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508 Compliance Tip Sheet and Resources

Purpose	This tool provides a list of tips for formatting documents and websites to be 508 Compliant. These tips can be applied to various document formats such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, as well as Adobe PDF documents.
Format	This tool provides bulleted instruction on how to format documents to be 508 compliant.
Audience	This tool is designed primarily for researchers from the Model Systems that are funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The tool can be adapted by other NIDRR-funded grantees and the general public.
Resources	Other sources of information about 508 compliance including standards, procedures, guidance and checklists.

In this document, we first define 508 Compliance followed by procedures and tips for making 508 compliant the four types of documents:

- [Microsoft Word \(2010\)](#)
- [Adobe PDF](#)
- [Microsoft PowerPoint](#)
- [Microsoft Excel](#)

Definition

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is an amendment enacted in 1998. It relates to electronic and information technology and requires Federal agencies to make their technology accessible to people with disabilities. The law applies to the development, procurement, maintenance, or use of electronic and information technology by all Federal departments or agencies. This eliminates barriers in information technology, making available new opportunities for people with disabilities, and encouraging development of technologies that will help achieve these goals. The overall goal is for individuals with disabilities to have access to and be able to use information and data that is comparable to the access and use by individuals without disabilities. More information can be found [here](#).

Microsoft Word (2010)

Word 2010 provides a set of accessibility features that is sufficient to enable the production of accessible digital office documents. In addition, Word 2010 includes an accessibility checking feature. Here are some techniques that are useful for making your documents accessible:

- **Use Accessible Templates:** Word 2010's default template for new documents is a blank page making it is possible to create or select your own accessible templates from scratch.
- **Specify Document Language:** In order for assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers) to be able to present your document accurately, it is important to indicate the natural language of the document.
- **Provide Text Alternatives for Images and Graphical Objects:** When using images or other graphical objects, such as charts and graphs, it is important to ensure that the information you intend to convey by the image is also conveyed to people who cannot see the image. This can be accomplished by adding concise alternative text to of each image.
- **Avoid "Floating" Elements:** When images and objects are inserted into Word 2010 documents they default to being an "inline object: which keep their position on the page relative to a portion of the text. A "floating" object keeps its position relative to the page, while text flows around it. To ensure that images and objects remain with the text that references it, always position it as an inline object.
- **Use Headings:** Any documents that are longer than a few paragraphs require structuring to make them more straightforward for readers to understand. One of the easiest ways to do this is to use "True Headings" to create logical divisions between paragraphs
- **Use Named Styles:** As with "True Headings", you should attempt to make use of the named styles that are included with the office application (e.g., "emphasis", "caption", etc.) before creating your own styles or using the character formatting tools directly.
- **Use Built-In Document Structuring Features:** Such as tables, lists, columns, tables of content, numbering, and document titles.
- **Tables.** Tables should have a logical layout of information based on rows and columns. In addition, the tables should be oriented so that they read from left to right and top to bottom.
 - Tables should have clear and concise column and row headers. Column and row headers should help the reader identify how data are separated and organized in the table.
 - Tabular data should be displayed using a table. Using tabs or spaces to provide a tabular format of data is not acceptable.
 - Row and column headers should start in the first left-hand column of the table.
- **Create Accessible Charts:** Some steps should be taken to ensure that the contents of your chart are appropriately labeled to give users reference points that will help them to correctly interpret the information.
- **Make Content Easier to See:** Be wary of text format including font.

- **Make Content Easier to Understand:** Write clearly and provide context for any Hyperlinks used.
- **Check Accessibility:** Word 2010 offers an “Accessibility Checker” to review your document against a set of possible issues that users with disabilities may experience in your file.
- **Additional Resource:** Similar techniques can be applied to Microsoft Word 2007: http://teachingcommons.cdl.edu/access/docs_multi/documents/2007WordCSUv2_Final.pdf

Reference: <http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/word2010>

Adobe PDF Documents

Ensure the ‘Document Properties’ are filled in correctly.

Ensure that any PDF over 9 pages is bookmarked.

If you saved your document in tagged PDF format, you can use the following tools and steps to evaluate the accessibility of the PDF document:

- Adobe Acrobat Professional
(<http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdf/A9-using-access-checker.pdf>)
 - Go to menu item: **Advanced > Accessibility > Full Check...**
 - In the **Full Check** dialog, select all the checking option
 - Select the **Start Checking** button
- PDF Accessibility Checker: <http://www.access-for-all.ch/en/pdf-lab/pdf-accessibility-checker-pac.html>
- **Additional Resource:** <http://wac.osu.edu/pdf/checking/checkingyourpdf.html>

Microsoft PowerPoint (2007)

When creating an accessible PowerPoint presentation, it is important to design the slide show from the start with accessibility in mind.

- **Outline View:** For a PowerPoint presentation to be accessible, all of the text must appear in outline view. Avoid using flashing or animated text in both text and graphics.

- **Accessible Design Templates:** Contrast between the background and text is important for viewers with vision difficulties. Therefore, light backgrounds paired with dark text or dark backgrounds paired with light text enhance readability. Simple solid colors also reduce distractions and allow users to focus on the content
- **Adding Images, Charts, and Tables:** Images within your slideshow that convey information must have alt text to be accessible to assistive technologies. Alt text should provide the same information that the image is conveying. Both charts and tables should contain different types of identifying labels to provide additional cues to people who may not be accessing your slide show visually.
- **Tables.** Tables should have a logical layout of information based on rows and columns. In addition, the tables should be oriented so that they read from left to right and top to bottom.
 - Tables should have clear and concise column and row headers. Column and row headers should help the reader identify how data are separated and organized in the table.
 - Tabular data should be displayed using a table. Using tabs or spaces to provide a tabular format of data is not acceptable.
 - Row and column headers should start in the first left-hand column of the table.
- **Stacking Order:** To ensure the presentation has a logical order, you can click the tab key on your keyboard to select objects in a slide in sequence. The tab sequence is the same order that a screen reader will use to read the slide.
- **Additional resources** for other versions of PowerPoint:
 - http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dmb/How_to_Make_Your_PowerPt_Presentations_Accessible5_199082_7.pdf
 - <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint-help/creating-accessible-powerpoint-presentations-HA102013555.aspx>

Reference:

http://isdexchange.com/online_training/accessible_section508_slideshow_powerpoint.php

Microsoft Excel

- Complete document properties by identifying pertinent information under "Summary" and "Custom" tabs.
- All images must include alternative descriptive text or be indicated as a spacer image if appropriate.
- Do not use color to convey important information. Use textual annotations instead.
- Label row headers and column headers to enhance accessibility. Make sure row and column headers are clear and self-explanatory. Avoid ambiguous headers.
- Name all worksheets to enhance navigation.
- Indicate blank cells which may be used for formatting purposes, by using the "hidden word" technique.
- Place charts and graphs on separate worksheets and include axis information
- **Additional Resources**

- http://www.section508.va.gov/docs/excel_checklist.pdf
- <http://www.hhs.gov/web/policies/webstandards/508excelpresentations.html>

Note: Use Accessibility Features when Saving/Exporting to Other Formats; e.g. Word to PDF etc.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103565>

<http://www.matrixpublishing.com/508Compliance.html>

<http://www.interactiveaccessibility.com/section-508-compliance-services-government>

<http://www.deque.com/services-overview>