

Accessible Word documents

Introduction

Many digital documents are created and read in Word. It is therefore important that the texts are digitally accessible. Word is in itself a reasonably accessible programme. In order to guarantee accessibility for everyone, some tips follow below.

Tips for improving accessibility

- **Accessibility check.** When creating the document, use the accessibility check (Check > Check Accessibility).
- **Title.** Give the Word file a clear title that clearly conveys the content information.
- **Headings.** Make sure the document is well-structured. Assign headings to the appropriate heading level. Do not designate headings but use the official Word headings of the template. This allows screen readers to recognise the headings.
- **Lists.** In the source document, use Word's list option and do not just indicate lists with, for example, the minus (-) sign.
- **Language.** Preferably use one language. Students with dyslexia sometimes have difficulty with other languages. Try not to make sentences too long. Long sentences are often difficult for students with dyslexia to follow. Explain complex situations that require a lot of text using pictures. Divide the topics into paragraphs and regularly include white spaces to distinguish between them. Use short, clear and concise sentences for examination questions and examination instructions. Students who have difficulties in processing information suffer even more from examination stress.
- **Font and font size.** Avoid changing the font and size in order to make parts of the text stand out. Preferably use sans serif fonts such as Helvetica, Arial, Verdana or Calibri, font size 12, line spacing 1.5.
- **Images.** Ensure that images are accompanied by alternative descriptive text. Images are not discernible to visually impaired students using assistive reading software. Avoid using text in images as the only method of conveying information. Otherwise, provide a brief description of the image in the alternative text and state the presence and purpose of the text.
- **Numbers.** Write numbers as numerals except when they do not represent specific facts (several hundreds). The same applies to ordinal numbers (2nd and 3rd).
- **Formulas.** The best way to write formulas is with MathML. If that does not work, the formulas can also be written out.
- **Colour contrast.** Make sure there is sufficient contrast between foreground and background colours. Make sure that colour is not the only means of conveying text. For graphics, use shading rather than colour contrast.
- **Hyperlinks.** Add relevant text for hyperlinks and screen info. Do not use 'click here'. Students with screen readers sometimes scan a list of links. Links should therefore convey clear and accurate information.

More information:

- [Microsoft](#)
- [Contrast and Colour Accessibility](#)
- [W3C Math Home](#)
- [Writing out formulas](#)

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