

A Guide for Accessible Document Design

Accessible digital content is fundamental to good communications. Please follow this checklist that has been developed in partnership with accessibility consultants [All Able](#).

Inclusive, user-centred design is fundamental. The content you add and how you format it can make a huge difference to accessibility. Following this checklist will help you to create accessible, user-centred documents that have been “designed” such as Faraday Insights, training guides and the Annual Report.

1. Use proper heading styles:
 - Use the built-in heading features of the authoring tool.
 - Headings should form an outline of the page content:
 - Heading 1 for main heading
 - Heading 2 for first level of sub-headings
 - Heading 3 for the next level of sub-headings, etc.
 - Don't simply edit the appearance of text to make it stand out as a heading (i.e., increase font size and underline).
 - The heading tools create structures that allows screen reader software to identify different sections. This enables screen reader users to understand how the page is organised, and to quickly navigate to content of interest.
 - [Microsoft guidance on accessible headings](#).
2. Make sure that text can be selected, copied, and pasted into another location; for example, do not embed or design text in an image.
3. Write meaningful link text (text that links to a web address) that describes its destination. It needs to make sense when it is read out of context.
 - Don't write: "[Click here](#) to visit the Faraday Institution website"
 - Write: "[Visit the Faraday Institution website](#)"
 - [Microsoft guidance on accessible links](#).
 - [Creating accessible links](#). Learn to create accessible links, in documents, websites and other digital media platforms that are clear, understandable, and perceivable to users.
4. Use bullets or numbered lists to help people scan your content and quickly find what they need. Use the list styles so that screen readers (and those that use them) know that it is a list. Don't add spaces and dashes manually.
5. Add appropriate alternative text (alt text) if possible – or a full text alternative if the image conveys information not otherwise available.

- Complex graphics such as infographics or flow charts can't be described through the 'alt text'. You will need to provide a full text alternative. In Microsoft Office:
 - Right-click the object and select **Edit Alt Text**. Select the object and then select the format menu for the object, for example, **Picture Format**. Select **Alt Text**.
 - In the **Alt Text** pane, type 1-2 sentences in the text box to describe the object and its context to someone who cannot see it.
- For purely decorative images you should 'mark them as decorative'. In Microsoft Office:
 - Open the **Alt Text** pane, do one of the following:
 - Right-click an image, and then select **Edit Alt Text**.
 - Select an image, select **Format > Alt Text**.
 - Select the **Mark as decorative** checkbox. The text entry field becomes greyed out.
 - Most social media platforms have an accessibility option with alt text for posts, but they have varying character limits. You can also describe the image in the post or as a caption.
 - [Microsoft guidance on alternative text](#).

6. Use bulleted lists instead of tables where you can.

- If your data is best presented in a table, try to keep the table simple. Table structure matters. Don't use tables simply for layout; only use a table to display data.
- If the table is complex, consider whether you could use lists or divide it into multiple smaller tables with a heading above each.
- A key to making data tables accessible to screen reader users is to clearly identify table header rows.
- For screen reader users, it is also useful to add a short descriptive caption for each table under Table Properties > Alt Text.
- Keep the structure simple: don't split cells, merge cells, or use nested tables.
- [Microsoft guidance on creating tables in documents](#).

7. Don't use colour alone to convey meaning (many people are colour blind). If using text on a coloured background or image background, you need to check its colour contrast. The following tools are available to help you check colour contrasts:

- [Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office](#)
- [TPGi's Colour Contrast Analyser](#)

8. Fonts and styles can make a big difference to how accessible your information is:
 - Avoid underlining text unless it's a link.
 - Avoid italics or all capitals (they're harder to read if you have dyslexia).
 - Always left-align body text (to help dyslexic readers).
 - Use bold sparingly as it slows down reading and can look 'shouty'.
9. Use these plain English techniques to help you edit your draft texts and documents. Editing your text into plain English will make it clearer and more concise; this helps everyone quickly understand your message and is especially helpful to assistive technology users and those with dyslexia.
10. Check the accessibility of your work for example using the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office.

Further information

- Microsoft Office's Accessibility Centre. Microsoft 365 is committed to inclusive design and developing accessible products and content. On this page, you'll find resources and tools to make your content accessible for all to support the disability community as allies.
- Make things accessible. A repository for guidance material and useful resources for organisations looking to improve their digital accessibility.