



Manually Testing Microsoft Office Documents for Digital Accessibility

The three stages to check for digital accessibility include automated checks, manual checks, and testing with assistive technologies (AT). The [Quick Check for Digital Accessibility](#) provides information that can be used to cover the first two stages with any electronic resource. The last stage, testing with AT, should only be done by individuals fluent in the technologies and practice.

For Microsoft (MS) Office documents, the first stage always begins with the built-in [Accessibility Assistant](#). The second stage becomes more manageable when we understand what the MS tool isn't catching. The following lists serve to guide this manual check, specifically targeting PowerPoint and Word documents.

Sight Check: Evident Upon a Careful Read

These items are readily apparent for someone able to visually discern the open documents. There *are* alternative ways to check, but often this takes more effort.

Look for:

- Transitions and animations, ideally, don't exist. [PowerPoint-specific]
- [Acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms](#) are expanded on first use.
- Hyperlinks use meaningful text.
- Color is not used on its own for emphasis or identification.
- [Color contrast](#) is sufficient, even against background images or solid colors.
- Tables are used only for sorting data and always have visible borders.
- Citations/sources are located near data visualizations to allow alternative displays and/or comprehension.
- Slide/page numbers are visible and in a consistent location.
- Visual clarity is retained upon projection or magnification with high-quality, high-resolution images.

Details Check: Requires Interaction

Always validate:

- [Document properties](#), specifically titles, are entered and correct.
- Font sizes are ideally 11-point or greater, depending on the document's intended use.
- [Alt text](#) exists (for non-decorative images, complex tables, and charts) and is contextually relevant.
- [Equations are accessible](#) (via equation object or image with alt text).
- SmartArt is avoided. ([Convert to text or shapes](#) and ungroup; check reading order.)
- Tables are presented as true tables and not images, when feasible. All tables are formatted to have Headers and, in Word, designed to [repeat the Header rows](#) across pages.
- Hyperlinks work.
- Text styled as Headings (in Word) or Titles (in PowerPoint) are intentional, determining hierarchical structure.
- Embedded videos have accurate captions or linked transcripts.
- Reading order is intentional and correct. This is ensured when:
 - Images and other objects are in line with text. [Word-specific]
 - Section breaks [Word-specific], columns, and paragraph spacing control layout.
 - Grouped objects are avoided. [PowerPoint-specific]