

## Getting Started with Document Accessibility

To help you remember the best practices for document accessibility, use the mnemonic **SLIDE**, which stands for:

- **Styles** are used to properly mark up headings
- **Links** are meaningful
- **Images** have text alternatives
- **Design** is perceivable and predictable
- **Evaluation** is performed with an accessibility checker

### Styles are used to mark up section headings

Section headings reveal how the information is organized and make the document easier to scan. Properly marking up section headings with styles also improves navigation for screen reader users.

**Best Practices:** Select the desired heading text and choose an appropriate heading style (H1, H2 and so on) from the styles menu in your authoring tool. Make sure headings are nested in a logical order (e.g. H2 does not come before H1).

- [Mark Up Headings in Microsoft Word](#) (NC State)
- [Mark Up Headings in Google Docs](#) (Luis Perez)

### Links are meaningful

Screen reader users can use a shortcut to bring up a list of the links in a document. Links need to be unique and descriptive for them to make sense when they are accessed as a list, without the surrounding text for context.

**Best Practice:** Instead of “click here” or “learn more” select meaningful text (text that is descriptive and unique) and make that text the link.

- [Create Descriptive Links in Microsoft Word](#) (Microsoft)
- [Create Descriptive Links in Google Docs](#) (Luis Perez)

### Images include text alternatives

Screen readers can only describe an image to someone who is blind if a text alternative is provided. Text alternatives can also make complex images easier to understand for other learners.

**Best Practices:** After considering the purpose of the image and the context for its use, provide a concise description that focuses on the information the image conveys. If the image is only used for decoration, mark it as decorative (if your authoring tool has that option) or use “decorative” as the alternative text.

- [Adding Alternative Text in Microsoft Word for Office 365](#) (Microsoft)
- [Add Alternative Text in Microsoft Word 2016](#) (Diablo Community College)
- [Add Alternative Text in Google Docs](#) (Luis Perez)

## **Design is perceivable and predictable**

Through good design, you can reduce the amount of effort it takes your readers to process the information in a document, allowing them to focus on the meaning conveyed by the content rather than its presentation.

Best Practices:

- Ensure sufficient contrast between text and the background. This can be confirmed with the free [Colour Contrast Analyser](#) tool for Mac and Windows.
- Choose a sans-serif font (one without extra ornamentation) for your body text.
- Use left-alignment rather than fully-justified text. Full justification can add extra spacing between words that can be distracting to some readers.

## **Evaluation is performed with an accessibility checker**

Use the accessibility checker in your authoring tool if one is available to make sure your work meets basic accessibility requirements. Just remember that even the best of these automated accessibility checking tools have limitations. You should seek feedback from users of assistive technologies along with the results of accessibility checkers to ensure content is usable for all.

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The contents of this document were developed under a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Education, #H327Z190004. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Rebecca Sheffield, Ph.D.



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National Center on Accessible Educational Materials (2020). *Getting Started with Document Accessibility*. Wakefield, MA: National Center on Accessible Educational Materials