Clarington

Accessible Word Document Guidelines

Style and Accessible Document Guidelines for Word 2013

Version 2.0.2

If this information is required in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at 905-623-3379 ext. 2131.

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Introduction

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), information posted to websites must be in an accessible format. This is why the Municipality of Clarington now requires all documents be provided in an accessible format.

This guide will provide you with the tools to make your Word 2013 documents accessible to everyone.

Creating an accessible document may change the way you use Microsoft Word but it doesn't necessarily mean more work. By making small, but important changes in how you produce documents, you can make them accessible to people with disabilities with very little effort.

Online Documents and Content

The Municipality of Clarington **will not** post content to its website(s) unless the information is in an accessible format.

Occasionally, inaccessible content will be posted to the internet, but will generally be limited to the following scenarios:

- Maps and GIS data
- Engineering drawings or complex technical data
- Legacy applications or data that cannot be updated or cannot be updated with reasonable effort/expenses
- Presentation content where making it accessible would take away from its purpose
- Content provided by external contributors such as vendors or community partners
- Older documents created before January 1, 2012

What is an Accessible Document?

Accessible documents:

- Use built-in styles;
- Have a sans-serif font that is at least 12pt or larger;
- Describe images with alternative text (alt-text) and use high-quality visuals;
- Contain proper lists;
- Are left aligned;
- Have page numbers;
- Use meaningful hyper-links;
- Only use ALL CAPS for acronyms;
- Emphasize important information with **bold**, not <u>underlining</u> or *italics;*
- Have good colour contrast;
- Use a table of contents in longer documents;
- Create space with paragraph spacing instead of empty paragraphs;
- Contain simple tables with header rows and no blank cells for spacing; and
- Use the Accessibility Checker to verify the document is useable to everyone.

Fonts

Avoid complicated, decorative or handwriting fonts.

Use "Sans-Serif" fonts like Arial, Calibri and Verdana. These fonts have easily recognizable upper, lower-case and numerical characters. Narrow versions of these fonts should be avoided.

"Serif" fonts are more difficult to read because they contain 'tails', as shown in the image below. Times New Roman, Cambria and Georgia are examples of serif fonts.
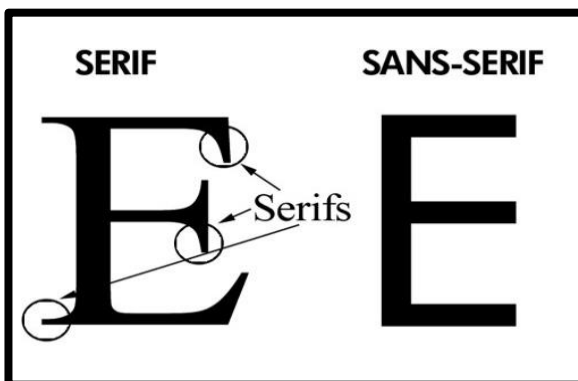
The Municipality of Clarington recommends using **Arial**.

Font Size

Information should be a minimum of 12pt font. Anything less will be difficult to read and should be avoided.

Information in a table should also be 12pt font. If absolutely necessary, text within a table can be reduced to 11pt. In exceptional situations, 10pt can be used, but nothing smaller because it will be too difficult to read.

Headings can be made larger. Size 14 and 16 are good sizes for headings.

Font Features

Use **Bold** to add emphasis.

Do not use *italics* or underlining to convey important information. These font features are more difficult to read and are not recognized by screen readers.

Exceptions:

1. Italics can be used to highlight laws and legislation.
2. Microsoft Office products typically recognize email addresses and web page links and automatically underline them. In this situation, it is acceptable to have email addresses and web page links to be underlined.

All Capital Letters

Avoid sentences in all UPPER CASE letters. A sentence written with a combination of upper and lower case letters is easier to read.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms and abbreviations are shortened versions of words or phrases that are used in everyday speech and writing. Typically, they simplify long phrases, words or titles.

It is generally good practice to provide an expanded form or explanation of an acronym or abbreviation on first mention. Example: The National Hockey League (NHL) has 30 teams.

However, judgement is required to decide whether the abbreviation itself conveys sufficient information. The word "modem" is technically an abbreviation of "modulator/demodulator" but it is fair to say that the abbreviation has replaced the expanded phrase in popular usage.

Similarly, it is doubtful that providing the expanded title of "Deoxyribonucleic acid" will enhance anyone's understanding of the word "DNA"

Not every abbreviation is unique and will depend on who you are speaking to or the

industry you are addressing. For example in computing the acronym MDF is used to abbreviate 'Microsoft Data File' but MDF can also refer to the building material Medium Density Fiberboard. In this case, it will be helpful to define the acronym prior to using it.

Alignment

Text should always be left aligned. Centered and justified paragraphs are not accessible and should be avoided.

Margins

Use the default 1" margins set by Microsoft Word where possible.

Use Styles

Styles are formatting instructions, such as 'Heading1' for the title of your document, 'Heading 2' to indicate the top-level heading. 'Heading 3' to indicate a sub-heading and the 'Normal' style for the paragraph text in your document. It is best to use the built-in styles in Word as opposed to creating your own, as not all assistive technologies will be able to understand custom styles.
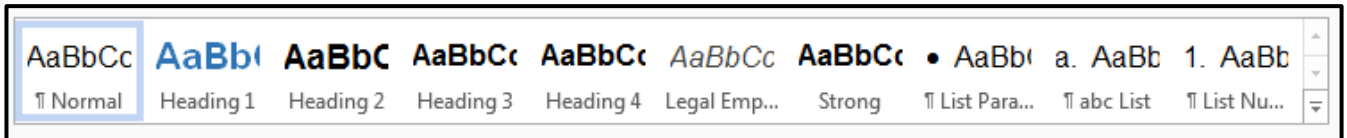
When using Microsoft Office, use the "**Styles**" tool to quickly apply a set of formatting choices to document headings and body. Benefits include:

- Increased readability
- Screen readers can identify and navigate sections
- A table of contents with links to document sections can be automatically generated, as formatted in this document.
- Formatting is consistent throughout the document.

Colour Contrast

The better the contrast between the background and the foreground, the more legible the document will be. Black text on a white background provides the best contrast, but is not the only option.

As a general rule, use dark letters on a light background, or a light colour on a dark background.

A good way to check contrast is to print in black and white and check if the document is legible.

Easy to Read Colour Combinations	Hard to Read Colour Combinations
Dark Blue on White	Red on Purple
White on Black	White on Light Green

Note: Limit the use of watermarks. It takes away from the colour contrast

Hyperlinks

Always use meaningful hyperlinks.

Every hyperlink in a Word document needs to be accessible for all readers. Ensure your links are contextual. Don't use words such as "Click Here" or "For more information" to create your link. Screen readers read these words out loud instead of the actual link.

Example of an inaccessible hyperlinks:

1. To apply for a marriage licence, visit http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca/mbs/ssb/forms/ssbforms.nsf/AttachDocsPublish/007-11018E~1/$File/11018E.pdf and fill out the form. Bring your completed form along with the required identification to the Clerk's office on the second floor of the Municipal Administrative Centre. The Clerk's Office also has printed forms available.

2. To apply for a marriage licence, click here.

Example of an accessible hyperlink:

To apply for a marriage licence, bring a completed marriage licence application form along with the required identification to the Clerk's Office on the second floor of the Municipal Administrative Centre. The Clerk's Office also has printed forms available.

ScreenTips

Every hyperlink requires a ScreenTip. ScreenTips provide extra information about the hyperlink which makes it easier to determine if it is a link that needs to be opened.

To add a ScreenTip:

Right click "edit hyperlink" then select "ScreenTip". Enter additional information about where the link will go in the pop up window, such as "Link to open website"or "Link to send an email".
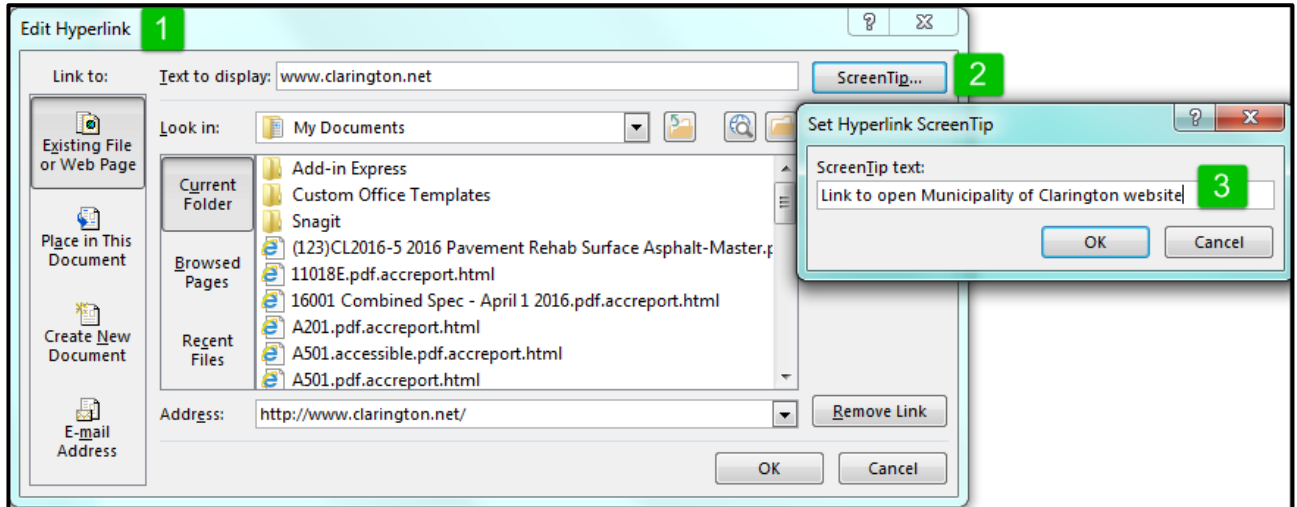
Note: ScreenTips do not convert to PDF, but are very useful additions to Word files.

Use Space not Spaces

Use paragraph settings to create the space you need before and after paragraphs and headings instead of hitting "enter" multiple times. You can set a paragraph spacing for each style that you use. This will make your document easier to read and easier to create.

Document Formatted with Spaces (Inaccessible)
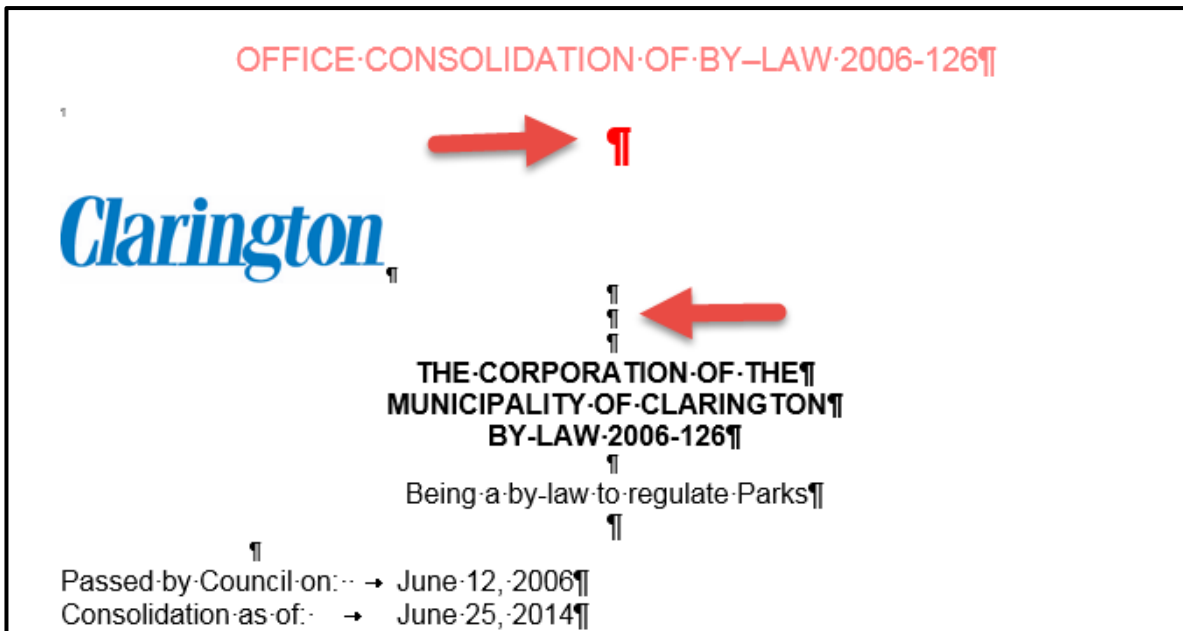
Document with Paragraph Spacing (Accessible)

Use Alternative Descriptions (Alt Text) on Images, Charts and Graphs

Add a short description to all graphics inserted into a document.

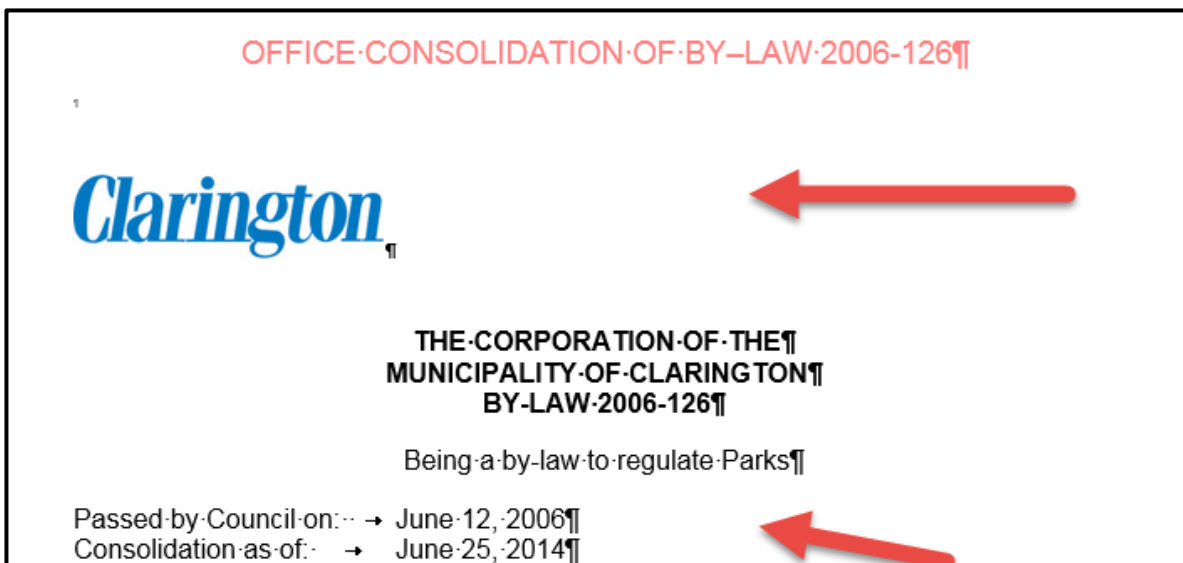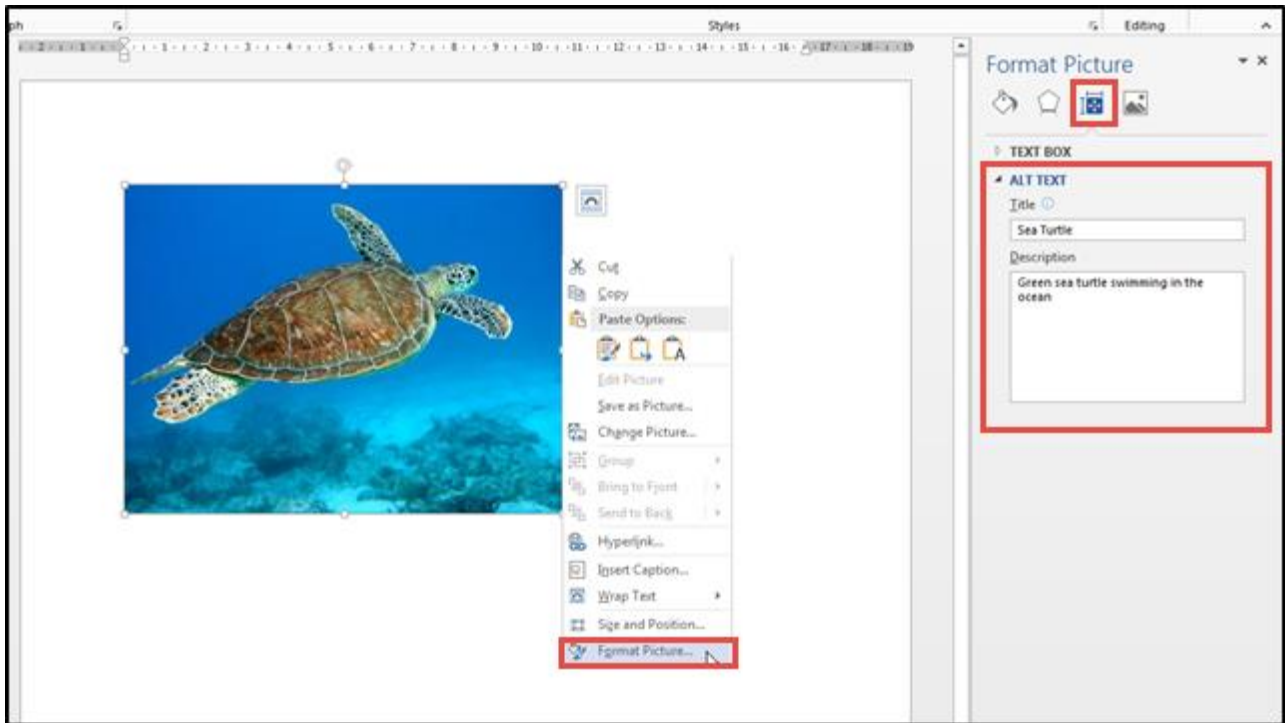An "Alt text", or alternative text, is a brief description of any graphic inserted into a document. It can be read by a screen reader to allow someone with a vision disability to understand what the graphic is.

To add Alt Text: Right click the image and select format picture. Select the "layout and properties icon" and then "alt-text".

The amount of Alt Text needed depends on the image being used. A logo does not need to be described in great detail; simply state that it is the logo for the business.

Example: Municipality of Clarington Logo.

If you are using Alt Text on more complex images, provide as much description as possible.

Tip: It sometimes helps to imagine describing the picture to someone who has their eyes closed. What would you say? That's your alt text.

Use High Quality Visuals

When using images, charts, maps or graphs, ensure the quality and/or resolution is high. Grainy, blurry or pixelated images are difficult to read and understand. For example, using a map that has been faxed, copied and scanned multiple times

reduces the quality and readability. Try to find the original source or the highest-quality version you can find.

Images from the Internet

It is not acceptable to take an image from a Google or Internet search.

If you are ever unsure about an image you want to use, consult the Communications Division **before** you use it. In special cases, the Communications Division can provide royalty free images from their photo library.

Use of Clarington's Logo

In a Word document, the Clarington logo should be placed at the top left or bottom right of the document. If you are using a memo or report template, the logo is already in the correct position. For posters, brochures, shirts, signs, or any other item, contact the Communications Division.

Use Page Numbering

Add automatic page numbering using the Header and Footer tool

Numbering the pages of a document helps readers to effectively navigate and reference the contents.

Microsoft Office products have a variety of page numbering templates that can be automatically inserted into documents.

Tables and Charts

Avoid tables and charts where possible. Do not paste tables as images.

There are times when using tables and charts are the most efficient way to express a large amount of information, making the information more understandable for most readers. When using tables and charts, ensure they are formatted to be as accessible as possible to all readers.

All of the basic accessibility considerations that are applied to documents must also be applied to tables and charts. For example:

- Use appropriate font size

- Add alternative text

- Use appropriate text alignment

Additionally, **ensure tables include column headings** and where possible, use only one row of headings. Keep tables simple by avoiding merged cells. If tables split across pages, set the header to show at the top of each page. Do not use blank cells for formatting.

When creating charts, use formatting options to create different types of lines or apply textures rather than colours to differentiate information for users who are colour blind.

Of course, there are times, such as preparing budget documents, when charts and tables are the most efficient and best way to express a large amount of information. In these cases, you should be prepared to provide an accessible format of this information if requested.

Use Real Lists

Format lists as "real lists" by using automatically generated bullets or numbering systems.

When creating lists, it is important to format them as a "real list". Otherwise, assistive technologies such as screen readers will interpret the list as a series of short separate paragraphs instead of a coherent list of related items. Microsoft Office products have a variety of automatically generated list options.

Use numbered lists if the information is sequential and use bulleted lists if the information is a related set of points. A screen reader will announce the information as a list.
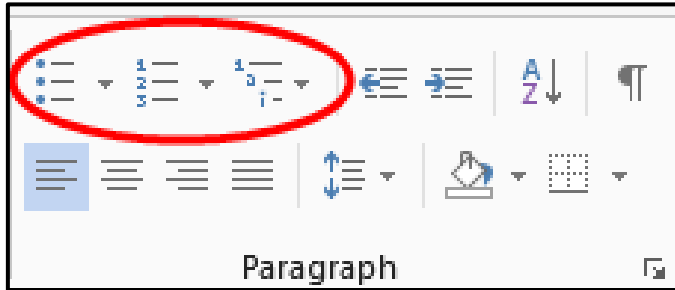
Avoid SmartArt

Screen readers will not read content within SmartArt objects. In addition, SmartArt objects often produce images that contain text that is too small for sighted readers. Choose an alternate way to convey the information. For example, if you want to describe a process, use Real Lists to number the steps and add a description of each step.

Note: If SmartArt, or other graphic designs are required for a newsletter, brochure, poster, etc., the Communications Division can design the document for **you** and make it accessible. This will save you time while ensuring that the content is accesible and follows branding guidelines.

Avoid SmartArt:
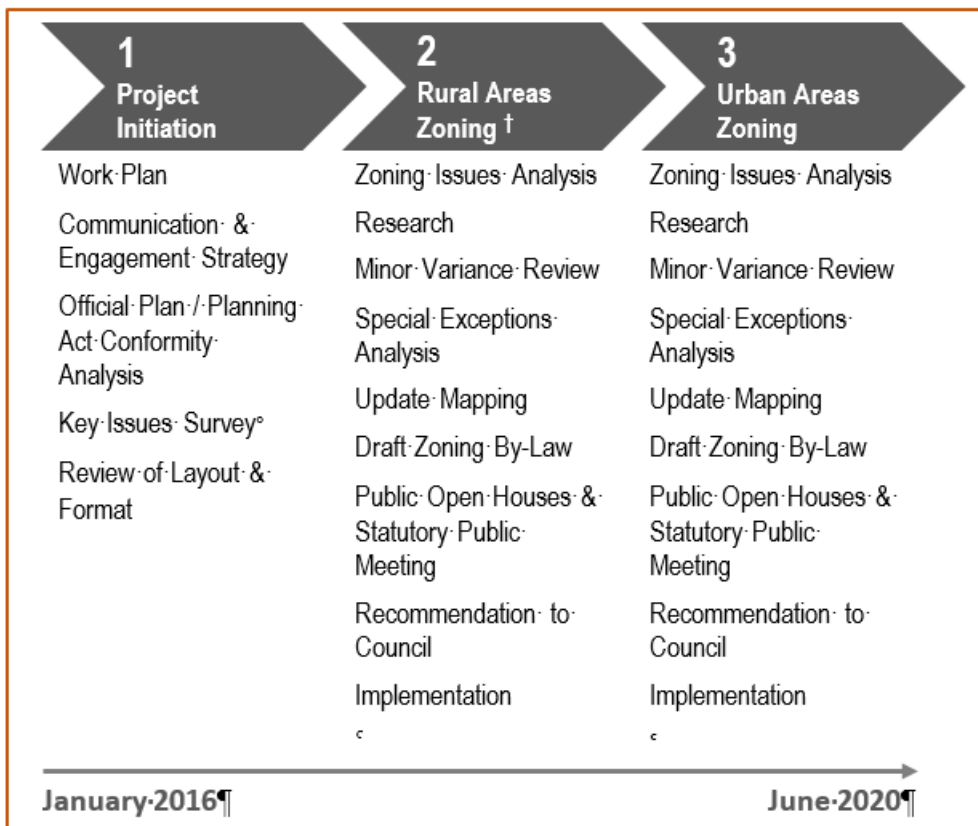
Instead of using SmartArt, try using a [Real List](). A well-constructed accessible table would also be acceptable.

1. Project Initiation (January 2010)

   - Work Plan
   - Communication and Engagement Strategy
   - Official Plan / Planning Act Conformity Analysis
   - Key Issues Survey
   - Review of Layout and Format

2. Rural Areas Zoning

   - Zoning Issues Analysis
   - Research
   - Minor Variance Review
   - Special Exceptions Analysis
   - Update Mapping
   - Draft Zoning By-Law
   - Public Open Houses & Statutory Public Meeting
   - Recommendation to Council
   - Implementation

3. Urban Areas Zoning (June 2020)

   - Zoning Issues Analysis
   - Research
   - Minor Variance Review
   - Special Exceptions Analysis
   - Update Mapping
   - Draft Zoning By-Law
   - Public Open Houses & Statutory Public Meeting
   - Recommendations to Council
   - Implementation

Avoid conveying information by colour only

Ensure that information is not conveyed by contrast, colour, format or layout or by combinations thereof.

In the chart below, it is difficult to determine the value of each segment within the columns. In addition, individuals with colour deficiency (colour blindness) may not be able to distinguish the colours within the legend or columns.
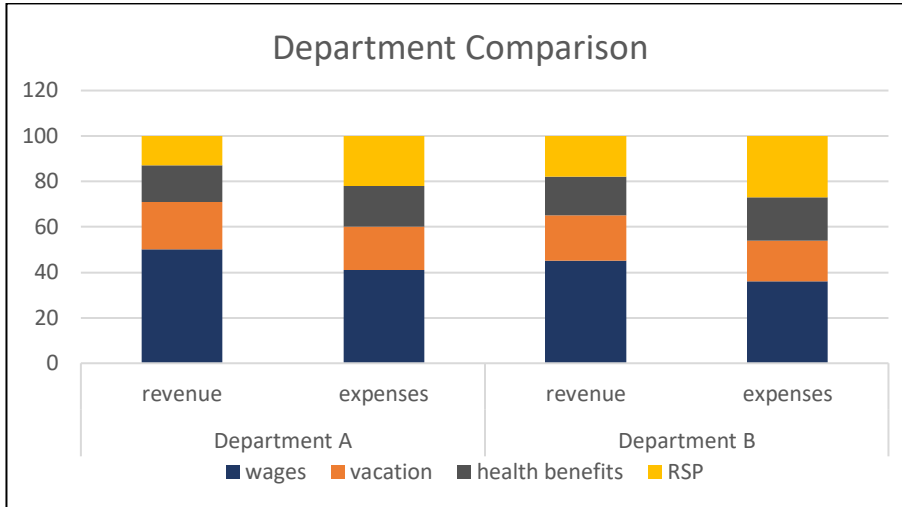
Instead, provide values for each segment and include detailed alternative text so that sighted and non-sighted readers have access to the same information. Be mindful of the font size and colour contrast when inserting chart images.
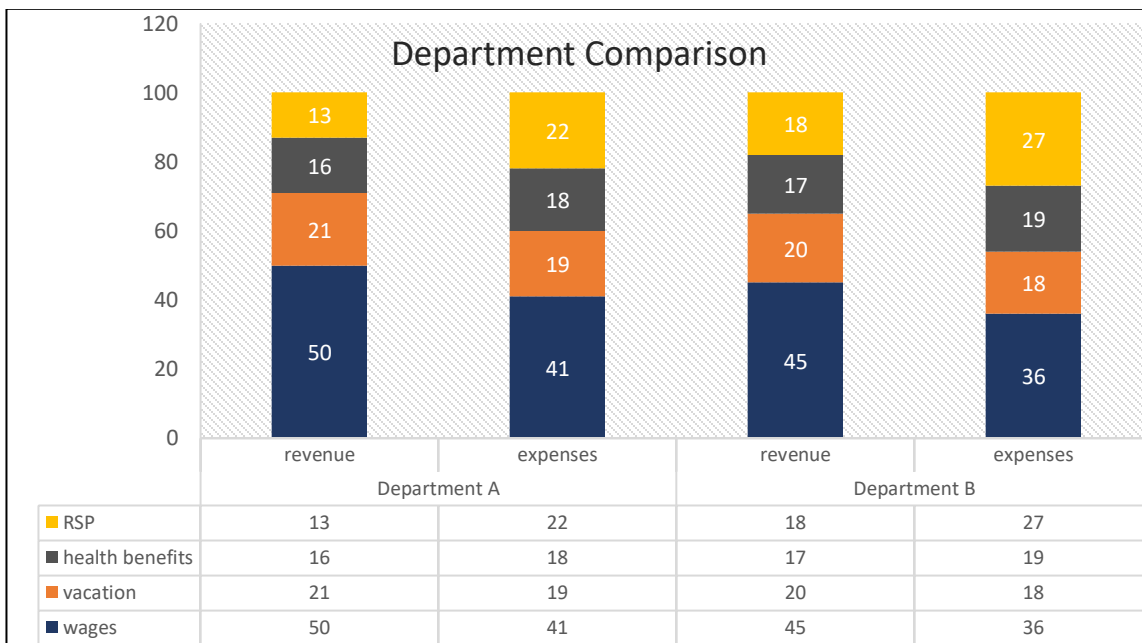
Tracking Changes

If you need to make changes to the document, it is important to use the Track Changes feature. Using font features such as strikethrough or colours to show changes are not accessible to people using screen readers. Track changes also makes it easier to accept or reject changes.
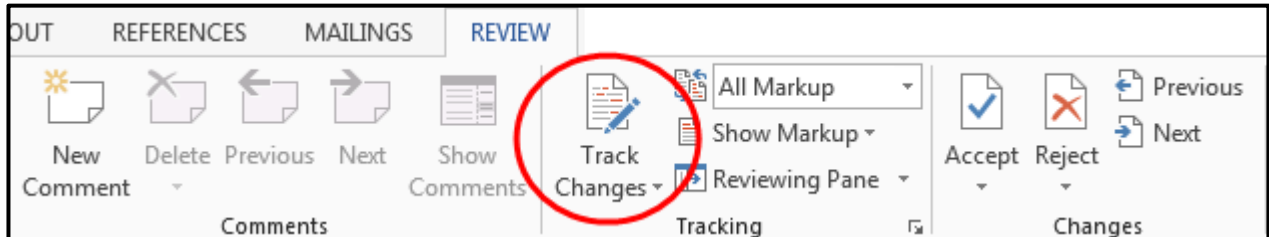

Alternative Format Statement

The following statement should appear at the **top** of all internal documents and public facing documents to inform individuals that they may request the information in an alternate format. Place it within the body of the document (not in the header) just above tor just below the title, prior to any content or information..

If this information is required in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at 905-623-3379 ext. 2131.

Table of Contents

Longer documents should always have a table of contents. Having a table of contents makes it easy to navigate the document and skip to a particular section.

When you use built in styles, you can automatically generate a table of contents. The table of contents will be generated using the various Headings you've used. If you don't use proper Headings through the styles menu, you will not be able to generate an automatic table of contents. This is a sign your document is not accessible.

To create a table of contents automatically:

Select the references tab, then table of contents. From the drop down menu you can select an automatic table of contents to use.
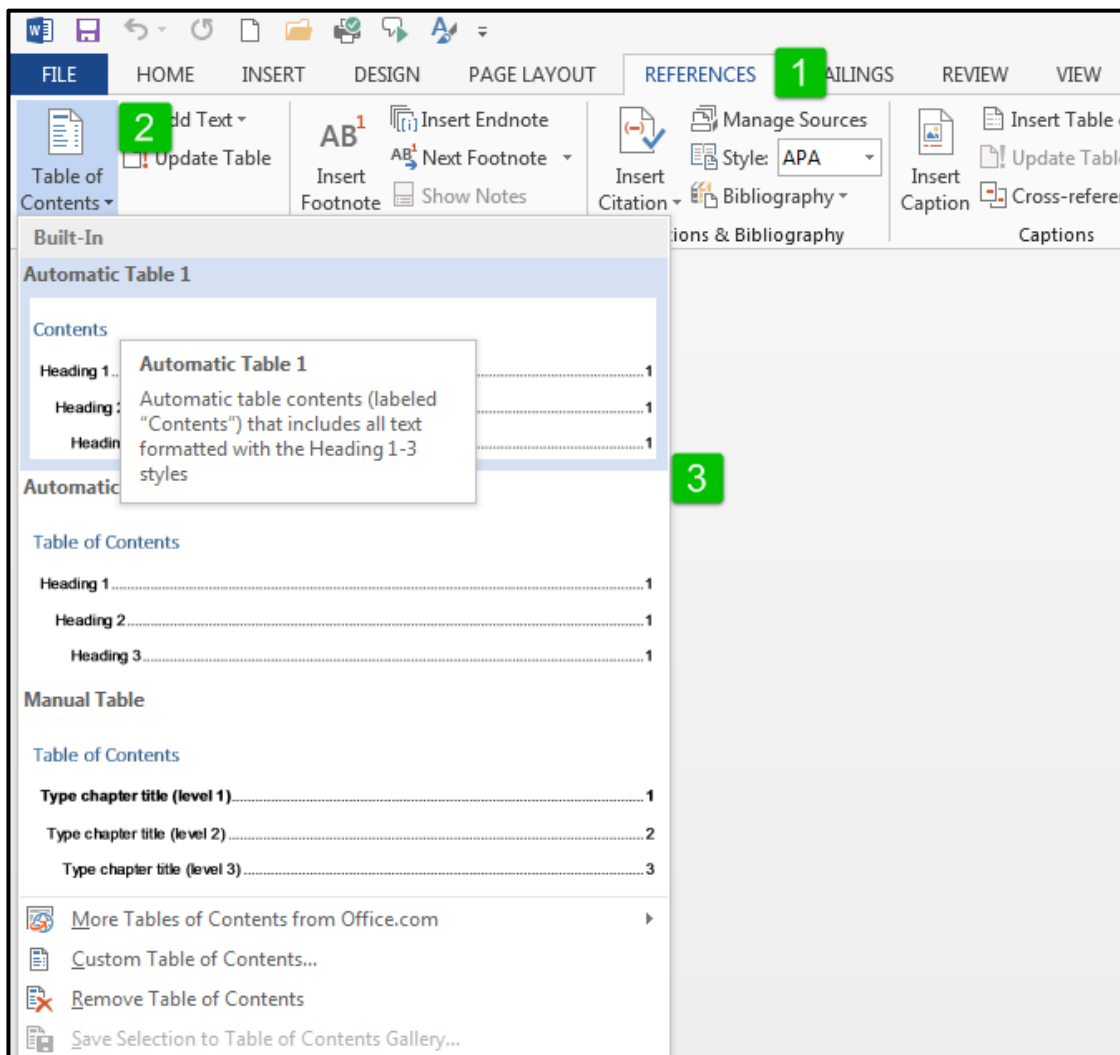
Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word 2013

The Accessibility Checker helps users create more accessible content. By identifying areas that might be challenging for users with disabilities, you can fix potential problems within your content.

This feature is available in Word 2013 and will only work on documents saved as a .docx file. Older documents saved as .doc files must be updated to Word 2013 to enable the accessibility checker.

Running the Word 2013 Accessibility Checker

Click on the File tab, then select "Check for Issues" and then select "Check Accessibility" from the drop down menu.
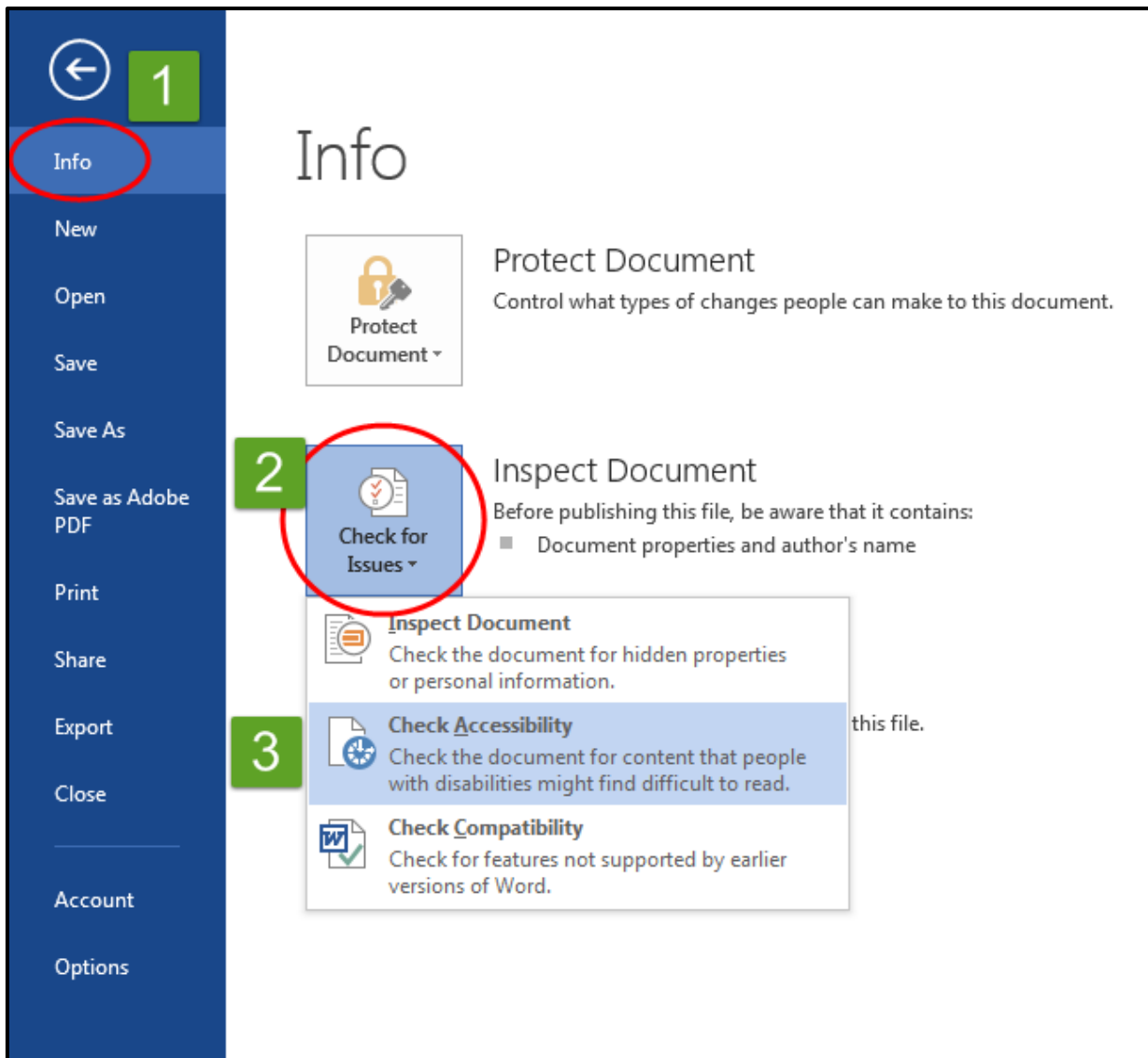
The Accessibility Checker checks your document against a set of possible issues. Each Issue that the Accessibility checker finds is classified as an Error, Warning or Tip.

1. An **Error** is for content that makes a file very difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to understand.

2. A **Warning** is for content that in most but not all cases makes a file difficult for people with disabilities to understand.

3. A **Tip** is for content that people with disabilities can understand, but that might be better organized or presented in a way that would improve their experience.

Fixing accessibility issues

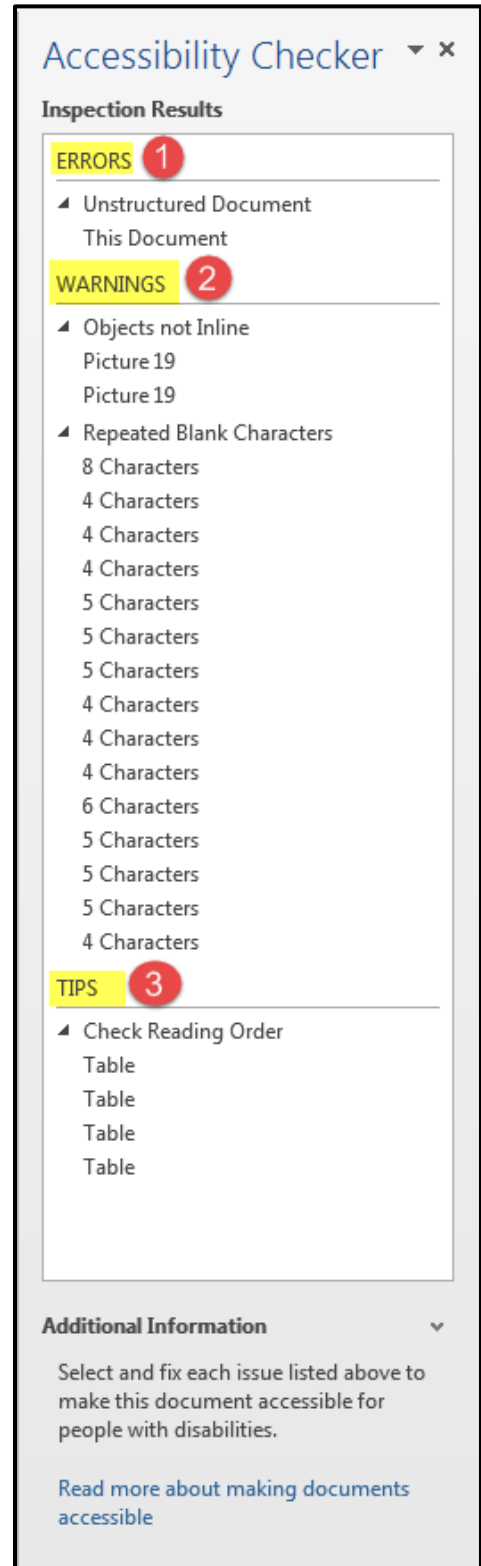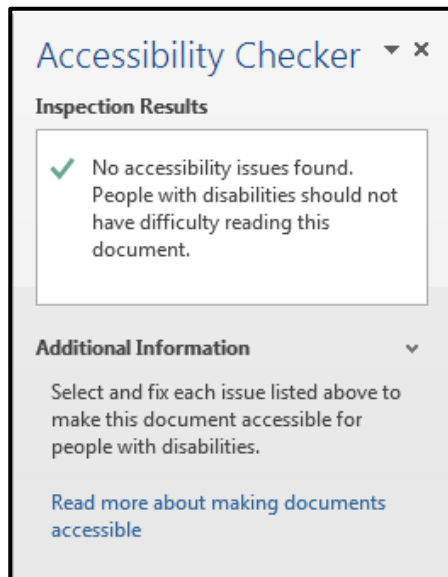Whenever the Accessibility Checker finds an issue, the task pane shows information about why the content might be inaccessible. When you select an issue, it shows you how to repair or revise it.

Accessibility Checker ▾ ✕

Inspection Results

✔ No accessibility issues found. People with disabilities should not have difficulty reading this document.

Additional Information ⌄

Select and fix each issue listed above to make this document accessible for people with disabilities.

Read more about making documents accessible

Accessibility Checker ▾ ✕

Inspection Results

ERRORS ①

▲ Unstructured Document
  This Document

WARNINGS ②

▲ Objects not Inline
  Picture 19
  Picture 19
▲ Repeated Blank Characters
  8 Characters
  4 Characters
  4 Characters
  4 Characters
  5 Characters
  5 Characters
  5 Characters
  4 Characters
  4 Characters
  4 Characters
  6 Characters
  5 Characters
  5 Characters
  5 Characters
  4 Characters

TIPS ③

▲ Check Reading Order
  Table
  Table
  Table
  Table

Additional Information ⌄

Select and fix each issue listed above to make this document accessible for people with disabilities.

Read more about making documents accessible

Accessible Document Checklist

General Formatting features

General formatting features	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
Statement "If this information is required in an alternate format, please contact…" is at the top of the document.			
Minimum font size is 12pt or higher.			
Sans serif fonts (not fancy) are used (e.g. Arial or Verdana)			
Text is aligned to the left.			
Large amounts of text set in all capitals, italics or underline is avoided.			
Sufficient white space is provided between text and graphics using paragraph formatting			
Foreground and background colours have significant contrast. Patterned backgrounds are avoided.			
Hyperlink text is meaningfully described and provides context as to the purpose of the hyperlink			
Styles are used to format the document and provide structure (e.g. heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3,Normal, etc.)			
Headings progress in a hierarchical order (e.g. Heading 2 comes after Heading 1)			
Style elements have a different look from the others. (e.g. Heading 1 looks bigger than Heading 2 etc.)			
Information is not conveyed by contrast, colour, format or layout or by combinations thereof			
For print documents a matte/non-glossy finish is used			

Layout and Structure

Layout and Structure	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
Built-in table feature is used rather than manual spacing			
Tables are used ONLY for tabular information, not for layout and formatting of content.			
Tables are structured with no merged cells, blank cells or nested tables.			
Complex data tables are split into smaller/simpler tables rather than having one large complex table.			
Tables have marked table headers which are clear and concise.			
The "repeat header rows" at top of page option is turned on			
Built in functions are used for lists (bullets), numbering, tables and other layout and structure features.			
For longer documents a hyperlink enabled table of contents is inserted near the beginning of the document.			
The language of the document is specified in the documents language preferences			
Page numbers are added using the built-in page number functionality. Page numbers are not added manually.			

Images and Objects

Images and Objects	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
High quality images, maps and graphs are used.			
All photos, images, clipart, charts, tables, SmartArt graphics, etc. are provided with meaningful and descriptive alternative text (Alt Text) descriptions.			
A longer Alt Text description is provided for complex images, charts etc.			
Text boxes and other "floating elements are avoided.			
Watermarks are avoided.			
All objects are "In Line with text"			
When a more accessible representation exists, the more accessible representation is used instead of a graphic (e.g. actual text is used instead of images of text.)			

For more information

Contact the Accessibility Coordinator if you require more information on any of these topics.

Accessibility Coordinator, 905-623-3379 extension 2131 or accessibility@clarington.net

Microsoft Quick References

Create Accessible Word Documents

Microsoft Quick Reference for Creating an Accessible document

Format your document using Styles

Microsoft Quick Reference for Formatting your document Using Styles