# Creating an Accessible Word Document

## for Inclusion and Compliance

### Office of Disability Services

### Montgomery County Community College

# What is accessibility?

'Accessible' means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to **acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.** The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability.

(Resolution Agreement South Carolina Technical College System OCR Compliance Review No. 11-11-6002, [emphasis added])

# Who encounters barriers with document accessibility?

- Students who are blind or "low vision" and use a **screenreader**
- Students with a variety of other visual impairments (optical or central processing), including colorblindness.
- Students with a brain injury (TBI)
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with autism spectrum disorders
- Students with executive function disorders
- Students with some mobility impairments.

# Why the Focus on Word Documents?

- Word documents are accessible to all types of assistive technology, the programs people with a number of disabilities use to access content.

- A well-structured Word document is the essential building block for creating other accessible formats, such as an accessible .pdf file.

- Word documents can be easily edited, allowing you to update and repurpose as appropriate.

# Screenreaders and Visually-Impaired Users: The Canaries in the Mine

- Distinct from text-to-speech software used by sighted persons
- <u>Everything</u> must be read; users cannot fall back on sight to process content.
- Screenreaders read everything from left to right and top to bottom; all information is obtained linearly
- Navigation cues must be included and properly sequenced; use Word Styles.
- Screenreader users must have access to <u>all</u> content, including that contained in images- more about adding Alt-Text to images later.

# Elements of an Accessible Document

Well structured:

- Consistent and considered use of headings to aid navigation- "Styles"

- "True" columns (and tables); do not create "pseudo-columns" by just using tabs. (The latter will not read correctly.)

- Bulleted lists; use rather than tables for descriptive information, such as class schedules.

- Simple tables with header rows, which repeat on each page

# And, Content is available to everyone:

- Use of alt-text for images, charts, and tables
- Color is not the exclusive means of conveying information or impact
- High contrast
- Simple fonts (sans serif) and clean backgrounds
- Use of descriptive labels for hyperlinks
- Judicious use of headers and footers
- No text boxes!

# Facilitate Navigation with Headers

- Use "Styles" function of MS-Word for headers.
- Preplan and then review to make sure the levels of your heading are consistent and informative.
- Use Heading 1 only once: for the title of the document.
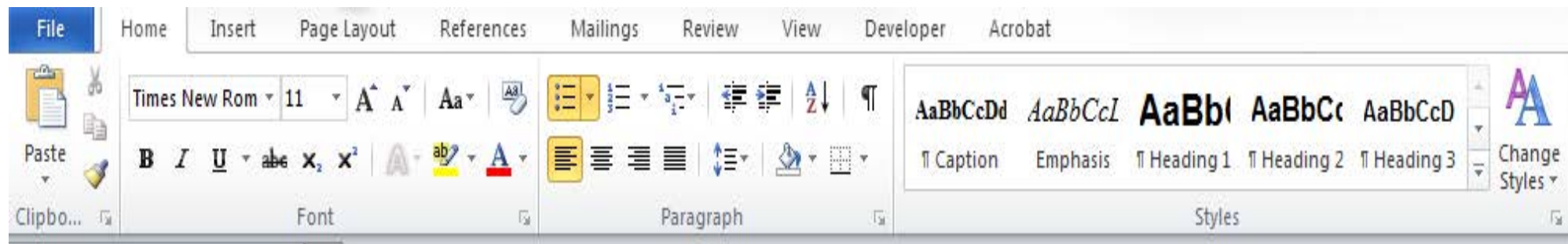
# Alt-Text

- Provide descriptive language for any image that convey meaning (except decorative elements),  charts, and table (esp. when there are multiple tables).

- Place in "description" (not title) field. Title field content can be brief- or absent.

- Determine description according to context in document. What is the purpose of the image? What information does it convey?

- Don't omit information available to sighted users.

# Adding Alt- Text

Do one of the following:

- For a shape, picture, chart, SmartArt graphic, or other object, right-click it, click **Format object**, and then click the **Alt Text** pane.
- To add Alt Text to the entire SmartArt graphic or chart, click the border of the SmartArt graphic or chart, and not an individual shape or piece.
- For a table, right-click the table, click **Table Properties**, and then click the **Alt Text** tab.

# Alt-text cont.

- In the **Description** box, enter an explanation of the shape, picture, chart, table, SmartArt graphic, or other object. This box should always be filled in.
- If you want, in the **Title** box, enter a brief summary. This box should only be filled in if you are entering a detailed or long explanation in the **Description** box.
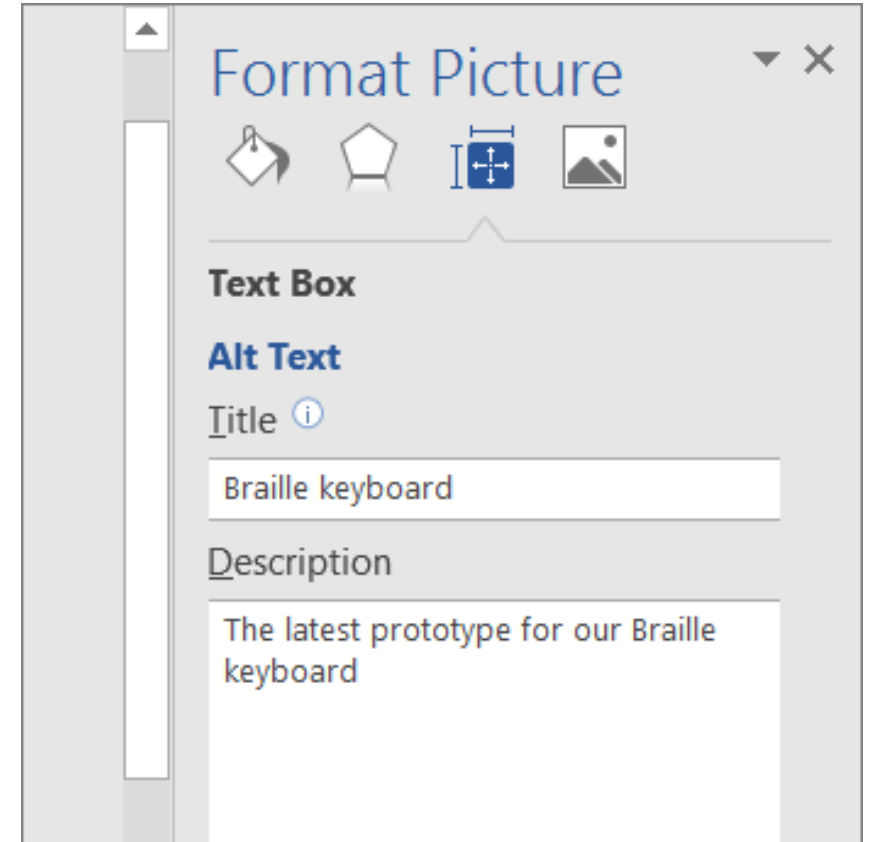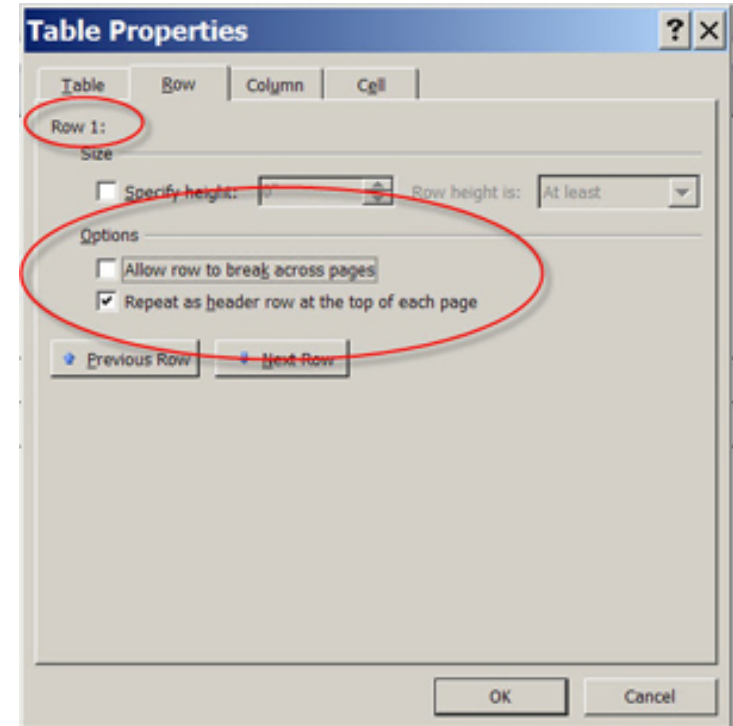
# Tables

- Use only for tabular data. Do not use for image or content layout. Do not use as substitute for text columns.
- If information can be communicated in bulleted list, do this.
- Use Column Headers; set to repeat on each page as needed
- Keep columns simple.  Avoid nested tables (or split cells)
- Include alt-text description of tables for orientation of screenreader users, especially if the table is complex or the document contains multiple tables.

# Inserting Header Rows in Word

A Header Row should be added to tables to distinguish the heading text from the data area of the table. Header rows are also important if the table spans more than one page. To repeat the header row when a table spans more than one page:
1.Select the first row of the table > Right click for context menu > Table Properties…> Row tab
2.Select (check) the option "Repeat as header row at the top of each page" (Figure 3)
3.Select OK

# Add alt text to tables

1.Right-click a table.
2.Select **Table Properties**.
3.Select the **Alt Text** tab.
4.Type a description and a title.
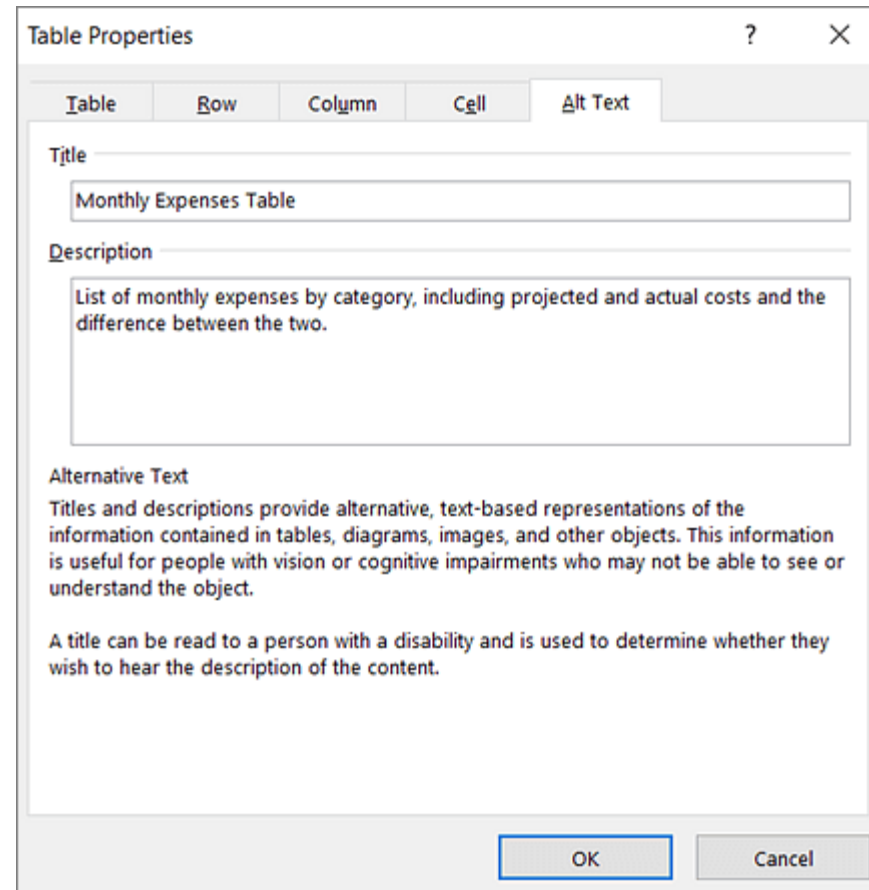
# Color

- Maintain high contrast between background and text.

- Do not rely solely on color for organization and emphasis.

Use a [color contrast checker](http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/), e.g., http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

| Week/Date | Group Assignment |
|---|---|
| Monday    June 26 | Case study 1<br>Case study 2<br>Case study 3 |
| Wednesday | Case study 4<br>Case study 5<br>Case study 6 |

Vs.

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# Links

- Provide meaningful text for hyperlinks.  Avoid, "Click here."
- Include both a descriptive link and the URL for use of both online and hard copy syllabi.
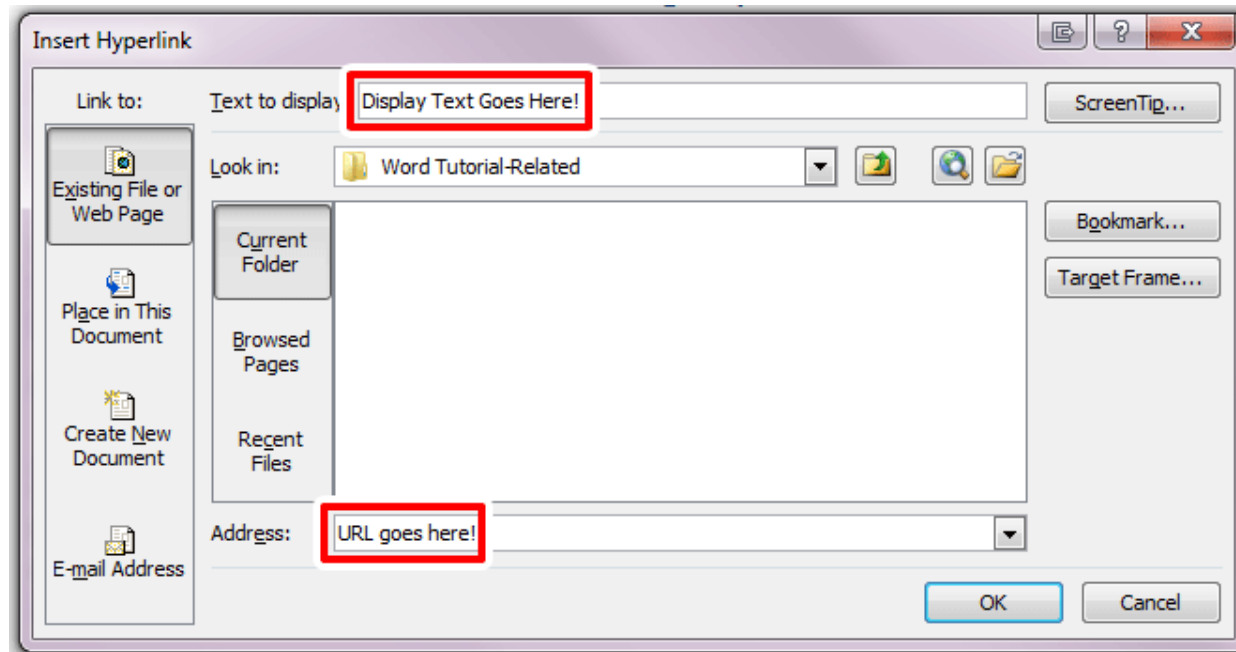
# Other Tips

• Avoid placing information in headers and footers, e.g., page #'s. titles, authors, contact information

• Reserve underline for hyperlinks; do not use for emphasis

• Avoid using all caps- this can be difficult to read.

• Give students multiple ways to contact you..

• Use color contrast checkers, esp. for material posted online.

# On PC's, Run the Word Accessibility Checker
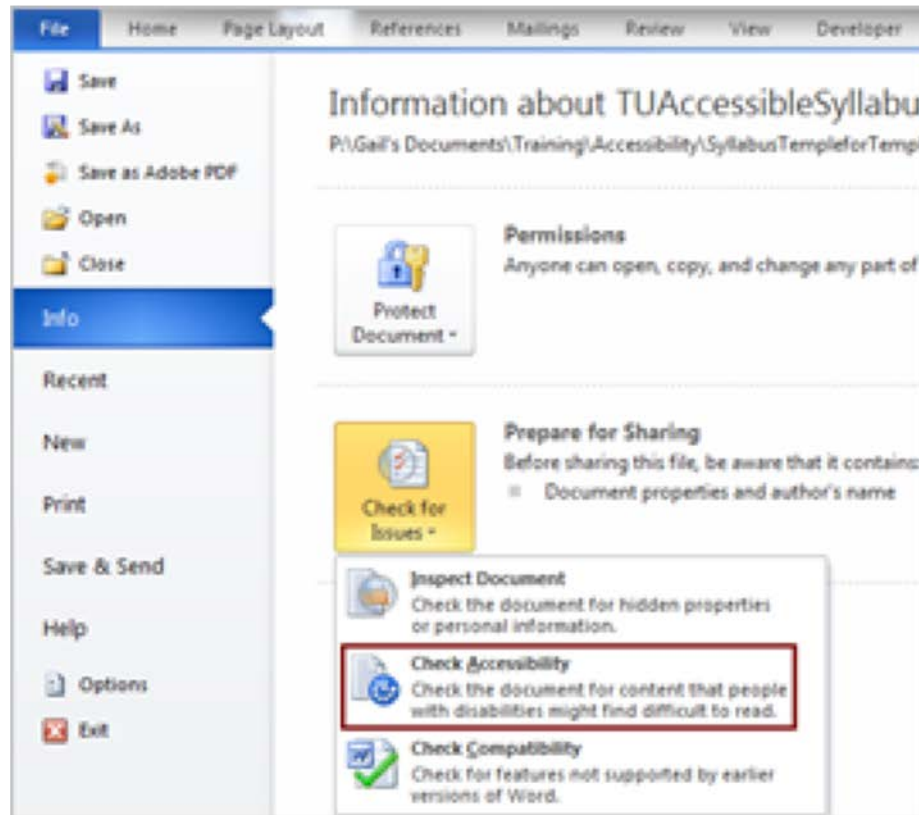


**The Accessibility Checker**

1. Go to the File Menu
2. Select Check for Issus
3. Select Check Accessibility

# The Accessibility Checker flags issues into three categories:

- **Errors**:  Content makes a file difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to understand.

- **Warnings**:  Content that in most, but not all, cases makes a file difficult for people with disabilities to understand.

- **Tips**:  You see a tip when content that people with disabilities can understand, but that might be better organized or presented in a way that can improve their experience.

# Use Blackboard Ally as 2$^{nd}$ Level Check

- Upload file to Blackboard

- Blackboard Ally will evaluate the accessibility of your file and show you a red, orange or green gauge.

- If the gauge is red or orange , click on it and then click "All issues" for information about the problems with your file and instructions for fixing them. Then upload the corrected file.

- More instructions for using Bb Ally can be found at: https://kb.mc3.edu/article/faculty-using-blackboard-ally-1732.html

# Questions?

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