Making PDFs accessible

A selection of relevant slides from
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Writing and Posting Rules That People Can Use
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Janice (Ginny) Redish, used with permission

Disclaimers and why YMMV*
(* Your Mileage May Vary)

- Advice:

  If creating accessible documents is important, use the most recent version of both Office and Acrobat that you can.

  - Features to support creating accessible documents are getting better
  - Microsoft, in particular, has made it a priority in the past few years

- Disclaimer:

  Because accessibility features are new, they are often in different places in the user interface from version to version, so they may be slightly different on your own computer.

- But

  Acrobat X has few differences between Mac and Windows versions

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Creating an accessible PDF is a process

1. Start with well structured, accessible source files
   - It's easier to add accessibility when the document is created
   - The changes won't have to be made each time you create the PDF file

2. Create the PDF file using Acrobat or built-in tools
   - Create a tagged PDF file

3. Use the tools in Acrobat to "touch up" the file for
   - ALT text for images
   - Reading order
   - Tags for headings, links, bookmarks…
   - Security to allow assistive technology access

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Create and use accessible templates

For any program you use, create an accessible template

- Start with a blank document

- Set up styles and set language

- Check accessibility for any
  text, images, tables, charts

- *File* → *Save As* a Template

  - Give it an informative name

  - Make sure it saves in your
    My Templates directory

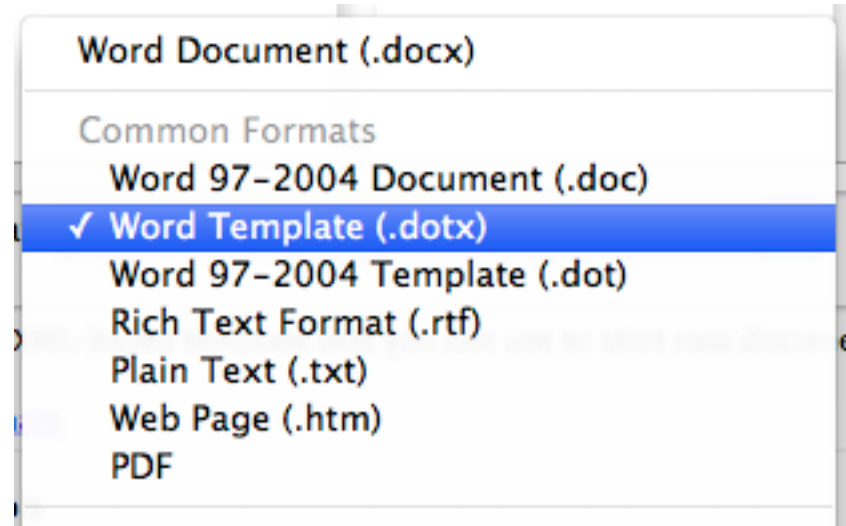- Start new documents by using
  this template.

Word Document (.docx)

Common Formats
  Word 97–2004 Document (.doc)
  ✓ Word Template (.dotx)
  Word 97–2004 Template (.dot)
  Rich Text Format (.rtf)
  Plain Text (.txt)
  Web Page (.htm)
  PDF

Image: List of file types in Save-As dialog
in Word for Mac

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Use the built-in semantic markup features

- Use **styles** for headings, paragraph text and any other special function text.

- Use **built-in bullets and numbering for lists**, instead of manually typing in bullet characters or numbers.

- Use **automatic page numbering**

- Use built-in features for **footnotes, endnotes, table of contents, indexes**
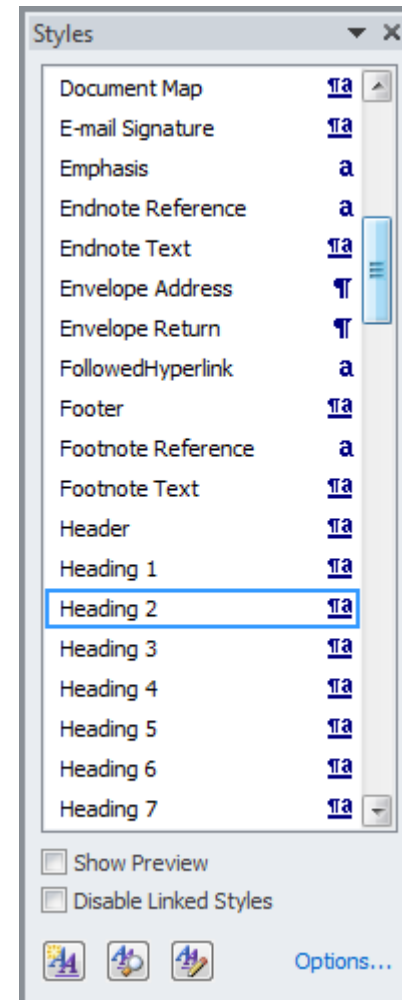
- Insert **page breaks**, not extra lines

Image: Styles in Word

Provide descriptions for all images

Include descriptions of any images that communicate content

- Provide Alternative (ALT) Text for all images

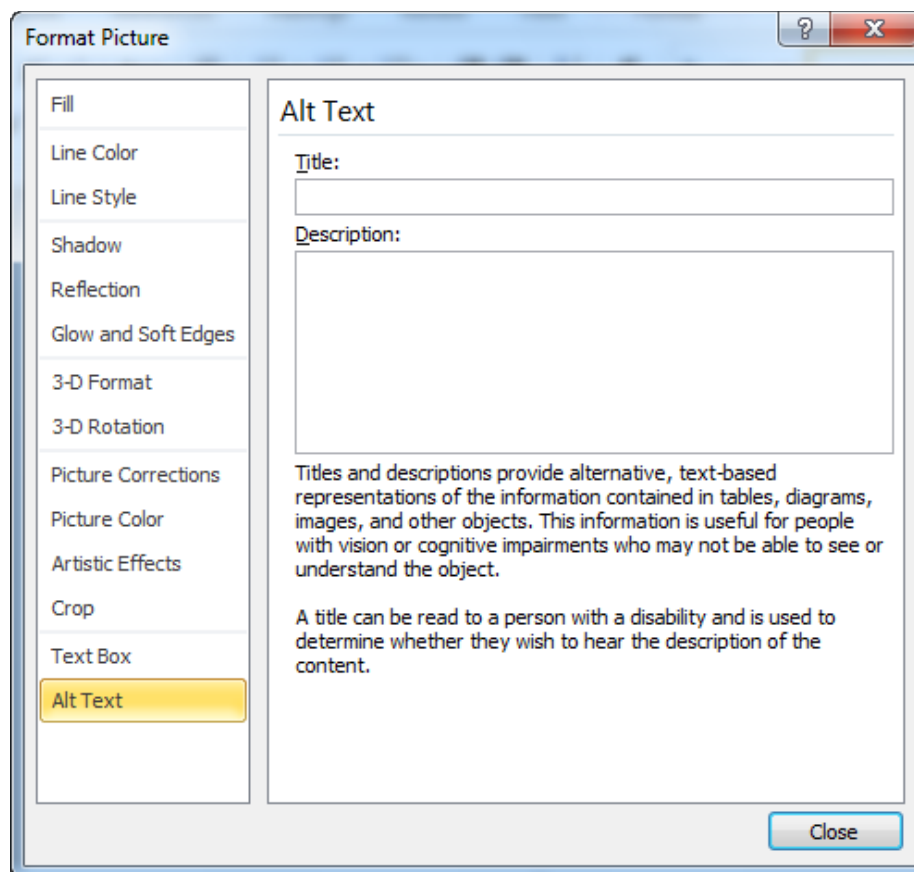- In the context menu Select **Format Picture** → **Alt Text tab**

Image: Format Picture dialog

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Tables and spreadsheets
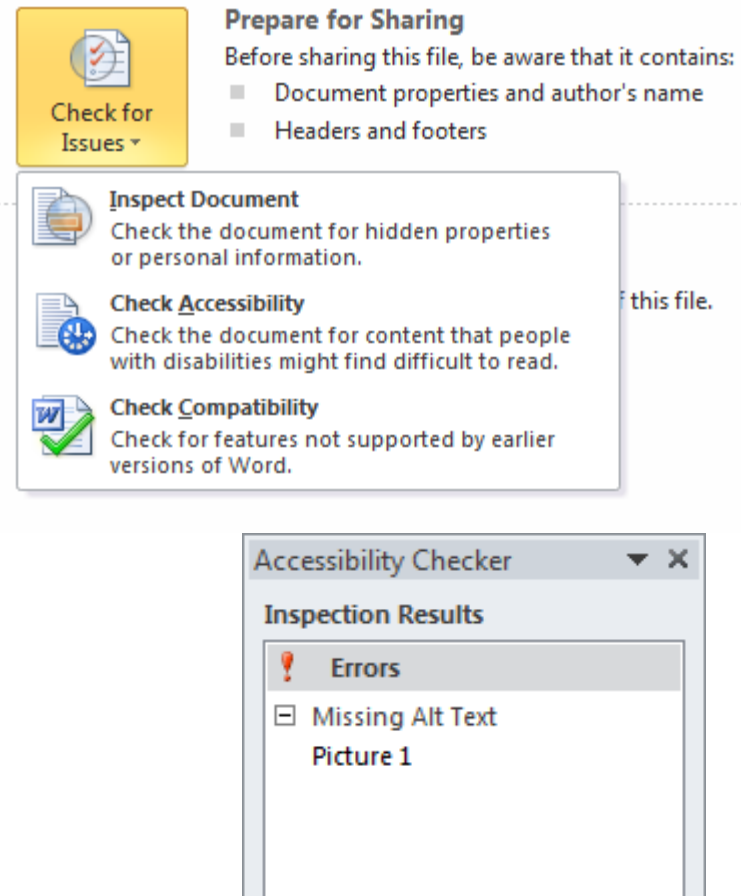
Use tables correctly

- Create information in the table in a logical order
- Use tables only for tabular data (not formatting)
- Don't create columns of data with manual spacing
- Set a heading row in Table→ Properties

Name cells and worksheets

- Give worksheets meaningful names to make it easier to navigate among them
- Name cells where appropriate, to make formulas easier to understand
- Provide clear, self-explanatory row and column headers

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Check the document in the source program first

- Office 2010 adds a new feature to check accessibility before sharing a file

- It checks for all accessibility features and lists problems and ways to fix the issues in the Accessibility checker

  - Click on each item to go it in the file, so you can correct it.

Prepare for Sharing
Before sharing this file, be aware that it contains:
- Document properties and author's name
- Headers and footers

Check for Issues

Inspect Document
Check the document for hidden properties or personal information.

Check Accessibility
Check the document for content that people with disabilities might find difficult to read.

Check Compatibility
Check for features not supported by earlier versions of Word.

f this file.

Accessibility Checker

Inspection Results

! Errors

☐ Missing Alt Text
Picture 1

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Set up Acrobat so accessibility tools are visible

- **Add accessibility tools to the toolbar**
  - Quick Check
  - Full Check
  - Accessibility Report
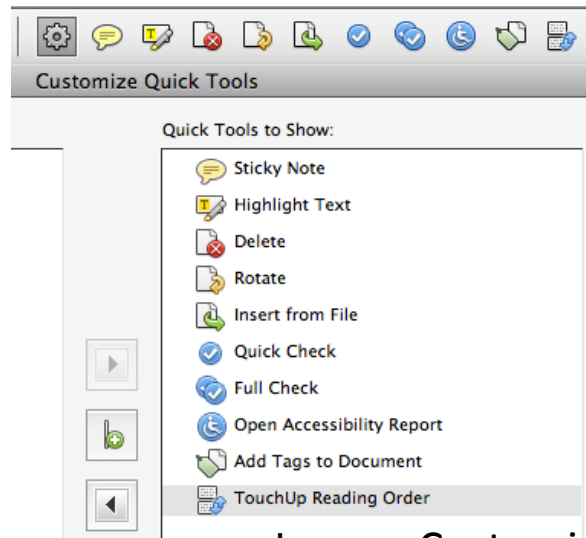 - Add Tags to Document
  - Touch Up Reading Order

Image: Customize Tools dialog (partial)

- **Add Tags pane**
  - View→ShowHide→ Navigation Panels→Tags
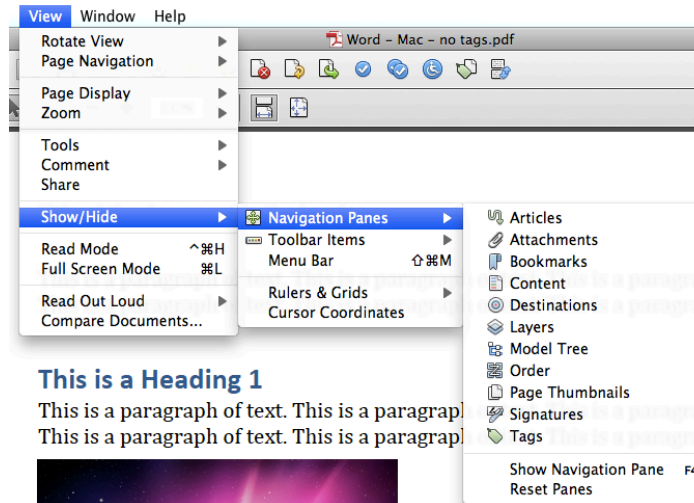
- **In Tags pane**
  - Highlight Content

Image: View menu to add navigation panes

Use Acrobat built-in checks

- **Quick Check** looks for text and document structure tags

- **Full Check** examines all accessibility features

- The Full Check report

    - Can be used as a list of errors to repair

    - Can be used to show that the PDF file passes these tests

    - Ask for this report when you receive a PDF file as a deliverable

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Good resources for more information

- HHS Section 508 Resources
  http://www.hhs.gov/web/508/index.html

- The Social Security Administration Accessible Document Authoring Guide
  http://www.ssa.gov/webcontent/files/The_Social_Security_ Administration_ Accessible_Document_Authoring_Guide.pdf

- GSA Tutorials, Guidance, Checklists
  http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103565

This is where I linked back to the main slide deck.

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