
Making a Microsoft Word document accessible

Centre for Innovation in Education

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University of Liverpool brand standards

The University of Liverpool has created a [Brand Toolkit](#) where you can find information regarding the use of fonts, sizes and the correct use for the University Logo. A [writing guide](#) has also been created to assist when writing content.

Important: The Brand Toolkit provides four font options. These are Freighttext Pro, Palatino Lino, Arial, and Montserrat. The use of Arial and Montserrat is recommended as they are a Sans Serif typeface and therefore are more accessible.

Making a document accessible

Paragraph styles

What are paragraph styles?

Paragraph styles are formatting instructions that the creator can set and apply to paragraphs and headings throughout their document.

Why use paragraph styles?

Paragraph styles are used to provide structure and clarity for those using screen readers. This enables the content to be read aloud in a logical order as well as giving the user an option to skip from heading to heading for easier navigation. From a creator's perspective, paragraph styles help speed up the creation of a document. They allow the creator to pre-set their chosen paragraph style which then remains consistent throughout the document and removes the need to change font details each time a new heading or paragraph is required.

Paragraph style structure example

Heading 1 - Title of your document

Heading 2 - Subtitle

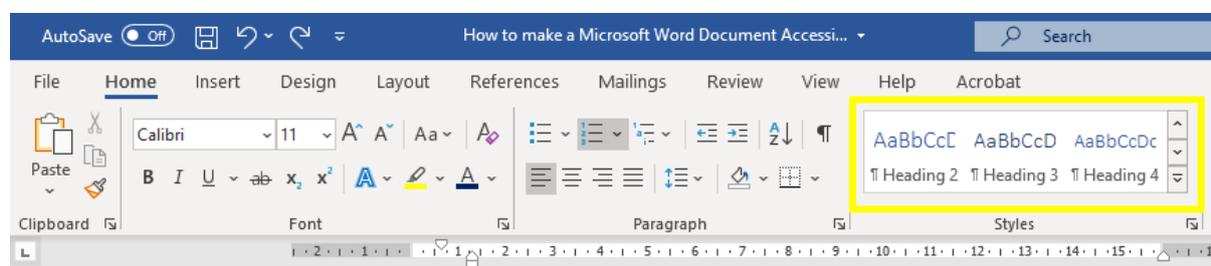
Heading 3 - Title within a subsection

Normal - Paragraph

How to locate the paragraph style editor

The paragraph style editor can be found within the **Home** tab.

1. Select the style for editing
2. Right click and select modify
 - a. Here the style can be renamed, or visual changes can be made
 - b. To change the line-height and paragraph settings, select the format button located bottom left and select paragraph
3. Once the changes have been made, they will then be present throughout the document. If a heading or paragraph is linked to the wrong style, highlight the content, and select the style it should be linked to



Adding spaces between paragraphs

If spacing is required between paragraphs, highlight the specific content, select the Line and Paragraph Spacing icon and then select either 'Add Space Before Paragraph' or 'Add Space After Paragraph'. The Paragraph spacing icon is located within the **Paragraph** section under the **Home** tab.

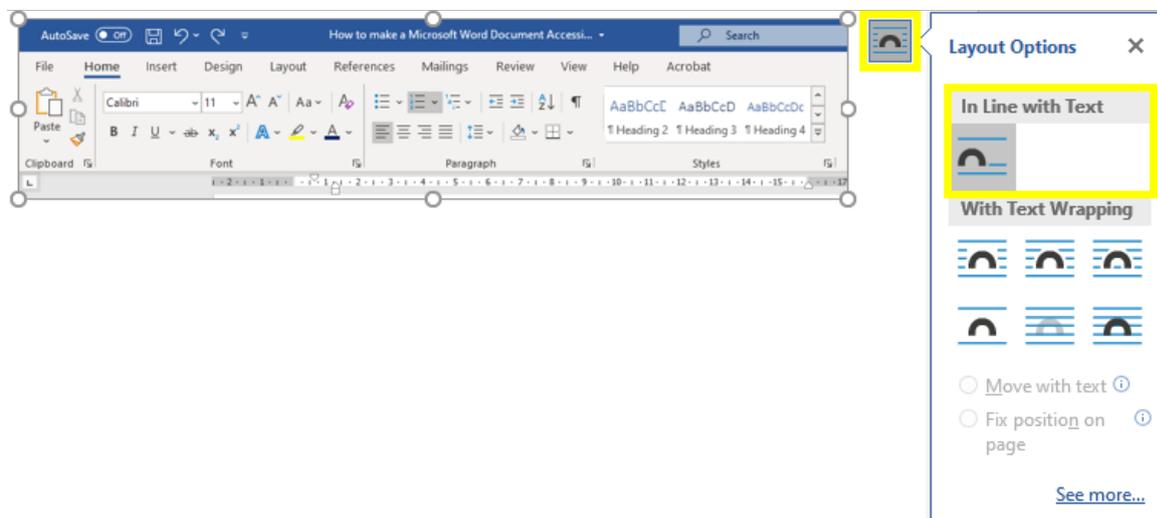
Important: Please do not click enter twice to start a new paragraph or to add spacing, as this causes the screen reader to read the break aloud. This is the same when content is required to move to the next page: in this instance a page break should be created. To do this click the **Insert** tab in the main toolbar and select **Page Break**.

Images

When adding images to the document, ensure they are set in line with text and that each image has Alternative Text.

Setting an image inline

1. Paste the required image into the document
2. Select the layout option button located to the right of the image and select **In Line with Text with Text** icon



Alternative Text

Alternative Text (Alt Text) is used to describe the meaning and context of an image. A screen reader will read the Alt Text aloud, allowing the users to know what is on their screen.

Therefore, a good description will dramatically improve the user's experience and will allow them not to miss out on key information.

Decorative text

Select **Mark as Decorative** when an image or graphic has no meaning or relevance to the content and is only there to offer a more visually appealing document. The screen reader will read that the image is decorative, and the user will know they are not missing any information.

Images

Consider

- keeping the description precise and describe the image as well as its purpose
- using no longer than two sentences
- what is important within the image

Do not

- repeat what the image is as this holds no value to the user
- use phrases such as 'image of' or 'graphic of' before describing the image

Try to

- describe what is in the image and provide as much detail as possible

Example

Bad practice: Image of students.

Good practice: Students attending a lecture. The lecture room is full, and the lecturer is standing at the front of the room pointing at a whiteboard with a remote clicker.

Diagrams and Charts

The Alt Text for diagrams and charts should be detailed and convey the information to the user. Give the user as much detail as possible so that they are receiving the same data and statistics as other users.

Images with text

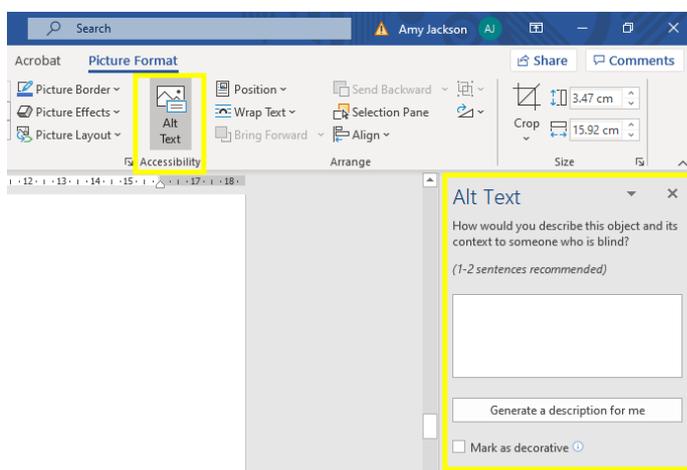
When using an image that has text within it, the Alt Text needs more consideration. Good practice is to:

- Mark as decorative if the text in the image is displayed in the content nearby
- Mark as decorative if the text in the image is to visually improve the document
- Images with text that are intended to be read, such as buttons, require Alt Text. The Alt Text should convey the action of the image and communicate the destination of the link.

How to add Alt Text

1. Select the image that has been inserted into the document
2. Select **Picture Format** from the top toolbar
3. Select **Alt Text** and insert description

Remember: Select **Mark as Decorative** if the image is for decorative purposes only



Using links within a document

When links are required within the document, it is important that they are included within a sentence as a 'hyperlink'. This should be assigned to one of the words or the sentence itself.

Do not use:

- Click here
- More information
- Full URL, for example <https://www.google.com>

Bad practice: To search Centre for Innovation in Educations resource database click [here](#)

Good practice: Centre for Innovation in Education has a variety of [resources](#) available to download

Using ScreenTips in a link

Adding a screen tip to a hyperlink can help the screen reader provide the user with more information about the link. An example of this would be adding a ScreenTip to a [Contact us](#) link within the document. Doing this allows ScreenTips to inform the user of the preferred method of contact, for example, via email. This will be displayed when hovering your cursor over the link or through the use of the screen reader functions.

Important: The ScreenTip feature will be removed if you convert the document to a pdf.

How to add a ScreenTip

1. Highlight the text where the link is required
2. Right click and select **Link**
3. Select which link to create
4. Select **ScreenTip**
5. Type in what is required for the screen tip. Based on the example above – 'Contact us via email'

Using tables

Tables created within Microsoft Word are accessible. However, an accessibility issue may occur when tables are designed to include split cells. In this instance, the best solution is to merge all cells.

Note: Split cells are defined as two cells that occupy the space of a single cell.

How to merge split cells

1. Highlight the row that is split
2. Right click and select **merge**

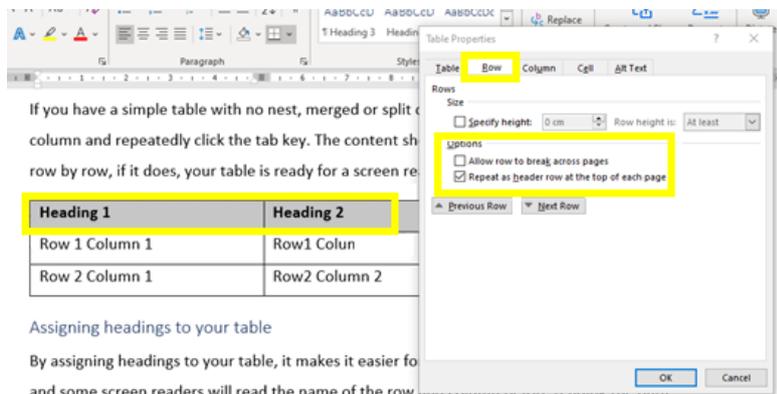
Assigning headings to the table

Assigning headings to the table will improve navigation for the screen reader. By using this function, some screen readers will be able to read the name of each row and column before reading the data, therefore, improving the experience for the user.

How to assign headings to the table

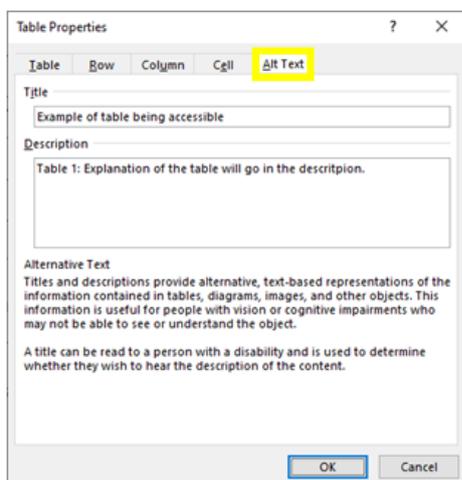
1. Select the row that is to be made a header
2. Right click and select **Table Properties**
3. Select the **Row** Tab
4. Check **Repeat as header** row at the top of each page
5. Uncheck, **Allow row to break across pages**

Important: Do not forget to add the table's Alt text whilst the property window is open



Assigning headings to your table

By assigning headings to your table, it makes it easier for screen readers to navigate and some screen readers will read the name of the row



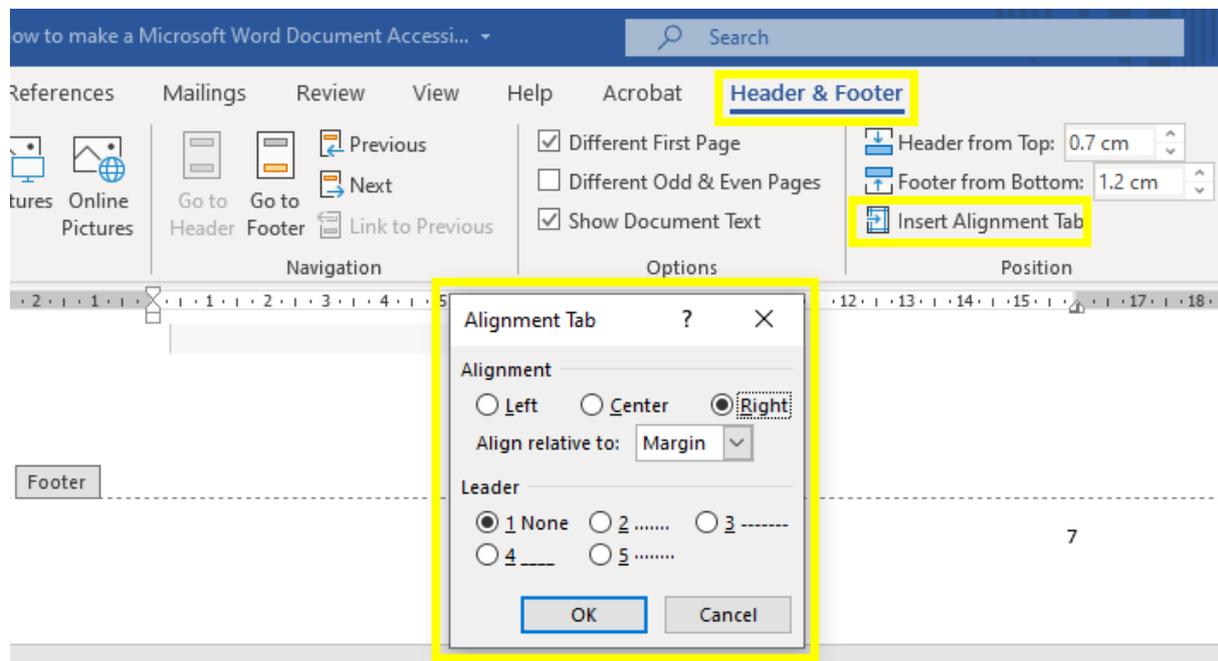
Testing the table's accessibility

Once the table is complete and contains no split cells it is ready to be tested for accessibility. To do this, click the first row in the first column and repeatedly click the tab key on the keyboard. For example, the content in an English language table should highlight from left to right, cell by cell, and row by row. If it does, the table is ready for a screen reader.

Headers

If when working with headers, text or images are required on both the left and right of the document, it is important that the tab function is not used to achieve this as accessibility issues will be caused.

Aligning text/images within the header



1. Double click **header and footer** to open the header menu
2. Insert image, add Alt Text, and select In **line with text**
3. Repeat step two for the second image
4. Select the second image and click **Insert Alignment Tab** and select **Right**
5. Select **OK**

Check document Accessibility

1. Select Review from the top tool bar
2. Select Check Accessibility
3. Accessibility check will appear with either issues to correct or no issues.

If preferred, accessibility can be checked and required alterations can be made, when the document is completed. It does not have to be done throughout the creation of the document. However, it is recommended that paragraph styles are used when creating the document as this will reduce formatting errors when completed.

Create accessible file names

When saving the document, it is important to ensure that a meaningful title name is provided. This gives an indication of the content within the document to the user.

Bad practice: Document 1

Good practice: How to make a Microsoft Word document accessible May 2020

Tip: An additional good practice is to include the Month and Year within the document title.

Add Document Information

Under the accessibility guidelines, the Title and Author of the document is required to be added.

1. Select **File** from the top toolbar
2. Select **Info**
3. On the right-hand side under properties there will be a tab titled **Title and Author**.
Here, it is possible to add as many authors as is required.

Please remember the accessibility issues outlined above also apply when creating a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. A guide has been put together which discusses how to make an [Accessible PowerPoint Presentation](#).



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