Creating an Accessible Word Document

It is important to ensure that your documents are accessible to all members of the Loyola community. This guide will show you how to make your Word 2010 documents more accessible.

Heading Styles

It is important to use headings in your Word document. Headings make navigation easier for people who are using a screen reader to read your document. Headings give your document structure. You should use one of the built in styles of headings in Word to add headings to your document. Headings can be found on the Home tab, in the Styles group.
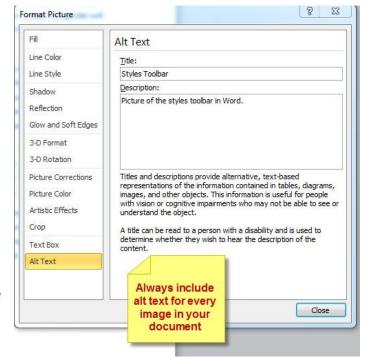

Changing the color of your font, making it bold, and increasing the size can make it look like you are using headings, however, this does not actually give your document structure or improve the navigation for screen readers.

Alternative Text

It is important to provide alternative text (alt text) for every image you include in your document. If a person is using a screen reader to read your document, the screen reader will read any alt text that you provide when it comes to a picture or image. If you provide no alt text, the person will not have any idea as to what picture you included or its significance. This is easy to do. After inserting your image, right click on the image and choose "Format Picture." Click on Alt Text. Fill in a title and a description as instructed. Use meaningful alt text; "Loyola logo" is better than "logo."

You will also need to add alt text for any Word Art that you insert, as well as charts or graphs. If you are embedding a chart from another source, you should provide a description of the chart somewhere in the document.

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Appropriate Link Text

Be sure that the text you use for any links included in your document is clear. It is good usability practice to never include "click here" as the text for your links. Links should be obvious on a page. Instead of saying "Click here for a training schedule," you can say "View Our Training Schedule" as the link text.

General Usability – Best Practices

In order to make your document as accessible and generally user-friendly as possible, you should run through this check list and make sure your document addresses the following items:

- ✓ Use built-in styles wherever possible. Built-in headings, built-in bulleted/numbered lists are more accessible than creating them yourself.
- ✓ Provide a table of contents for lengthy documents. You can easily insert a table of contents automatically if you have made good use of headings. Click on the References tab and then Table of Contents.
- ✓ Be sure that you are not relying on color to convey meaning or emphasis; people that are colorblind may have difficulty seeing the colors you have used. You could circle important information instead of making the text red, for instance. Make sure you've used enough contrast.
- ✓ Tables in Word are difficult to make accessible; try using columns where possible.
- ✓ If you provide a link to a video, make sure it is captioned.

Accessibility Checker

Word 2010 has a built-in accessibility checker. You should use this to check for any issues related to accessibility. Go to the File tab, and then to Info. Click the **Check for Issues Button**, and then **Check Accessibility**. Word will show you where you have accessibility errors, and provide you with tips on how to fix them.

If you have questions, or for further information on accessibility at Loyola, visit our Accessibility website*. (www.loyola.edu/accessibility)*