

Accessibility in Word

Other Things to Consider

While this course has tried to cover most of the accessibility issues you will encounter in a document, there are several other things to consider that didn't fit well within the other units.

Fonts

The WCAG 2.1 Success Criteria do not mandate a font choice. However, there are several best practice considerations that the community has suggested.

1. A screen reader cannot read text within a graphic, additionally text within a graphic can pixelate when enlarged. When given a choice always use real text.
2. Limit the number of fonts used in a document and be consistent in how they are used.
3. Use basic fonts that will be available on most systems unless you are going to embed them within a document.
4. Make sure the fonts are easily readable. For example, the Verdana font, built primarily for screen viewing, does have more spacing between the font glyphs, which can improve readability.
5. Sparingly use **bold**, *italics*, and ALL-CAPS.
6. Avoid cursive and fantasy fonts.
7. Because underlining is associated with hyperlinks, avoid using it for straight text whenever possible.

Text Spacing and Size

WCAG 2.1 Success Criteria 1.4.12 Text Spacing (Level AA) offers the following guidelines designed to make text accessible for people with cognitive or reading disabilities.

- Line height (line spacing) to at least 1.5 times the font size.
- Spacing following paragraphs to at least 2 times the font size.
- Letter spacing (tracking) to at least 0.12 times the font size.
- Word spacing to at least 0.16 times the font size.

While this is easier to accomplish with web CSS text style properties, in word font choice, paragraph spacing, line spacing, and font properties can adequately accomplish these guidelines. Best practices recommend that font size be a minimum of 12 points and some recommend 14 points. Since it is possible to zoom in or out on a display screen this is not as critical except for materials to be printed.

Use of White Space, and Bullets

The use of white space between paragraphs make the text easier to read because it helps to chunk the content down into smaller digestible pieces. It can keep people from getting lost in long blocks of text. Along with the use of white space to break up large blocks of text, using bullets, whenever possible and appropriate, to separate ideas or points can help with the readability of the text for those with cognitive or reading disabilities.

Color and Contrast

WCAG 2.1 Success Criteria 1.4.1 (Level A): “Color is not used as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.” This helps people who may have limited color vision. Additionally, text narrative should avoid using language like “all required fields are in red”. Additional clues such as text in bold should be provided.

Success Criteria 1.4.3 (Level AA) sets a minimum of a contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for text and images.

Success Criteria 1.4.11 (Level AA) requires that graphical objects such components of charts and user interface components have a contrast of at least 3:1.

Since Word 2016 does not have built-in contrast checking external applications will have to be used to validate these values.