



Making Microsoft Word Documents Accessible

Microsoft Word documents are commonly used and because of their widespread use, it is helpful for them to be constructed in a way that makes them readily available to all users. Making your course documents accessible acknowledges learner variability and benefits all learners. Accessible documents are easier to read and navigate and remove barriers to learning.

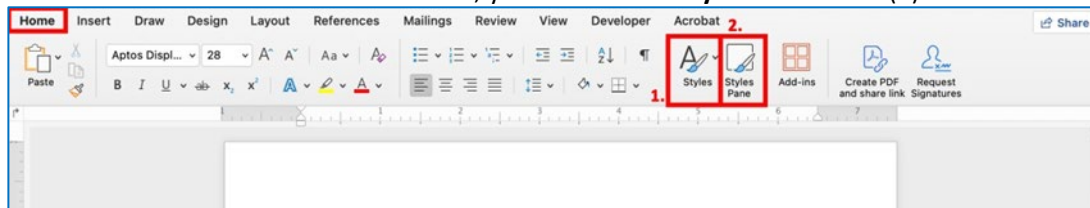
As you begin to create a Word document, the first thing to consider is the document font. For your document to be accurately read by an assistive technology, such as a screen reader, the font should be a San Serif font, such as Calibri, Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana, with a 11- or 12-point size. Black text is recommended in documents with a white background since it is a combination most individuals can see.

Microsoft Word has built-in formatting tools that when used increase the access of the document's content to all users. These include document headings, table headers, creating lists, and checking document accessibility.

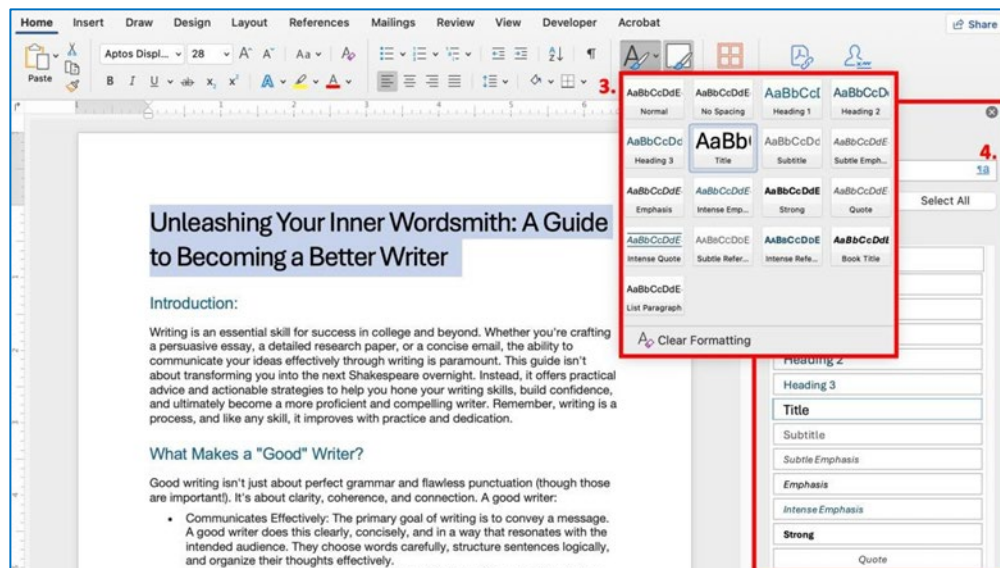
Headings

Headings are useful in MS Word documents to guide users through the document. In addition, headings allow assistive technologies to function optimally. To add headings to your document:

- On the home tab of the Word menu bar, you will see the **Styles** menu item (1) as well as the **Styles pane** (2).



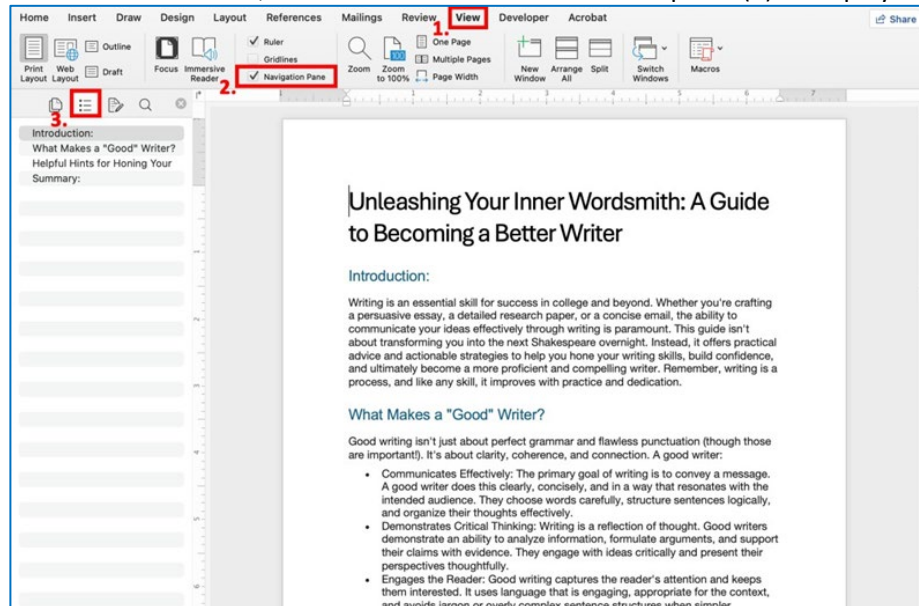
- When you select **Styles**, the item expands to show all the different text styles you can apply to your document (3).
- Select **Title** to style the title of your document (3). After that, add headings to the different parts of your document, begin with Heading 1 to add a heading to your document. As you continue to develop your document text add more headings, such as Heading 2 and Heading 3, so that your document is formatted like an outline. This embedded organization assists a screen reader.
- As you continue to add more headings, you can view the styles you are applying to your document by expanding the styles pane by clicking on it. A menu appears on the right of your document, and when you select text within the document, the styles pane indicates the text formatting you have applied (4).



Checking Document Navigation

Once you have added document headings using the styles pane, you can check the organization of your headings using the **Navigation Pane**. The Navigation pane check that your headings are consistent and allows you to organize your document. It also provides you with a reading order based on the headings in your document. Reading order is particularly important for users that use assistive technologies, such as a screen reader. To access the Navigation pane:

- On the toolbar, click on **View** (1), and check the box labeled **Navigation Pane** (2). A panel will appear on the left side of the document; Select the **outline icon** on the left panel (3) to display the document's heading structure.



Tables, Lists, and Images in MS Word Documents

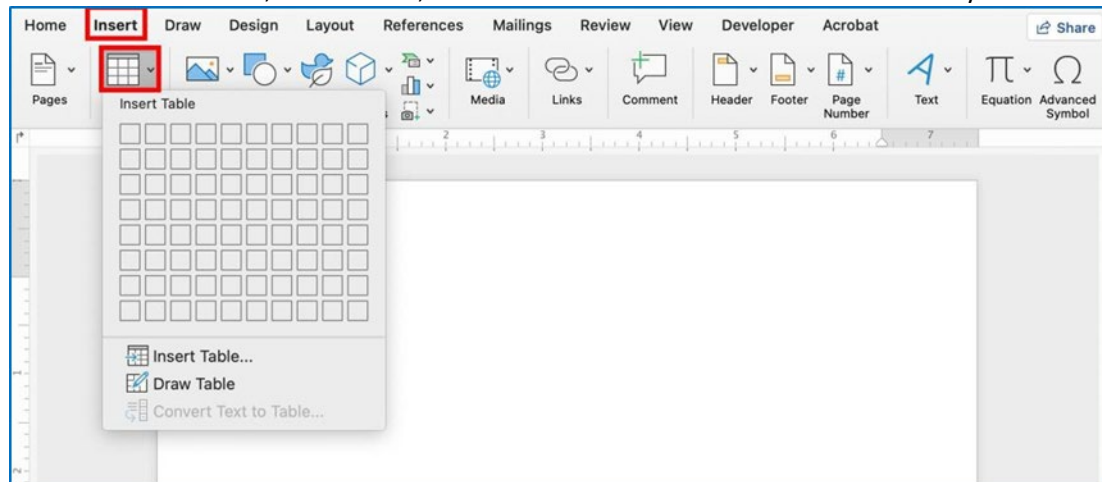
Some of your course documents may include tables, lists, and images. Like headings, these items need to be formatted so that a screen reader can read them to an individual.

Tables

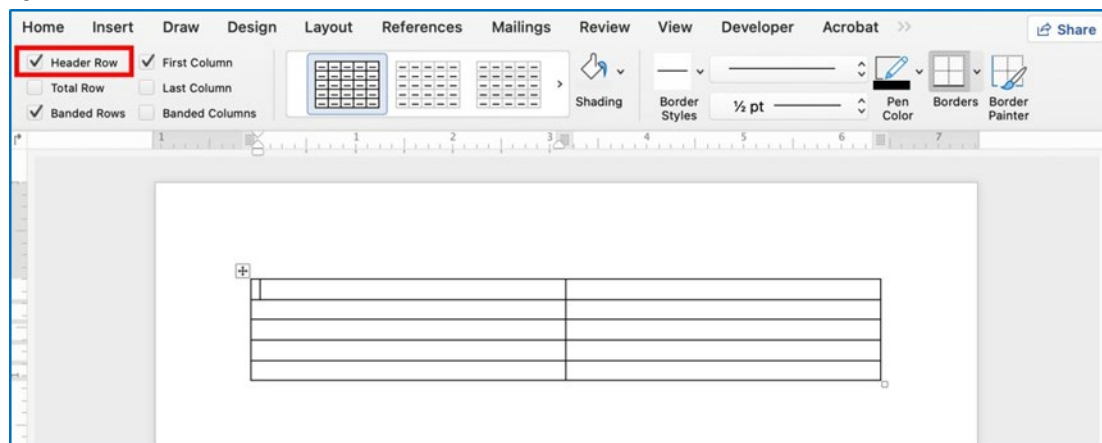
You may wish to present content as table in your documents. These tables need to have a header row. To insert a

document table and add a header row:

- Click on the **Insert** tab, select **Table**, and choose the number of rows and columns you want.



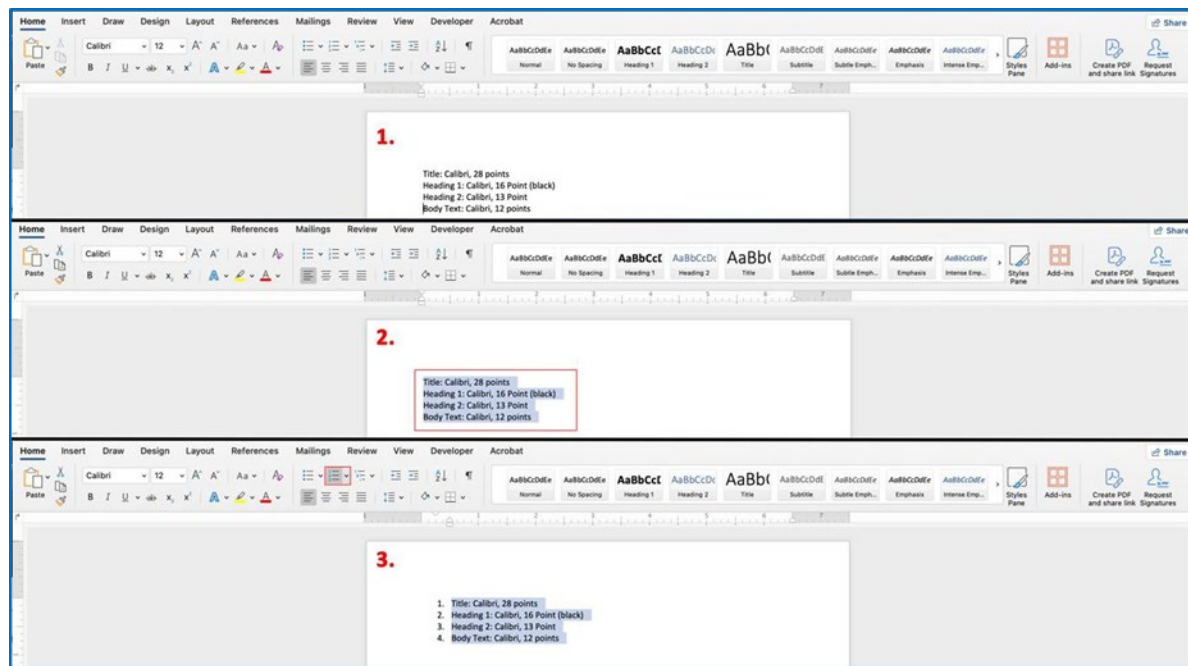
- Make sure the **Header row** in the table toolbar is checked, indicating that the table does indeed contain a header row.



Lists

Lists in your document should be formatted using the bulleted or numbered lists function. To develop a list:

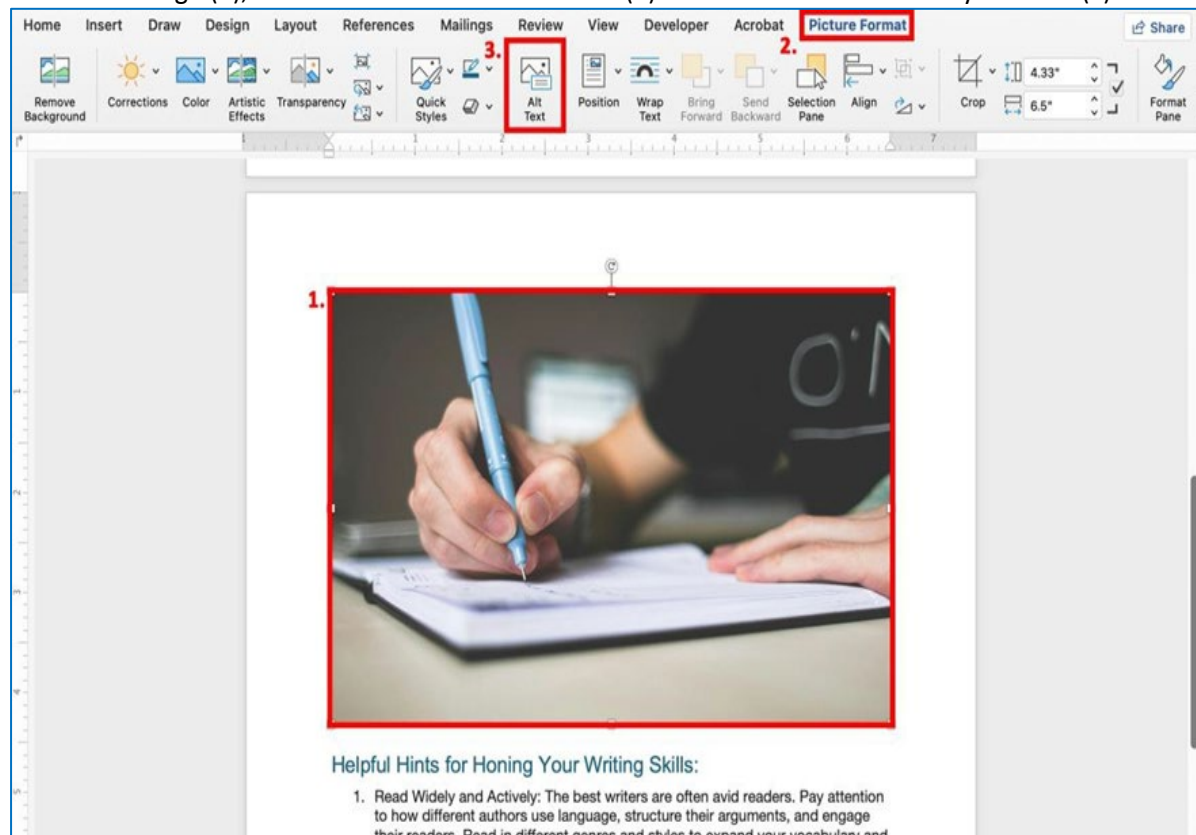
- Type each item of your list on its own line (1) and then select all of items you want in your list (2).
- Next, on the menu bar, select the icon for either a bullet or numeric list (3).



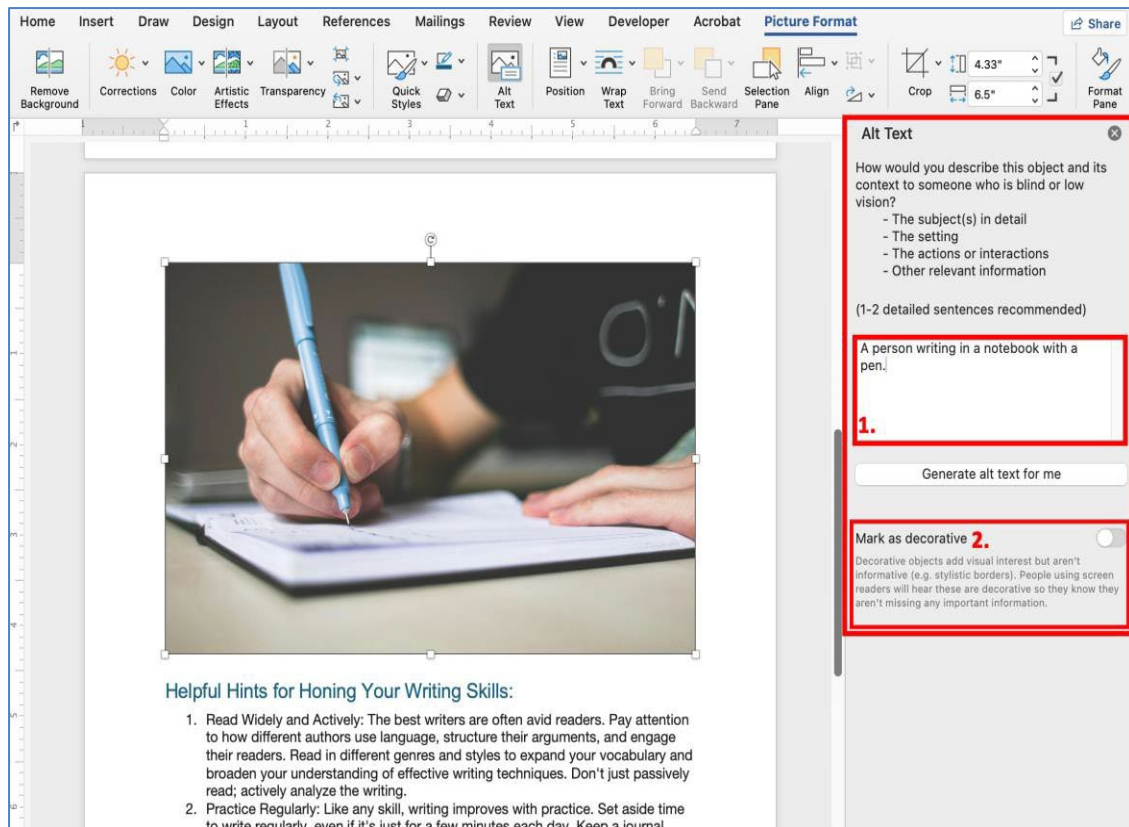
Images and Alternate Text

All images in your document should have alternate text (alt text). To add alt text:

- Select the image (1), and then select **Picture Format** (2) on the toolbar followed by **Alt Text** (3).



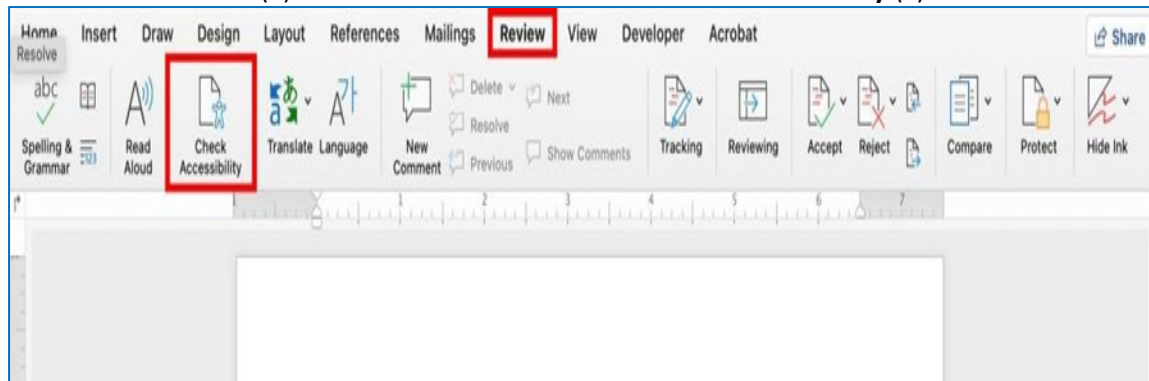
- In the **Alt Text** window, type description of the image (1). If the image does not reflect information to the reader, check **Mark as decorative**. (2)



Checking Document Accessibility

When you are done constructing your document, you can check the accessibility of the entire document. To check the accessibility of the entire document:

- Go to the **Review** tab (1) and click on the button labeled **Check Accessibility** (2).



- A window will appear to the right displaying errors in the document, along with a tip on how to fix each.

Home

Insert

Draw

Design

Layout

References

Mailings

Review

View

Developer

Acrobat

Share

abc

Spelling & Grammar

A

Read Aloud

Check Accessibility

Translate Language

New Comment

Delete

Resolve

Previous

Next

Show Comments

Tracking

Reviewing

Accept

Reject

Compare

Protect

Hide Ink

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Unleashing Your Inner Wordsmith: A Guide to Becoming a Better Writer

Introduction:

Writing is an essential skill for success in college and beyond. Whether you're crafting a persuasive essay, a detailed research paper, or a concise email, the ability to communicate your ideas effectively through writing is paramount. This guide isn't about transforming you into the next Shakespeare overnight. Instead, it offers practical advice and actionable strategies to help you hone your writing skills, build confidence, and ultimately become a more proficient and compelling writer. Remember, writing is a process, and like any skill, it improves with practice and dedication.

What Makes a "Good" Writer?

Good writing isn't just about perfect grammar and flawless punctuation (though those are important!). It's about clarity, coherence, and connection. A good writer:

- Communicates Effectively: The primary goal of writing is to convey a message. A good writer does this clearly, concisely, and in a way that resonates with the intended audience. They choose words carefully, structure sentences logically, and organize their thoughts effectively.
- Demonstrates Critical Thinking: Writing is a reflection of thought. Good writers demonstrate an ability to analyze information, formulate arguments, and support their claims with evidence. They engage with ideas critically and present their perspectives thoughtfully.
- Engages the Reader: Good writing captures the reader's attention and keeps them interested. It uses language that is engaging, appropriate for the context, and avoids jargon or overly complex sentence structures when simpler alternatives exist. It considers the audience and tailors the writing style accordingly.
- Exhibits Organization and Structure: A well-structured piece of writing flows logically from one point to the next. Good writers use clear introductions, transitions, and conclusions to guide the reader through their arguments. They organize their thoughts into paragraphs, sections, or chapters as needed.
- Possesses Strong Grammar and Mechanics: While not the only factor, correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling are essential for clear communication. Errors in these areas can distract the reader and undermine the writer's credibility.

Accessibility Assistant

Keep going!

Fix the remaining issues in the document to make it accessible to everyone.

Color and Contrast

Hard-to-read text contrast

Media and Illustrations

Missing alt text

1

Tables

Missing table header

Use of merged or split cells

Document Structure

No headings in document

Document Access

Restricted access