IOWA™ | Department of Management

Accessibility Checklist for Content Creation

This guide provides content managers with a checklist of formatting items for use when creating content for your website. These ten items are important for accessibility compliance and will alleviate website accessibility flags from Editoria11y and Aquia Optimize, allowing your pages to score higher.

Alt Text

- Provide useful alt text for non-text content. This helps to ensure that non-decorative images, media, applets, and other non-text content can be understood by users of assistive technologies.
- All images and video need alt text. Alt text should be short and appropriate. Alt text may need to be long if the text describes charts or maps. This ensures clarity and supports inclusivity for users with visual impairments.
  - If the image contains text, check if the text is decorative.
  - If the text is not decorative, check if the text appears elsewhere in the document content.
  - Any text included in an image should either be provided in the alt text (unless the image text appears elsewhere in the document) or be purely decorative/redundant and not essential for understanding.
  - If the image is decorative, use 'decorative' as the alt text, or put “” (two quotes) in the field.
- Review Writing Tips for Alt Text Best Practices
- Alt Text Decision Tree

Block Quotes

- When creating a "Quote," use the blockquote styling on the WSWYIG bar. Using the blockquote styling will insert the quotes for you and tag them in a way for the screen reader to understand this is a quote. Do not use quotation marks. (")
- Review and confirm that the blockquote is associated with a quote and is not used just for indentation. Open the page(s), find the text that is inside the blockquote - confirm that the text is a quote.

Caption Videos

- Ensure visitors with certain audio and cognitive/learning disabilities can enjoy your content. YouTube can create automatic closed captions.

Document Title

- Title describes the document.
  - Is your document title unique? Not a duplicate? Does the title make sense and is understandable?

Headers

- Use headers to structure content
- Headers should be descriptive and have a clear and understandable name.
  - Assess the headers to determine if each header accurately describes the content that immediately follows it.
- Headers should all be formatted as h1, h2, h3, h4, h5. There should only be one h1 on a page.
  - Do not use header styles for applying visual formatting only - Header codes like the html tags <h1>, <h2>, <h3> etc. must not be used to apply visual formatting to any text that is not a header.
- Headers should be in a hierarchical order - h1, h2, h3, h4, h5.
  - In the content editor, you can view and hover over each of the bolded words to confirm h4 follows an h3 and not immediately after an h1 or h2.
- Learn more about headings

Link Text

- Link text should describe where the link will land when clicked.
- Link text must always be unique (no two the same). Never use "Click Here," "Learn More," "View Video." If link text is "Click Here," it is considered suspicious by Google. Link text could be 'View Video of Accessibility Training for MS Word,' or 'View Video of Accessibility Training for PDFs.'
- Create a Link | Digital Experience

List Items

- List items should be formatted as a bulleted list (for general list items) or a numbered list (for specific, usually shorter lists) that may require steps or a stated number of things. Don’t use dashes or asterisks to create lists.
- List items must not be used to format text.
- Basic Page Elements with Microcontent, Tables, Images, Headings, Lists, and Remote Video | Digital Experience

Page Title

- Write a unique page title. The HTML page title needs to be descriptive, unique, short, and accurately reflect the content that appears on it.
    - You can sort the Title column so you can see page titles in alphabetical order. You can scroll through the list to see if you have duplicate page titles or pages with very similar names. There should be no duplicates. You should be able to easily understand what the information is you will see on the page based on the title.
    - Page title defines a title in the browser toolbar, provides a title for the page when it is added to favorites, and displays a title for the page in search engine results.
- Content Quality Checklist | Digital Experience

Tables

- Only use tables for data that fits in rows and columns and for information that's easier to see in a grid.
- Tables should have captions to identify information in the table. The caption appears above the table.
- Use headings at the top of columns (and sometimes at the start of rows) to tell people what the information is about. (For simple tables, you can just use column headings.)
- Learn about working with tables

White Space

- Do not insert extra carriage returns or spaces to create extra white space. Use caution when doing a copy and paste from MS Word as there could be extra white space. Visually your eye can skip over extra white space, but a screen reader may be forced to read blank character or carriage returns as "carriage return, carriage return."
- Do not use white space characters to create multiple columns or to format tables in plain text content.
    - Use tables for data that fits in rows and columns and for information that is easier to see in a grid.

Creating accessible content

- **Don't use e.g.** Use **for example** or just use your examples. The reason is some older or less advanced screen readers may read e.g. as the letters E-G or the word egg, rather than expanding it to **for example**. It may also present a barrier for users with cognitive or learning disabilities and for those whom English is not their first language. It's recommended you don't use i.e. either.

- **Rather than using double or single quotation marks** for single word or phrase emphasis, use **bold text**. Using quotation marks to indicate emphasis can be confusing for users with disabilities, especially those who rely on screen readers. Bold text provides a clear and consistent signal of importance and is easily understood by all users.

    - To improve accessibility, it's recommended to use **double quotation marks** for quoted text and **single marks** only for quotes

within quotes. This is particularly beneficial for braille transcribers, as it provides clear distinction between quoted and non-quoted text.

- **Don't use italics.** Use bold instead. Italics are hard to read for everyone and largely ignored by screen readers.
- **Use the word and instead of using an ampersand &**. The word **and** is universally understood. Using the symbol can be a visual speed bump that interrupts reading flow and may take more mental effort to interpret. Ampersands are not universal in all languages.
  Exceptions: If it's part of a company name such as AT&T; in a navigation menu where the word **and** would cause space issues.
- **Other punctuation**. Remember that screen readers may read everything. If you use parentheses surrounding text, like (content), a screen reader may read that as **left/open parenthesis content right/closing parenthesis**.
- **Don't use all caps** for titles or content. It reduces readability for everyone, particularly for users with cognitive disabilities. It may cause screen readers to spell out words letter-by-letter as they may see it as an acronym.
- **Lists.** Use built-in editor tools for bulleted or numbered lists. If you type the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. to start the lines in your list, a screen reader will not see it as a list or related content.
- **Avoid directional language** that requires users to see the layout or design of the page. Avoid using **below, above, right, or left** when trying to direct a user to another element or link on a page.
- **Don't use em dashes**, use regular dashes if necessary. Screen readers may read em dashes, which are long dashes, as dash or dash-dash. This can cause confusion when punctuation marks are announced. Use en dashes, which are regular dashes, or hyphens. Consider not using dashes when unnecessary. Instead of writing 5–7, write 5 to 7.
- **Headings H2-H6** should only be used for subtitles or section headings, not paragraphs. Using a heading tag for an entire paragraph breaks screen reader navigation and confuses the content structure. Screen readers see headings as titles, subtitles, or subheadings. Drupal

automatically tags the title of a page as an H1. Don't add another H1 on your webpage. When creating Word documents to be exported to PDF, be sure to style your title as an H1.

- **Make calls to action accessible**. Never use **Click Here**, **Learn More**, **View Video or a URL**. Make the text of the link a clear description of where the user is being taken. If a link text is **Click Here**, it is considered suspicious by Google. Link text could be **View Video of Accessibility Training for MS Word**, or **View Video of Accessibility Training for PDFs**.
- **Provide useful alt text** for non-text content. This helps to ensure that non-decorative images, media, applets, and other non-text content can be understood by users of assistive technologies.
- **Caption your videos** to ensure visitors with certain audio and cognitive/learning disabilities can enjoy your content.
- **Create a document title** that is unique and not a duplicate. Ensure the title makes sense and is understandable.
- **Do not insert extra carriage returns, tabs, or spaces** to create extra white space. Use caution when making a copy and paste from MS Word as there could be extra white space. Visually your eye can skip over extra white space, but a screen reader may be forced to read blank character or carriage returns as **carriage return, carriage return**.
- **Plain language.** Using simple plain language, steering clear of slang and abbreviations where possible, and providing definitions where it is not possible.
- Test designs across devices and lighting conditions.