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Guide to Creating Accessible PDFs from Word Documents (adapted from gov.uk and support.office.com)

Introduction

It is a legal requirement that documents published on a public sector website are accessible from 23 September 2020.

Any documents published on Glasgow City HSCP internet and intranet websites must meet accessibility standards. This means everyone should be able to get the same information, including those with disabilities. Documents include Adobe Acrobat PDFs, Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint documents, as well as printed publications that are available online.

This guidance covers the main things that you can do to create an accessible PDF document converted from a Word document.

Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 came into force on 23 September 2018. The Regulations require that public sector websites and mobile apps be made more accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities. This includes all their design, coding and content. The Regulations build on existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010, where all UK service providers must consider reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

Websites (including intranet) and mobile apps will meet the newer legal requirements if they:

- meet the [international WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidance/wcag/) and
- publish an accessibility statement that explains how accessible the website or mobile app is.

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Prepare your source file or edit an existing PDF

When creating a new Word document, you should ensure it is accessible before turning it into a PDF.

To make an existing PDF accessible you will either need to edit:

- the PDF if you have access to the appropriate software (find out more at [WebAIM: PDF Accessibility](#)) or
- the original document (for example, Word) then republish it as a new PDF.

Follow the steps below when you create or edit a new or existing Word document before converting it to PDF.

If you have any questions, contact GCHSCP_Communications@glasgow.gov.uk

1. Keep the Language Clear and Concise

Write in language that is as clear and concise as possible. Clear and concise language makes your document more accessible to people with cognitive impairments and learning disabilities. Where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them.

2. Keep the Document Simple

Give the Word document a meaningful title. A document title is metadata. It will display at the top of the document's application or in the tab of a web browser. If someone's using a screen reader, the title will be the first thing the screen reader recognises. A good clear and descriptive title will help people understand what the document is about. For example, 'Guide to Creating Accessible PDFs from Word Documents' is a good title for this document, but a file name convention such as '2019-09-24-doc-accessibility-v1.1' would not. It is best to make the file name and document title consistent. Find out more about how to [view or change the properties for an Office file](#) (such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint).

Other requirements include:

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- keep sentences and paragraphs short
- use Arial font in a minimum size of 12 points (or another Sans Serif font)
- use sentence case. Avoid all caps text and italics
- make sure the text is left aligned, not justified
- use line spacing of 1.5
- avoid underlining, except for hyperlinks
- make sure any hyperlink text clearly describes where the link will go. It should also be understandable on its own, even if you read it out of context. This is important because some screen reader users scan through the links on a page one-by-one to find what they need. Guidance on using hyperlink text and screen tips can be found at support.office.com
- documents with single, continuous columns of text are easier to make accessible than documents with a more complex layout
- only use tables for data. Keep tables simple; avoid splitting or merging cells. Guidance on creating accessible tables can be found at support.office.com
- do not use things like colour or shape alone to get across meaning. This is because instructions like 'click the big green button' rely on the user's ability to see the page
- if you are using images or charts, think about how you will make the content accessible to people with a visual impairment. Two options are:
 - make the same point in the text of the document (so people with visual impairments get the information they need - the image or chart is there as an extra for people who are able to see it) or
 - give the person converting or uploading the document for you [alt text](#) ('[alternative text](#)') for the image or chart, which is a description
- it is also best to avoid images containing text, as it is not possible to resize the text in the image, and screen readers cannot read text within images and
- avoid footnotes where possible. Provide explanations inline instead.

3. Give the Document a Structure

Break up your Word document to make it more readable. Use bullet points, numbered steps and meaningful subheadings.

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Use styles to create a hierarchy of headings: 'heading 1', 'heading 2' and so on. Also use styles for things like tables and bullet lists. That way, a screen reader will recognise the formatting and read out the content correctly. Guidance on using styles and headings can be found at support.office.com.

How to Save an Accessible PDF in Microsoft Office

Adding accessibility tags to PDF files makes it easier for screen readers and other assistive technologies to read and navigate a document, with table of contents, hyperlinks, bookmarks, alt text and so on. Accessibility tags also make it possible to read the information on different devices, such as large type displays, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and mobile phones. In Windows, Office for Mac, and Office for web, you can add tags automatically when you save a file as PDF format.

When you have created your document in Microsoft Word, run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to make sure the document is ready to convert to PDF and that there are no accessibility issues. If there are, fix these issues before converting to PDF. Follow the steps below to convert your Word document to PDF.

Note: the Accessibility Checker is accessed in different ways depending on which version of Microsoft Office you are using. Instructions for different versions can be found on the Microsoft Website under [Accessibility Checker](#).

Once you have converted your file to PDF run the [Accessibility Checker](#) in Acrobat Pro and fix any issues that are found. This feature is only available in Acrobat Pro and not in Acrobat Reader.

Office 2013

- Before generating your PDF, run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to access and edit. Instructions for Office 2013 can be found in the 'Don't see Accessibility Checker?' section.
- If there are any accessibility issues fix them before saving your document.
- Click the **File** tab, and then click **Save As**.
- Under **Choose a Location**, choose where you want the file to be saved.

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- Under **Choose a Folder**, choose a folder that you have already used or click **Browse for Additional Folders** to choose a different folder.
- In the **Save As** dialog box, click the arrow in the **Save as type** list, and then click **PDF**.
- Click **Options**.
- Make sure that the **Document structure tags for accessibility** check box is selected, and then click **OK**.
- Click **Save**.

Office 365, Office 2019 and Office 2016

- Before generating your PDF, run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to access and edit.
- If there are any accessibility issues fix them before saving your document.
- Click **File > Save As** and choose where you want the file to be saved.
- In the **Save As** dialog box, choose **PDF** in the **Save as type** list.
- Click **Options**, make sure the '**Document structure tags for accessibility**' check box is selected, and then click **OK**.

Further Guidance

Further information and guidance on creating accessible documents can be found at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/accessible-pdfs> and
- <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Make-your-Word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities>