OCFO

SECTION 508 COMPLIANCE

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TIPS FOR MAKING DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBLE

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS SECTION 508?

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended is a set of standards that requires Federal agencies to make information and communication technology (ICT) accessible to employees and members of the public who have disabilities in a comparable manner to the access experienced by employees and members of the public without disabilities.

Compliance to Section 508 not only pertains to technological equipment, such as computers and phones, but also documentation that is disseminated to the public and our fellow employees. Below are helpful tips to ensure documents

created using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Adobe PDF are accessible.

MICROSOFT WORD

Word provides a set of accessibility features that is sufficient to enable the production of accessible digital office documents. In addition, Word includes an accessibility checking feature. Here are some techniques that are useful for making your documents accessible:

1. Document Layout and Formatting
   a. The document must be formatted using Style elements in a hierarchical manner (i.e., headings different from body text etc.)
   b. The document must refrain from using flashing/flickering text and/or animated text.
   c. Page numbering codes must be used as opposed to manually typed page numbers.
   d. If footnotes are present, they must be created through Word Footnote linking.
   e. If color is used to emphasize the importance of selected text, there must be an alternate method.
   f. The Bullet style must be used as opposed to manually typed characters (e.g. Hyphens).
   g. Track Changes must be accepted or rejected and turned off.
   h. All comments and formatting marks must be turned off.
   i. The Document must be reviewed in Print Preview for a final visual check.
   j. All URLs must contain the correct hyperlink and display the fully qualified URL and be hyperlinked with the full address (i.e., http://www.usda.gov not www.usda.gov)
   k. All URL's must be linked to an active Web destination.

2. Document Images
   a. All images, grouped images, and non-text elements that convey information must have alternative text descriptions.
   b. Complex images must have descriptive text immediately after the image.
   c. The document must be free of background images or watermarks.
   d. The image text wrapping style "In Line with Text "should be used for all images.
   e. Multiple associated images must be grouped as One Object (i.e., Organizational Charts).
   f. All multi-layered objects must be flattened into one image and use one Alternative Text (Alt Tag) for the image. Text boxes must not be used for simple graphics.

3. Document Tables
   a. Tables must be used, to create a tabular structure (not tabs or spaces). i.e. Do not use tabs or spaces to display columns of information.
   b. All tables must read from left to right, top to bottom.

c. Tables containing 'data' must have the first row designated as a 'Header Row' in table properties.
d. Tables must not use merged cells.
e. If tables are used, where appropriate, they should be described and labeled.
f. Rows should not break across pages as it will make it more difficult. In MS-Word, Table properties, the "Allow to break across pages" must be unchecked.

Notes/ Additional Requirements:

A. The document file name must not contain spaces and/or special characters.
B. The document file name must be concise, generally limited to 20-30 characters, and make the contents of the file clear in the context in which it is presented.
C. The document must utilize the recommended fonts i.e., Times New Roman, Verdana, Arial, Tahoma and Helvetica.
D. The Document Properties (i.e., Subject, Author, Title, Keywords, and Language) must be properly filled out. Note: For "Author" do not use individuals name or contractor name. Should use government organization name (i.e., RD).
E. Files that contain a Table of Contents (TOC) must use the TOC field (e.g., created using the TOC Command in MS Word).
F. A separate accessible version of the document must be provided when there is no other way to make the content accessible. (Example: An organizational chart).

Source:
Coleman, Rick. "Section 508." *Section 508 Guides*, June 2014, https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/rd_cio/csd/ea/section508/Section%20508%20Guides/Forms/AllItems.aspx.

ADOBE PDF

Adobe Acrobat has many tools available to ensure that Adobe PDFs meet accessibility standards such as: the 'Make Accessible" tool located in the Action Wizard toolset, an Accessibility Checker, and an Accessibility Report summarizing the areas that need to be remediated within the PDF.

1. Ensure the 'Document Properties' are filled in correctly.
2. Any PDF over 9 pages must be bookmarked.
3. Design your source document with accessibility in mind.
4. Do NOT use character formatting for headings, use the program's styles.
5. Add alternative text to graphics in the source file.
6. Use a table editor if available to create tables, but do not use it to create layouts.
7. Set your PDF output preferences option to 'tagged PDF.'
8. For a walk through of the steps required to make a PDF accessible use the 'Make Accessible' action.
   o Choose Tools > Action Wizard
   o From the Actions List, click 'Make Accessible
   o Add the files you want to apply the 'Make Accessible' action to.
   o Click 'Start'
9. To check the accessibility of existing PDFs:
   o Choose Tools > Accessibility
   o Click 'Full Check/ Accessibility Check'
   o In 'Report Options' section, select the options for how you

- o want to view the results.
- o Select one or more 'Checking Options'
- o Click 'Start Checking'

Source: Adobe Systems Incorporated. "Adobe® Acrobat® X Creating Accessible PDF Files from Microsoft® Word." 2011, https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/rd_cio/csd/ea/section508/Section%20508%20Guides/acrobat-x-accessible-pdf-from-word.pdf

MICROSOFT POWERPOINT

When creating an accessible PowerPoint presentation, it is important to design the slide show from the start with accessibility in mind.

1. Be sure to click the Normal View icon in the lower left of the screen. Also, be sure you are in the Outline View at the top left of the screen.
   - o The outline pane shows your presentation text without any graphics. The slide pane shows how each individual slide of your presentation looks. The notes pane shows the author's notes and is where you describe any graphics in the slide. The screen shot below shows the three different panes.
2. Contrast between the background and text is important for viewers with vision difficulties. Therefore, light backgrounds paired with dark text or dark backgrounds paired with light text enhance readability. Simple solid colors also reduce distractions and allow users to focus on the content
3. Images within your slideshow that convey information must have alt text to be accessible to assistive technologies. Alt text should provide the same information that the image is conveying. Both charts and tables should contain different types of identifying labels to provide additional cues to people who may not be accessing your slide show visually.
   - o Be sure to click in the Notes pane "Click to add notes" and describe the graphic.
4. Tables should have a logical layout of information based on rows and columns. In addition, the tables should be oriented so that they read from left to right and top to bottom.
   - o Tables should have clear and concise column and row headers. Column and row headers should help the reader identify how data are separated and organized in the table.
   - o Tabular data should be displayed using a table. Using tabs or spaces to provide a tabular format of data is not acceptable.
   - o Row and column headers should start in the first left-hand column of the table.

5. To ensure the presentation has a logical order, you can click the tab key on your keyboard to select objects in a slide in sequence. The tab sequence is the same order that a screen reader will use to read the slide.
6. Additional resources for other versions of PowerPoint:
    o http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dmb/How_to_Make_Your_PowerPt_Presentations_Accessible5_199082_7.pdf
    o http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint-help/creating-accessiblepowerpoint-presentations-HA102013555.aspx

Notes/ Additional Requirements:

A. Color: Make sure there is a contrast between the foreground and background. Don't use color to emphasize a point.
B. Fonts: Sans-serif fonts such as Ariel, Helvetica, or Verdana work best with screen readers.

source:

Coleman, Rick. "Section 508." Section 508 Guides, June 2014, https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/rd_cio/csd/ea/section508/Section%20508%20Guides/Forms/AllItems.aspx.
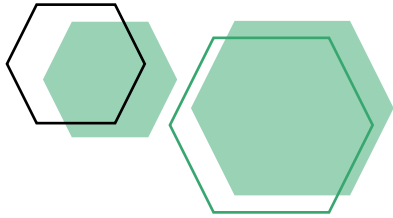
MICROSOFT EXCEL

1. A consistent convention must be used throughout the document and a note should be provided indicating the direction of the text flow, indicating whether it is top to bottom or left to right.

2. For Data Tables Identify Row and Column Headers. Headings must be clearly separated from other text so that it is better understandable.

3. Provide a text equivalent for all non-text elements. This can be done through providing descriptive text titles for elements by adding text wherever possible. Examples are titles for charts and alternative text for pictures and diagrams.

4. Ensure that hyperlinked text makes sense out of content. Hyperlinked phrases such as "click here" can be confusing for people who use screen readers. Make each hyperlink descriptive of the content to which it links.

5. Ensure that documents that use color are understandable for people who cannot perceive color. Color and highlighting can be used for markup but should not be the only way to provide information.

6. If color is used, use a high contrast between background colors and text colors. People with low vision may not be able to read text that does not have a high degree of contrast between text and background. Use light text on dark backgrounds and dark text on light backgrounds.

7. Label each worksheet with a meaningful name. Each worksheet should be labeled aptly as opposed to Sheet1, Sheet2, etc which are the default sheet names.

8. Provide titles for rows or columns of related information. If a column lists a series that contains numbers or other information that are related to one another, create a descriptive header above the series signifying what the series are. For example, consider a column of expenses followed by a total of all the expenses at the bottom of the column. Provide a header at the top, such as Expenses, and create another label for the total at the bottom, in a cell next to the total result, in the same format as Expenses.

9. **For more guidelines on making Excel documents accessible, visit OCIO's Sharepoint at:**
   https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/rd_cio/csd/ea/section508/Section%20508%20Guides/Forms/AllItems.aspx

If you have any questions/comments please contact the 508 Compliance team at Section508.OCFO@usda.gov.