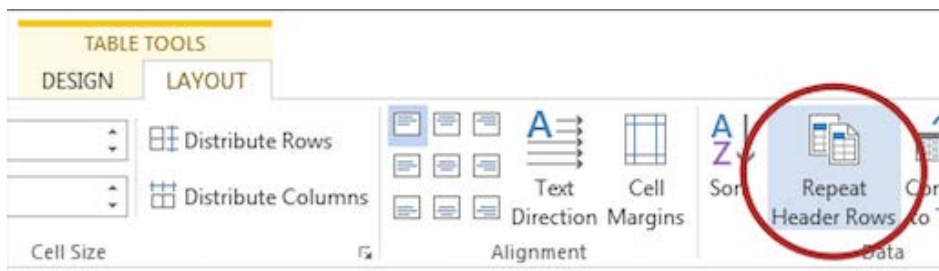

Creating Tables and Adding Alternative Text

1. Select the **Insert** tab on the ribbon, then select **Table > Insert Table.**
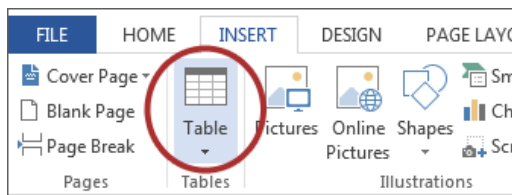
2. If your table has a column header(s), select **Table Tools > Layout** on the ribbon, then choose the **Repeat Header Rows** option in the **Data** group.
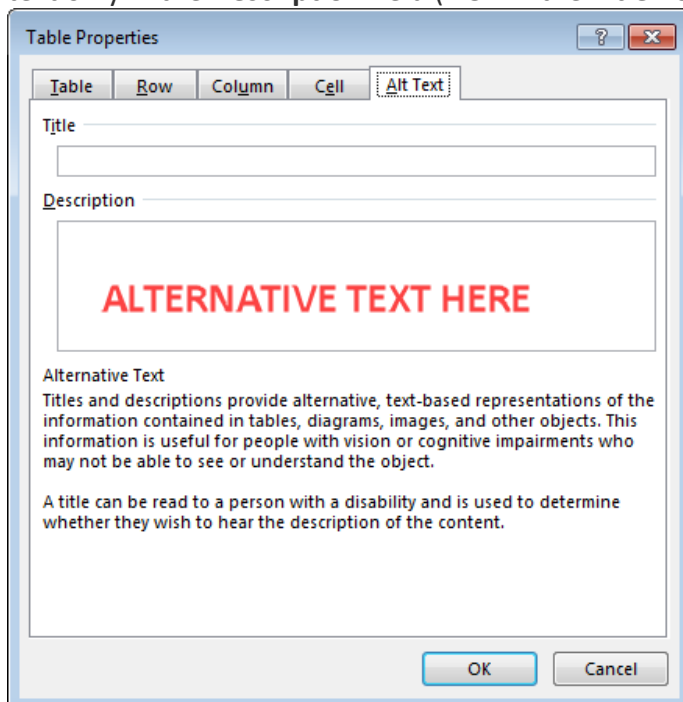

> **Important**
> Do NOT create tables "by hand" with spaces or the Tab key.

3. Add alt text to the table by selecting **Table Tools > Layout** on the ribbon, then choose the **Properties** option in the **Table** group.
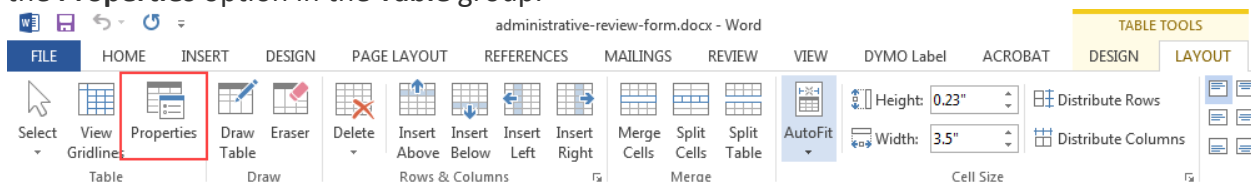

Select the **Alt Text** tab in the **Properties** window, and enter the appropriate alternative text only in the **Description** field (NOT in the **Title** field).

Editing Hyperlinks

1. Select a hyperlink, right-click, and select **Edit Hyperlink** or `Ctrl` + `K`.
2. Change the text in the **Text to display** field to a more meaningful description. Every link should make sense if the link text is read by itself. Screen reader users may choose to read only the links. Certain phrases like "click here" and "more" must be avoided.
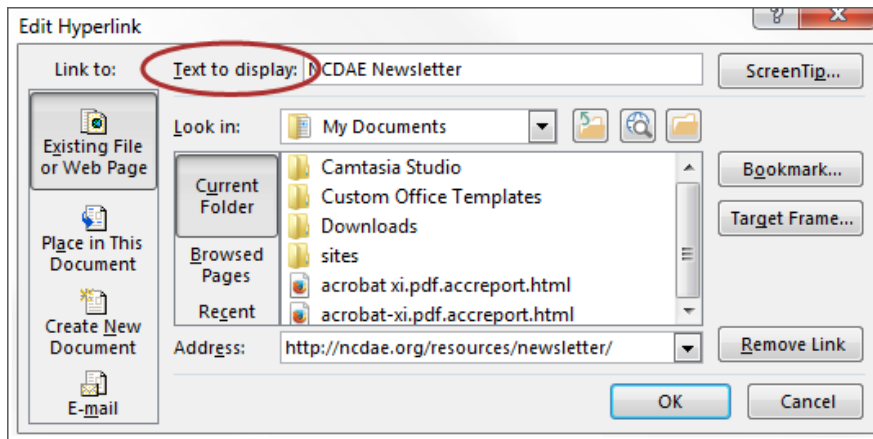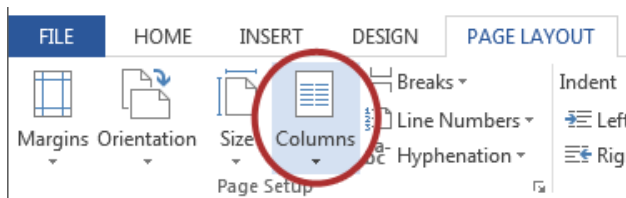

Creating Lists

1. Select the **Home** tab on the ribbon.
2. Choose the **Numbered List** or **Bulleted List** option from the **Paragraph** group.
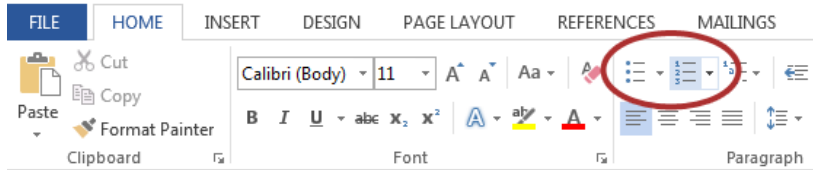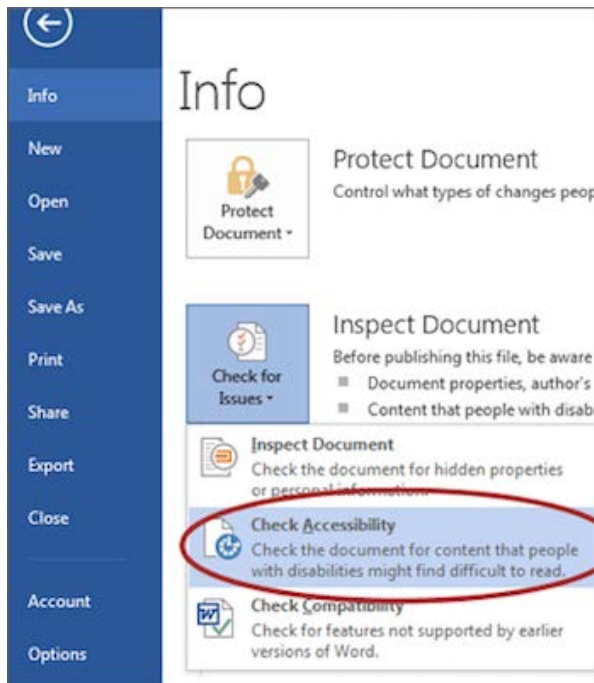

Creating Columns

1. Select the **Page Layout** tab on the ribbon.
2. Select **Columns** in the **Page Setup** group.

3. Choose the number of columns.

Using the Accessibility Checker

1. Select **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**.

The checker presents accessibility errors, warnings, and tips for making repairs. Clicking an item in the results highlights the corresponding item in the document and displays the **Additional Information** section:

- **Why Fix:** explains why the issue impacts accessibility.
- **How to Fix:** suggestions for repairing the issue.

Converting to PDF

Users can create PDF files with the Adobe Acrobat add-in, or by using Word to save the document as a PDF file. The file must be exported correctly. Do **NOT** use the Print to PDF option, as the file will **not** be correctly tagged.

Adobe Acrobat Add-in

1. First, double-check that the proper **Application Settings** are enabled in Word. You only need do this once:
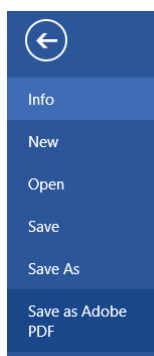   a. Select **Preferences** from the Acrobat ribbon.
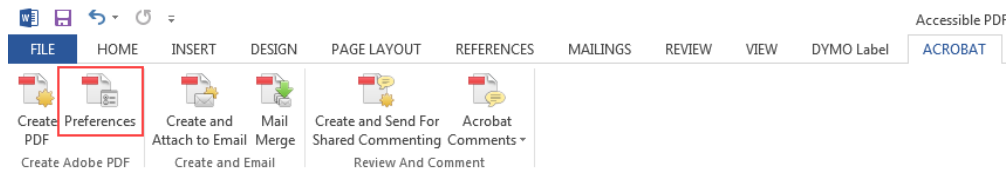
b. Ensure that the **Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF** setting is checked in the **Acrobat PDFMaker** dialog.
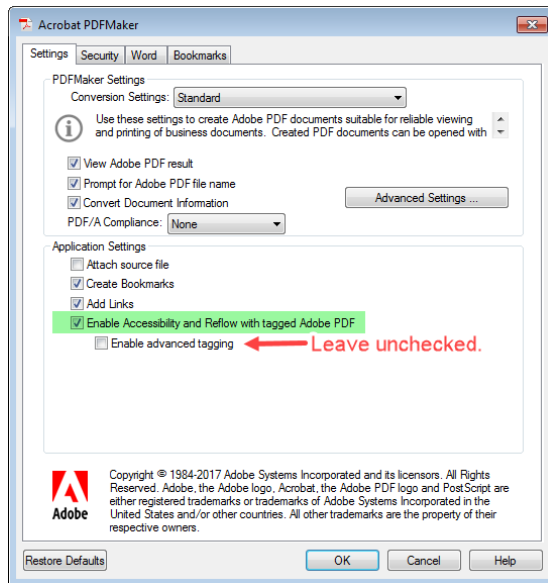
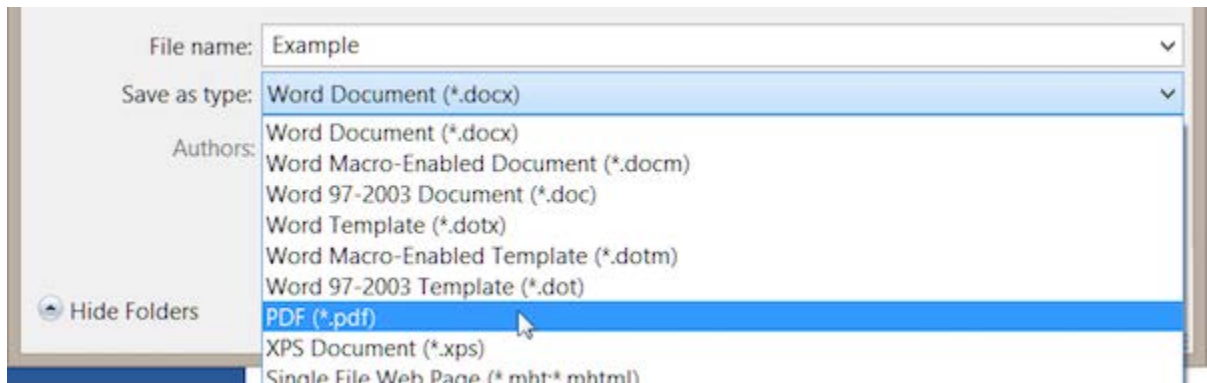2. Then, to export a PDF, select **Create PDF** from the Acrobat ribbon:

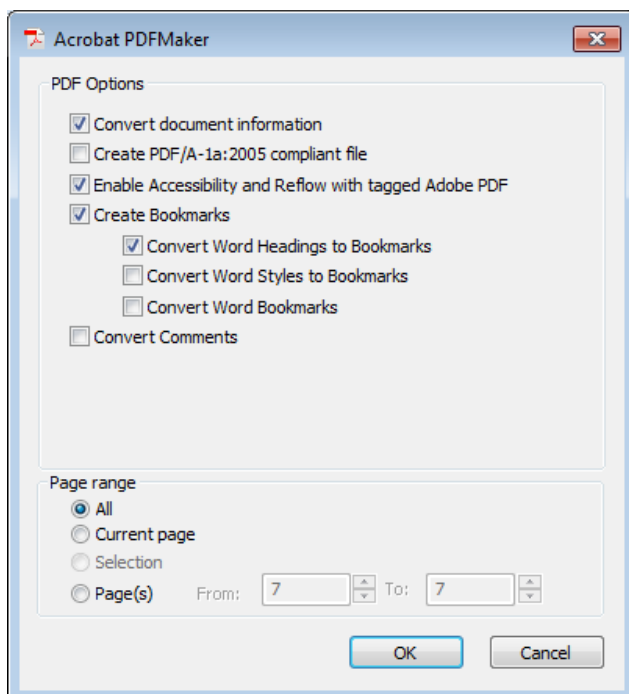OR select **File> Save as Adobe PDF**.

Saving to PDF with Word (without Adobe Acrobat add-in)

Accessible PDF files can be created without installing the Adobe Acrobat add-in:

1. Select **File > Save As**.
2. Under **Save as Type**, select **PDF**.

3. Before saving, select **Options** and ensure that the **Document structure tags for accessibility** option is selected.

Source: WebAIM. 2016, www.webaim.org.