Accessibility Checklist for Documents

General Guidelines

☑ **Use plain language:** Avoid jargon, acronyms (unless defined), culture-specific metaphors, legalese, and unnecessarily complex sentences. Write as if you're speaking to someone who is unfamiliar with the topic.

☑ **Describe visual content**: Add alt text or image descriptions to images or icons, explaining their content and context.

☑ **Check navigation and structure:** Organize content with clear headings, bullet points and consistent structure.

☑ **Think multi-sensory**: Not everyone processes information the same way. Some prefer text; others engage more with visuals or audio. If possible, use multiple ways of presenting information.

☑ **Use an accessibility checker**: Microsoft apps have this checker (much like using a spell checker).

☑ **Provide alternate formats** where requested (HTML and Microsoft Word, braille, accessible audio formats, large print, text transcripts of visual and audio information, such as video transcript).

☑ **Caption videos:** e.g. in Youtube, turn on captions when playing a video in a training session.

☑ **Never rely on color alone** to convey meaning (e.g., don't use red text to indicate urgency).

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Printed Documents

☑ Use a font size of at least 12pt (14pt or higher for better readability).

☑ Choose fonts that are easy to read and avoid overly decorative styles. Choose standard sans serif fonts with easily recognizable upper and lower-case characters.

☑ Choose fonts with medium heaviness and avoid light type with thin strokes.

☑ When emphasizing a word or passage, use a bold or heavy font. Italics or all-caps are not recommended.

☑ Don't crowd your text: keep a wide space between letters and ensure sufficient spacing between lines.

☑ Break content into short, scannable paragraphs. Separating text into columns can make it easier to read.

☑ Ensure strong colour contrast between text and background (black text on a white background is best).

☑ In MS Word, avoid using Text Boxes, Quick Parts, Word Art, and Drop Caps since content can be inaccessible or difficult for persons with low vision.

☑ Use headings (H2s, H3s) to organize content and guide navigation. Repeat structure and visual hierarchy across document.

☑ When printing, use a matte/non-glossy finish and use wide binding margins or spiral bindings if possible. Flat pages work best for vision aids such as magnifiers.

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Powerpoint Presentations

- ☑ Try to use font size of at least 20 point and larger. (30 point font is generally best for body text).

- ☑ Use a sans serif font that is clearly readable and avoid decorative fonts.

- ☑ Use appropriate colour contrast for text and background colours. You can use an online Colour contrast checker if you're not sure.

- ☑ Ensure that color is not the only means of conveying information or importance.

- ☑ Make sure slide contents can be read in the order that you intend.

- ☑ If you must use tables, create a simple table structure for data only, and specify column header information.

- ☑ Avoid text effects like Word Art as they may be inaccessible to screen readers.

- ☑ Avoid cramming a lot of information onto a slide as it can be confusing and unreadable.

- ☑ Ensure that the Hyperlink has context and describes where it leads.

- ☑ If your presentation has embedded audio or video you should include text transcripts and/or captions. If you are showing a video in a training session, ensure captions are on.

For more detailed information and instructions, see Make your content accessible in the Microsoft 365 apps

Sources: CNIB Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines, Microsoft 365 accessibility features, Queen's University Accessible Documents

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