

Accessible Microsoft Word Documents

This quick guide highlights common accessibility practices in Word but is not a complete compliance checklist. For full guidance, consult the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#). Mac and PC versions of Word may look slightly different, but the overall process for accessing and using accessibility features is similar.

Heading Styles

Create a clear and [meaningful heading structure using Word's built-in Styles](#). Proper headings help screen reader users navigate the document and improve accessibility for everyone.

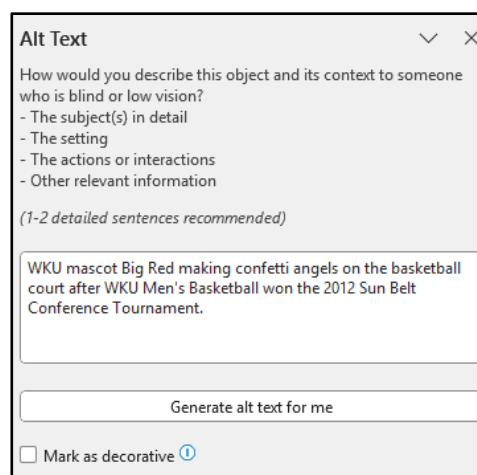
1. Start a new line or select the existing text you want to format as a heading.
2. Go to the **Home** tab and select the appropriate heading style from the **Styles** panel.



Alternative text

[Alternative text, or alt text, is a brief written description of an image](#). It allows people using screen readers to understand the purpose or meaning of images in a Word document.

1. Right-click the image and select **View Alt Text**. The Alt Text pane will open.
2. Enter a clear, accurate description of the image in the text box.
3. If the image is decorative, check **Mark as decorative** instead of adding alt text.



Meaningful Links

Use descriptive link text instead of pasting a full URL or using generic phrases such as “Click here” or “Link.” Clearly linked text helps all users understand where the link will take them, especially when links are read aloud by a screen reader.

1. Right-click the existing link and select **Edit Hyperlink**, or press **Ctrl + K**.
2. In the **Text to Display** field, replace the URL or generic wording with a meaningful description.
3. Choose link text that clearly identifies the destination or purpose of the link. On the next page are three examples of URLs: a copy and pasted URL, hyperlinked text that needs improvement, and a hyperlink with meaningful text.

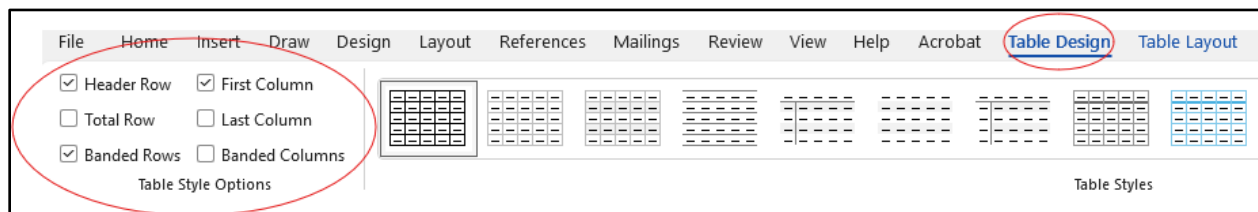
- **URL:** <https://support.microsoft.com/en-US/Word/create-or-edit-a-hyperlink>
- **Needs improvement:** [Click Here](#).
- **Hyperlink with meaningful text:** [How to create or edit a hyperlink in Word](#).

Tables

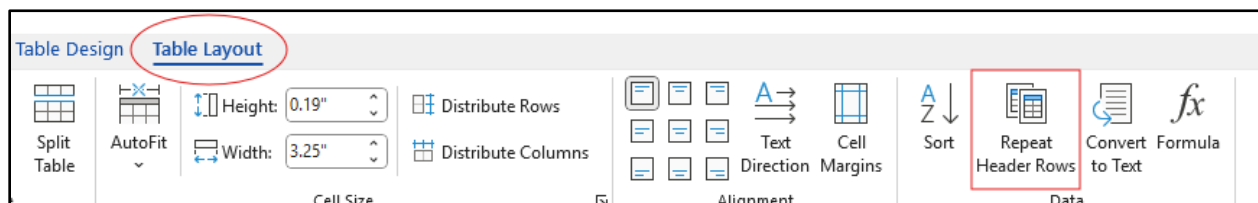
Tables should be used to organize data, not to control the visual layout of a document. Accessible tables help screen reader users understand how information is organized and how each cell relates to the table headers.

Keep tables simple. Avoid merged or split cells, blank rows or columns, and complex layouts, as these can make the table difficult for screen readers to interpret. Use tables only when information needs to be presented in rows and columns.

1. Identify the first row as a header row so users can understand what each column represents.



2. Select the header row, open the **Table Layout** tab, and choose **Repeat Header Rows**. This helps the header row remain available when a table continues onto another page.



3. Add a brief table title or introduction about the table so users understand the purpose of the table.

Color Contrast

Make sure all text and images are clear and easy to read. Use strong color contrast between text and background. Avoid relying on font color or highlighting to show importance, as this can be difficult for people who are colorblind, have low vision, or are simply trying to read the document clearly. For example:

- **Needs improvement:** The Midterm Exam will be on Blackboard. It will **open at 8:00AM on May 1, 2026** and will be **due by 11:59PM on May 3, 2026**.
- **Improved:** The Midterm Exam will be on Blackboard. It will open at 8:00AM on May 1, 2026 and will be due by 11:59PM on May 3, 2026.