



Edge Hill
University

Library and
Learning Services

Accessibility best practice



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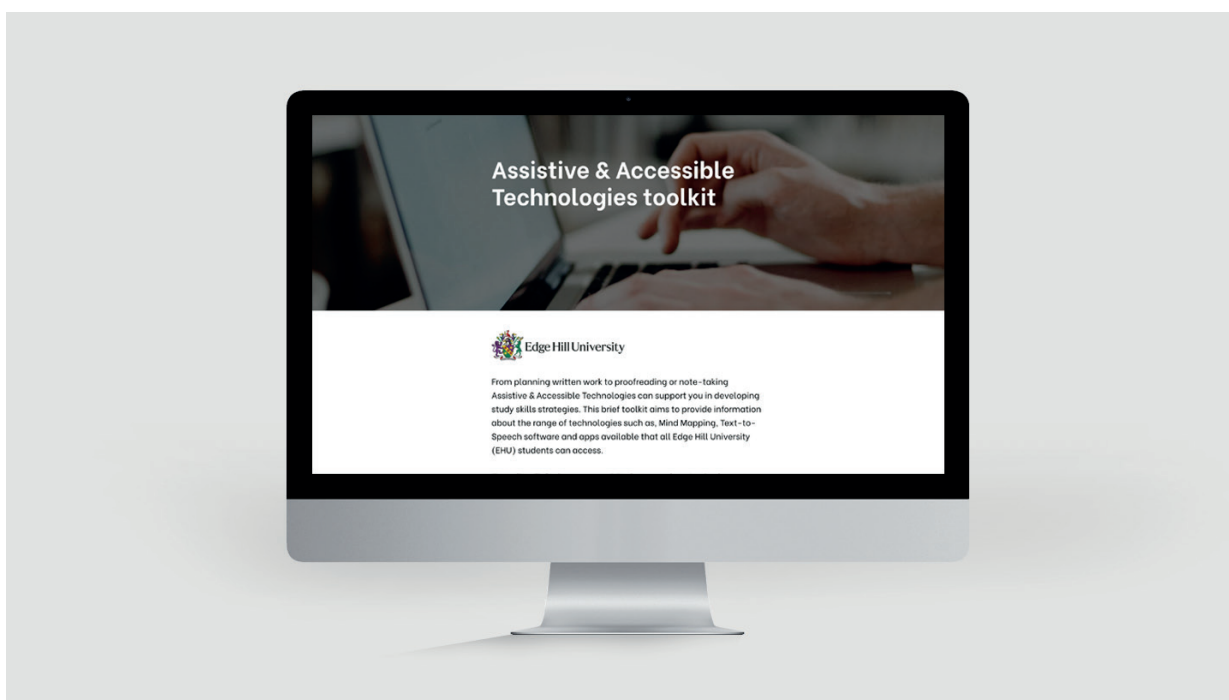


Introduction

Accessibility is an important consideration for colleagues and students at the university. This guidance aims to collate some useful information and resources to support colleagues in their accessibility considerations in departments.

Content created accessibly using universal design principles benefits all users and enables those using specialist software to access the content using a variety of tools that support multisensory and metacognitive learning.

The university has a range of accessible technologies available to staff and students, [The Accessible and Assistive Technologies Toolkit](#) provides an overview of these helpful productivity tools.



Microsoft Word



Microsoft Word has many features built-in that help people with different abilities to read and author documents. It is important you understand how to make your documents accessible at the point of creation.

The following guidelines will help you make your documents more accessible from the outset:

- Use **built-in headings and styles** to add structure to your documents in a logical order (Heading 1, Heading 2 etc.)
[Microsoft video tutorial 'Don't change font use Quick Styles '](#).
- Add descriptive **Alternative Text** ([alt text](#)) to images, shapes and charts to help those who use screen readers (right click on image and select edit alt text).
- Ensure there is sufficient [contrast between the font colour and the background colour](#). A black font on a pale background provides a good contrast.
- **Font size:** use good contrasts and a readable font size, 14 point is recommended (fonts of 12 point size are considered small) and choose a 'sans serif' font which is easier for most people to read such as Arial, Verdana, Calibri, Universe and Helvetica ([AbilityNet provides more information about Point size](#)).
- Use [meaningful hyperlink text and screen tips](#). Links should convey clear and accurate information about the destination rather than saying 'click here' or similar. For example: 'Visit the [Making MS Word Documents Accessible](#) page for more information'.

- Use a [simple table and structure](#), specify column and header information.
- Use **Bold** to emphasise items and avoid italics and underlining.
- Use [accessible file names](#) in Microsoft Word.
- Use **bulleted** or **numbered** lists to help break up text.
- Do not [use colour](#) or [spatial position](#) as the only way to convey content or meaning.

Writing effective alt text

It is important when composing alt text that we think about what we are trying to convey in the image and ensure that descriptions are considered, written in clear simple language and support users who may be accessing content using accessible and assistive technologies.

[Everything you need to know to write effective alt text - Microsoft Support](#)

Sometimes images are complex, and alt text may require a more detailed and considered approach to convey the necessary information and meaning. Colleagues across the sector have collaborated to provide some principles and advice when considering alt text for complex images.

[Describing complex images](#)

Further Information

Take this **LinkedIn Learning** course on:
[Creating accessible documents in Office.](#)

Have a look at this **MS Office guide** on:
[Making MS Word Documents Accessible.](#)

Microsoft PowerPoint



You can make your PowerPoint slides accessible by following a few best practices. PowerPoint comes with a large selection of accessible templates; these can save you lots of time as accessible templates already have the right colours for contrast and have simple easy to read fonts.

However, you may want to improve your own PowerPoint files, here are some of the more common issues you can improve and repair:

- [Correct content reading order.](#)
- [Make charts, graphs, and images accessible.](#)
- [Using colour, style, and templates to improve PowerPoint accessibility.](#)
- [Use readable fonts and good design for clearer and easier comprehension.](#)
- [Creating a Word document version of your PowerPoint.](#)

Further Information

- **Microsoft Office Video Tutorials** – [Getting started with Microsoft 365.](#)
- Microsoft Office 365 [Accessible Templates.](#)
- The **WebAIM site** has a good section on [PowerPoint Accessibility](#) with step-by-step details.
- Take a look at this **Microsoft page** which has a step-by-step guide to [Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to disabled people.](#)
- Take this **LinkedIn Learning** course on [Creating accessible documents in Office.](#)
- [Read more about setting the reading order of slide contents.](#)

Working with PDF's



PDF's can be created either by scanning a physical copy or by converting files from other sources such as Word or PowerPoint.

This collection of guides will help you produce PDF documents that are accessible for those who rely on assistive technology to use and understand your content.

[Guides for Producing Accessible PDF Documents](#)

Converting to PDFs



Where possible, make your source document accessible before converting to a PDF. Doing this will save considerable time and effort.

Don't use the Print to PDF option, use **Save As** or **Export** to create your PDF. Click Options and make sure the Document Structure tags for accessibility check box is selected, and then click ok.

Adobe Acrobat DC



If the original source document is not available, accessibility features can sometimes be added to the PDF using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC. Take a look at the Using [Acrobat Pro Accessibility Checker](#) for a guide on how to use the software.

For complete instructions on how to make documents accessible and repair the accessibility tag structure of a document refer to the [Adobe Acrobat Pro DC Accessibility Repair Workflow](#).

Further information

- Microsoft has a page on how to [Create Accessible PDFs in Office](#).
- Take this **LinkedIn Learning** course on [Creating Accessible PDF documents using Acrobat Pro DC](#). Although the course is over 4 hours long you can navigate to the sections you are interested in.
- **YouTube video:** [Create Accessible PDFs from Word in Adobe Acrobat](#).

Blackboard Ally



Anthology Ally is a tool which integrates with Blackboard to help you check that the content in your course is inclusive and digitally accessible. Ally automatically scans your original content (e.g. PowerPoints, Word Documents and PDFs), and performs a series of steps to advise on their accessibility:

- Provides staff with accessibility scores for your entire course content (this can only be seen by staff and not by students!) It also provides quick tips to make content more accessible.
- It gives staff feedback on how to improve your accessibility.



Ally is not the solution for all accessibility issues (see '[Making Documents Accessible](#)'). However you can use Ally as an indication of how accessible your content is and what changes can be made to improve content in your course.

Remember, only staff can see the Ally colour indicators and accessibility scores, they can be used to help address key accessibility issues with course content.

[Ally Alternative formats](#) provide greater opportunities for everyone to access the information they need in the way they need or want it. With alternative formats all students can meet the same learning objectives using resources that are built to target the needs of the individual student. For example, students have converted lecture slides to audio, listening to them during their commute to help with revision.

Microsoft Accessibility Checker



Another useful tool to support the creation of accessible documents and content is the Microsoft Accessibility Checker. This is available throughout the suite of Office 365 applications and is enabled by default at the university.

The Accessibility Checker can support you in creating accessible documents from the point of design and this approach will support students and colleagues by ensuring people can utilise content using a wide range of assistive and accessible technologies.

[Improve accessibility with the Accessibility Checker - Microsoft Support](#)

Colour contrast Checker



Having sufficient contrast between foreground and background colours is an essential part of usability in general and accessibility in particular. [WebAim's Colour Contrast Checker](#) is a tool that calculates the contrast between two colours and automatically evaluates the returned value against the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#).

Use [WebAim's Link Contrast Checker](#) to evaluate links that are identified using colour alone.

Optional Colour Contrast Analyser with built-in Colour Picker tool: [Colour Contrast Analyser Portable](#).

Emails



It is important to consider accessibility in our communications to ensure all recipients can access content equitably. People may read emails in different ways on different devices, and it is useful to think about some key considerations when composing emails.

- Make your subject line relevant to the email content.
- Add structure to emails using descriptive headers. This enables all users to navigate content quickly and breaks down information so users can visually scan information or use assistive technology to navigate effectively.
- Font size: use good contrasts and a readable font size, 14 point is recommended (fonts of 12-point size are considered small) and choose a 'sans serif' font which is easier for most people to read such as Arial, Verdana, Calibri, Universe, and Helvetica
- Avoid using all capital letters and excessive use of italics or underlines as this can be difficult to read and impact on the comprehension of the content.
- Ensure there is sufficient colour contrast between the foreground text and the background colour.
- When including a hyperlink use meaningful text to convey clear and accurate information about the destination. Avoid using phrases such as click here or see this page when including hyperlinks as this does not convey any meaning for users accessing via Screen Readers or Text to Speech technologies.

Emails



- If you're including images in your emails, make sure you add descriptive alternative text to your image. Disabled users may be accessing this content using Screen Readers or Text to Speech software that will read out the alt tags on the images.
- When writing your email, please ensure you use clear simple language so all recipients can understand. Use shorter sentences that are concise. Avoid using jargon and abbreviations or explain any terms that may be unfamiliar when they are first used.

[Video: Improve email accessibility - Microsoft Support](#)

Accessible social media



Alongside general good accessible practices such as using clear simple language, meaningful text for hyperlinks and including alt tags on images considering accessibility in social media activity will enable and improve engagement for all audiences.

A webinar exploring best practice in this area is available from Ability Net: [Accessible social media – Ability Net webinar](#)

Colleagues in Learning Services have developed a Social Media Accessibility Checklist to guide their work in this area. You can access this and hopefully this is helpful to inform your work on accessible social media:

[Social Media Accessibility Checklist](#)

Further Guidance and information on accessible tools and practices:

- [Microsoft UK Accessibility Champions Tips & Tricks - Microsoft UK](#)
- [Google Workspace user guide to accessibility - Google Workspace Admin Help](#)
- [Accessibility - Apple \(UK\)](#)
- [Ability Net – Factsheet Creating Accessible Documents](#)
- [Ability Net - Accessible Content Playlist \(YouTube\)](#)