

Accessible Word Document Checklist

Document-level

- ☐ Add a descriptive document title under File> Info> Properties> Title
- ☐ Set the default language for the document under File> Options> Language
- ☐ If a part of the document is in a different language than the default, highlight the relevant section and identify it under Review> Language> Set Proofing Language
- ☐ When providing instructions, do not rely only on sensory characteristics such as shape, size, visual location, or orientation to communicate the order, importance, or location of content (e.g. do not describe something as “next to the big red dot”)

Font

- ☐ Use a sans serif font (to comply with Waterloo brand guidelines, Verdana is recommended)
- ☐ Use 12 point size or larger
- ☐ Restrict font colour to black text on white background (or ensure a minimum contrast of 4.5:1, if you know how)
- ☐ Do not emphasize with coloured font, do so by bolding or underlining

Headings

- ☐ Format headings using Styles (never ad hoc with font formatting)
- ☐ Headings are properly ordered, with no level skip (i.e. h1>h2>h3, never h1>h3)
- ☐ Headings are descriptive
- ☐ Headings for repeated content are presented in the same relative order (e.g. Department Collection Policies always follow the order of “Persons Responsible for Collection”, “Department Description and Purpose”, “Scope of Coverage”, etc)

Page Layout

- ☐ Include a Table of Contents at the start of the document (inserted under References)
- ☐ Insert page numbers under Insert> Header & Footer> Page Number (never add manually)
- ☐ Add white space by increasing the Before and After spacing under Paragraph> Spacing (never using the Enter key)
- ☐ If you want content to start on a new page, use either a Page Break or a Section Break, under Layout> Page Setup> Breaks (never using the Enter key)
- ☐ Columns are formatted under Layout> Page Setup> Columns, not with spaces and tabs

Tables

- ☐ Create table under Insert> Table> Insert Table
- ☐ Provide a caption with contextual information about the table (select table, then under References> Captions> Insert Caption)

- ❑ If your table is organized by a category in each column, ensure “Header Row” is checked (select table, then under Table Tools> Design)
- ❑ If your table is organized by a category in each row, ensure “First Column” is checked (select table, then under Table Tools> Design)
- ❑ Only check both “Header Row” and “First Column” if your table is organized by categories in both columns and rows
- ❑ If your table displays across multiple pages, ensure the header row repeats (highlight header row, right click table, Table Properties> Row, check “repeat as header...” option)
- ❑ If your table displays across multiple pages, ensure good display (highlight entire table, right click table, Table Properties> Row, uncheck “allow row to break...” option)
- ❑ Ensure text wrapping around the table is disabled (right click table, Table Properties> Table> Text wrapping, select “None”)
- ❑ Do not merge or split cells
- ❑ Ensure table can be navigated fully using the Tab key, moving from left to right, top to bottom

Images and graphs

- ❑ Do not use images of text unless the information cannot be conveyed otherwise (e.g. logo or infographic)
- ❑ Write good alt text in the Description field (right click image, Format Picture> Layout & Properties (3rd option)> Alt Text). Write “decorative” if image is decorative
- ❑ Alt text is the same for images throughout the document, and throughout any other documents that are part of the same set, if it is the same image being used for the same purpose
- ❑ Provide a table of the original data for graphs (see above for table formatting)
- ❑ Format images to be In Line with Text (right click image> Wrap Text)

Hyperlinks

- ❑ Ensure hyperlinks are presented with context that describes where they lead;
- ❑ Avoid using non-descriptive hyperlink text (e.g. “click here” or “more”);
- ❑ Hyperlinks to the same destination use the same link text throughout the document, and throughout any other documents that are part of the same set (e.g. a series of documents explaining PubMed should all use the same link text, say “PubMed”, for the <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/> destination)

Lists

- ❑ Content meant as a list is formatted as such under Home> Paragraph
- ❑ Ordered lists (numbered lists) are only used if the content follows a sequential/meaningful order