

Best Practices for Section 508, Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word Tables

Microsoft Word 2003 has the capability to allow the creator to give the table header and row identification.

Recommendation: For tables that have only column headers, the following is an instruction on how to make Word tables Section 508 compliant.

- In the Word table place the cursor in the first column of the table.
- Select the “Insert” menu and choose “Bookmark”
- Type “ColumnTitle” and press “Enter”

Note: The title “ColumnTitle” can only be used once; you may name your subsequent titles differently like in this example “ColumnTitle_Version”.

For tables that have row and column headers, the following is an instruction on how to make Word tables Section 508 compliant.

- Place the cursor in a cell where the row and header columns meet
- Open the “Insert” menu and press “Bookmark”
- Type “Title” and press “Enter”

For only row headings:

- Place the cursor in the column containing the headings
- Open the “Insert” menu and press “Bookmark”
- Type “RowTitle” and press “Enter”

Use the “Table” menu option to construct tables. Avoid non-uniform tables. A uniform data table that has been formatted as per the instructions above to provide row and header identification will always meet compliance standards.

Images

Images in the native format of Microsoft Word need to be text described directly beneath the image. The “alt” attribute only works for the web view and not native Microsoft Word. Screen reader users generally download the Word file to the desktop because it is more accessible than the Word file displayed in the browser. Web view alternate text is used only before exporting the document to HTML or PDF.

The document creator can also right click the image and select “Caption” to enter a caption.

An example follows.



The Seal of the Department of Veterans Affairs

The description is placed directly below the image that it represents.

Pictures of people, places and things can be given descriptions. A picture of a chart, or a graph, or of text must be fully described. Charts and tables must be described in greater detail, which means including numbers and what those numbers represent. If the picture is of a data table, recreate the table in Word and provide the table with row and header identification as described above.

Note: Textboxes are not detected by screen readers and their use is discouraged when assembling compliant documents.

Microsoft Word Forms

Instructions from GW Micro on How to Make Word Forms Section 508 Compliant (These instructions will make a Word document compliant for Freedom Scientific JAWS also.)

Window-Eyes will easily read Microsoft Word form controls when designed with accessibility in mind. Creating accessible documents often falls on the part of a sighted individual who may or may not be familiar with accessibility aids such as Window-Eyes. It is important, therefore, to have both a mouse oriented way of creating accessible Word forms, and a keyboard method so that both Window-Eyes users and non-Window-Eyes users can achieve the same goal: document accessibility.

Note: All of these instructions are written for use with Microsoft Word 2003. Although exact steps for other versions of Microsoft Word may vary, the concepts remain the same.

Creating Accessible Word Forms with the Mouse

The following example shows how to insert a form control into a Microsoft Word document, provide descriptive text for that control, and protect a document, all while using the mouse.

Inserting a Form Control

1. Launch Word.
2. Open the View menu.
3. Select the Toolbars pull down.
4. Select the Forms toolbar.
5. Select the Text Form Field button (ab|). This will place an edit box form control in the document.
6. Right click the edit box form control, and select Properties.
7. Select the Add Help Text button.
8. In the Form Field Help Text dialog, enter text that describes the control into the "Type your own" edit box. For example, "First Name."
9. Select OK.
10. Select OK again.

These basic steps can be performed on any form control:

- Add the control
- Access the control's properties
- Add help text.

Once a document has been completed, it must be protected in order for a Window-Eyes user to interact with the form.

Protecting a Document

1. Open the Tools menu.
2. Select Protect Document.
3. Check the "Allow only this type of editing in the document" check box.
4. Select Filling in form from the Editing Restrictions combo box.
5. Select the "Yes, Start Enforcing Protection" button.
6. Select OK to bypass the Password dialog.

Note that when a form is protected, Window-Eyes users will only be able to navigate between form controls. In other words, if additional text exists in the document describing the function of the form controls, that text will not be accessible while the document is protected. To avoid having the user switch back and forth between protected and unprotected (which may not even be possible if the document protection requires a password, and that password is unavailable to the user), make sure to add appropriately descriptive text to the form control. For example, if an edit box requires a number to be entered in a specific format, enter those instructions into the help text (i.e. "Please enter your social security number, excluding any dashes").

For more information on creating accessible Word documents, please visit: [Microsoft Office Training: Create an accessible Office document](#).

For Excel an HTML alternative with HTML coding to provide the table row and header identification is recommended.

For PowerPoint either an HTML alternative with HTML coding to provide alt text for images; or a text-only PowerPoint presentation is recommended.