

Accessibility Help Guide

Making Word Documents
Accessible and Using the
Accessibility Checker



What it does:

Word has many built in features to assist you in making your documents accessible. Microsoft Word also has an Accessibility Checker that locates elements that might cause problems for people with disabilities.

What it helps with:

Word can help with a range of different accessibility issues such as including alternative text, meaningful hyperlink text, ensuring sufficient contrast for text and background colours, using built in headings and creating accessible tables.

What it works with:

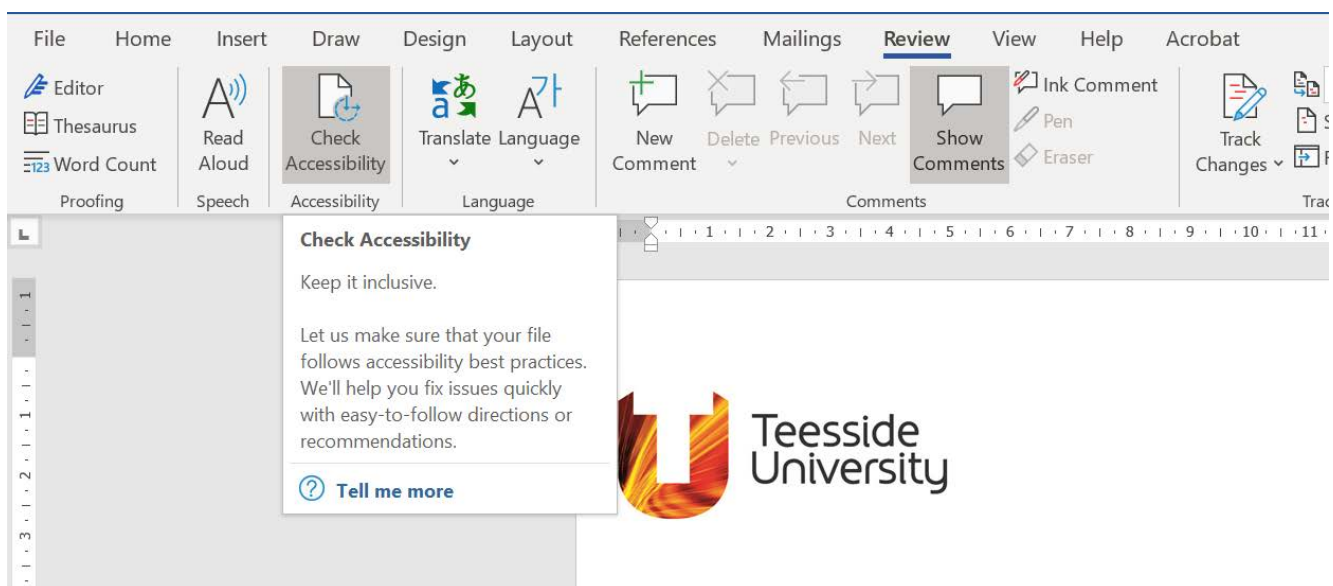
Any device with Microsoft Word.

Time commitment:

The Accessibility Checker works on most Office files. Once initiated, accessibility issues are displayed almost instantly in a simple menu.

How to enable the accessibility checker:

The Accessibility Checker is available in the Review tab in most Office programmes. You will see a list of errors, warnings and tips on how to amend your document to make it accessible. You can apply a one-click fix by selecting an action, or you can select the arrow button for more information and options.



Include alternative text with all visuals:

Alternative Text helps people who can't see the screen to understand the visuals that are being presented within a document.

Avoid using text in images as the sole method of presenting important information. If you need to use an image with text, repeat the text in the document. In alternative text, briefly describe the image and mention the existence of the text.

To add Alt Text to an image, select an image and press the Alt Text button in the Format ribbon tab. Alternatively, right-click an image and select Edit Alt Text.

Add meaningful hyperlink text:

People who use screen readers sometimes scan a list of links. The links should present clear and accurate information about the destination. For example, instead of saying 'click here' include the full title of the web page.

Ensure that colour is not the only means of conveying information:

People who are blind, have limited vision or are colour blind may miss out on the meaning conveyed by certain colours.

If a colour is used to differentiate status, add a shape. For example, if green is to indicate that something is complete, use a checkmark icon.

If a link is colour-coded, add an underline to highlight that it is a hyperlink.

Use sufficient contrast for text and background colours:

If your document has a high level of contrast between the text and the background, it will be accessible to a wider range of people. You can use the Accessibility Checker to check the contrast throughout your documents, including the contrast in tables and SmartArt.

Use built-in headings and styles:

To make it easier for screen readers to read your documents, use a logical heading order and the built in tools in Word. Organise your information in small chunks, ideally, each heading will only include a few paragraphs.

You can apply headings using the Styles section on the Home tab. You can also apply ordered lists to your documents via the Paragraph section on the Home tab.

Use a simple table structure and specify column header information:

Screen readers keep track of their location in a document by counting table cells. If a cell is merged or split, the screen reader can lose track and this can become confusing for the user. Blank cells in a table can also mislead someone using a screen reader that there is nothing else in the table.

Screen readers also use header information to identify rows and columns. You can add table headers via the Table Tools Design tab.

More information:

Information on how to use the Microsoft Word accessibility tools mentioned above on a range of different devices and operating systems.