

# Accessibility in Word

## Accessible Tables

Tables with bad structure can be difficult for screen reader users. Screen readers read from left to right and top to bottom. It expects each row to have a consistent number of columns and each column to have a consistent number of rows. Split or merged table cells can create understanding issues for users of a screen reader. Tables should only contain small amounts of data. Excel is a better choice if you are dealing with a large amount of data. When using tables keep them simple.

Never use tables as a layout tool, only for data. Never use blank cells, split, or merged cells to create space within a table. If you need additional space, then use the formatting tools within the Table Properties to create it. The addition of space may be helpful to address accessibility issues of those with learning disabilities. Many users will use the first row of a table to contain text that identifies the column's data. Often this text will be bolded or colored as a header indicator. The cells in the row may be shaded with a color. These format changes by themselves are not a problem and may make the table easier to read for others but does not add structure for a screen reader. With a row properly identified as a Header Row, a screen reader will repeat each column's header value as it reads the content of each cell below that header. This can help screen reader users identify the purpose of the contents of that column's cell as well as their location within the row. Additionally, the **Header Row** properties export if the document export is to HTML or PDF file formats. Use the **Alt Text** tab to help provide an explanation and purpose of the data in much the same way as describing an image.

## Tagging a Header Row from Table Properties

1. Select the row that contain the **Headers** for the columns.
2. Right-click the row and choose **Table Properties**. With the row selected the **Table Properties** opens to the **Row** tab.
3. Check the box next to **Repeat as header row at the top of each page**.
4. Click **OK**.

#### ***Tagging a Table Row from Table Properties***

1. Select the row that contain the **Headers** for the columns.
2. On the menu ribbon click the **Layout** tab that is next to the **Table Design** tab.
3. Click on the **Repeat Header Rows** icon in the **Data** section of the ribbon.

#### ***Changing cell sizes, margins, cell spacing in Table Properties***

1. Select row(s), column(s), or cell(s) in a table.
2. Right-click and choose **Table Properties**.
3. Choose the **Row**, **Column**, or **Cell** tabs and specify the height or width of the cells.
4. Choose the **Table** tab and **Options** to change the **Default cell margins** or **Allow spacing between cells**.
5. Click **OK**. Click **OK**.