Accessible Excel Document Checklist

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This information is available in alternate formats on request. Please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office at MAO@gov.mb.ca or 204-945-7613 or toll free at 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7613.

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Accessibility Checker

Microsoft Office, including Excel, offers a built-in accessibility checker. The checker won't identify all of the issues, but it looks for things such as missing alternative text and potential reading order issues.

How to use the Accessibility Checker:

1. Activate the **File** Tab > **Info** > **Check for Issues** > **Check Accessibility**
2. Review the results in the **Accessibility Checker** pane
3. Address the listed issues. Helpful information to understand and fix the different issues is provided at the bottom of the pane

Fonts

Choose fonts and styles that are easy to read.

- Use sans-serif fonts (like Arial, Verdana, or Tahoma)
- Leave sufficient spacing between letters
- Use font size between 12-14 points

Use of colour

- Use sufficient colour contrast for text and background (e.g. black and white).
  - Use a [contrast-checking tool](#) to check the contrast of the text relative to the background.
  - For most text, the contrast ratio must be 4.5:1.
    (Except for large text, which requires 3:1).

- **Do not** use colour simply to convey meaning or stress a word, cell or block of text.
- Patterns can be added to colour for those who are colour blind.
- Mandatory fields should be identified with an asterisk * and the word "required" rather than being labelled in red.

Rename Worksheets

- Screen readers read worksheet names, so ensure those labels are clear and descriptive.
- Using unique names for worksheets makes it easier to navigate the workbook. By default, Excel names worksheets as Sheet1, Sheet2, Sheet3, and so on, but you can easily rename them.

Delete Blank Worksheets

- Screen readers read worksheet names, so blank worksheets might be confusing. Do not include any blank sheets in your workbooks.

Tables

- Design all tables to be as simple as possible. Avoid using complex table structures.
- Screen readers often have difficulty interpreting tables with merged cells, split cells, or blank rows and columns.
- Assign meaningful names to headers and rows to facilitate user navigation.

Non-Text Elements

Alternative text

- Include alt text with visuals such as photos, videos, and screenshots.
- Alt text allows people who cannot see the screen to understand what's important in images and other visuals.
- Alt text should be clear and concise. It should not be more than a sentence or two and should include the important information the image conveys.
- When creating an alt text, do not begin with "this is an image of". Do begin with "Screenshot of" for screenshots.

To assign alternative text to images:

1. Select the image
2. Open the **Format** tab in the ribbon

To assign alternative text to images – continued:

3. Activate the **Alt text** tool.
4. If an image conveys no meaningful information (i.e., it is decorative or redundant), check "Mark as decorative".
5. If the image is meaningful, convey in words the meaning, function, or purpose communicated by the image.
6. Activate the **Close** button.

Charts & Diagrams

- Ensure complex images and charts provide long descriptions.
  - Complex images include plans, schematics, diagrams, or any other image that conveys a large amount of information. This is necessary, as users who cannot see the complex image will not be able to determine its value/purpose.
  - To add a long description to diagrams and charts, first add concise alt text (e.g. the chart title) as described above. Then, include a longer text alternative below the chart.

Links

- People who use screen readers sometimes scan a list of links. Links should contain clear and concise information about the destination.
- Link text should accurately reflect the target and purpose of the link. If link text is not provided, users will need to follow the link to determine its purpose, which can present difficulties. An example of appropriate link text would be including the full title of the destination rather than linking to the text "Click Here".

To add hyperlinks with meaningful text:

1. Type a web address in your document and press spacebar or "Enter" to convert into a hyperlink
2. Select the link and open the context menu
3. Activate **Hyperlink**
4. Edit the **Text to Display field with meaningful text**

Have you created an accessible document in Excel?

Congratulations! …But you are not done yet!

Always open the PDF in Adobe Acrobat and perform the Make Accessible feature. This is the final check needed to ensure that your document is accessible. In most cases, this is where you will add/confirm the title of the document.

To run the Make Accessible feature in Adobe Acrobat:

1. Open the PDF in Adobe Acrobat
2. Select **Tools** in the upper right-hand corner
3. Expand the **Action Wizard** and select **Make Accessible**
4. Select **Start** and follow the prompts

Contact Information

For questions and inquiries, please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office:

Manitoba Accessibility Office
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Phone: 204-945-7613; Toll-free: 1-800-282-8069, Ext. 7613
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For questions about compliance, please contact:

Accessibility Compliance Secretariat
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Winnipeg, MB R3C 1G1
Phone: 204-792-0263
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Sources: Microsoft: Make your Excel documents accessible to people with disabilities, Microsoft: Accessibility support for people who use a screen reader program, Government of Canada: Accessible Excel Documents