

A photograph of a group of young men sitting at a long table in a classroom or computer lab. They are all looking towards the right side of the frame. The man in the foreground on the right is wearing a grey hoodie with 'HOLLISTER' written on the sleeve and has white earbuds in. The man next to him is wearing a dark hoodie. In the background, there are whiteboards with diagrams and other students. The image is partially covered by a yellow overlay on the left side.

BORDERS
COLLEGE

Accessibility Guidance for Staff

Created March 2021



Small changes
big difference

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Section 1

Purpose of guide

This guide has been developed to provide an overview of accessibility and what it means when producing content that will be available to staff or students online.

The purpose of this guide is to provide hints and tips on how to make Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, PDFs and videos accessible.



Section 2

What is accessibility?

Accessibility is about making our materials accessible for all. This ensures a best practice approach in the way we communicate, convey information and support teaching and learning.

Legal Context

We also have certain legal duties under The Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) (No. 2), Accessibility Regulations 2018, which came into force on 23 September 2018.

[Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-bodies)

The Regulations require public bodies to have websites and apps that meet certain accessibility standards. These standards are known as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or WCAG for short.

Making a website or mobile app accessible means making sure it can be used by as many people



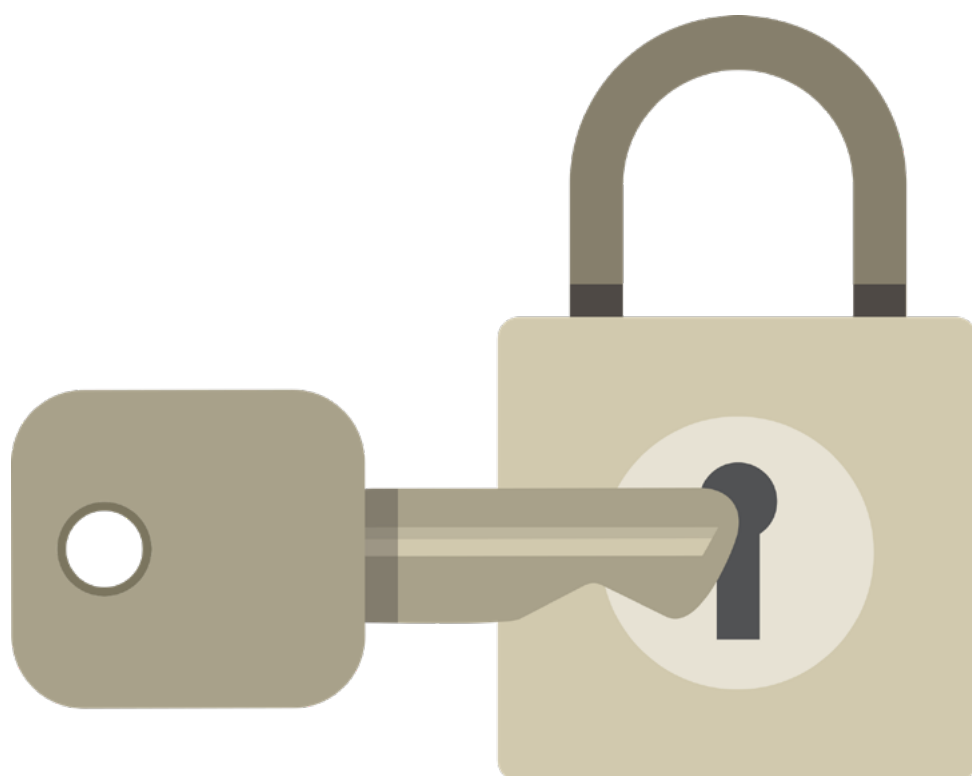
as possible. This includes those with:

- impaired vision
- motor difficulties
- cognitive impairments or learning disabilities
- deafness or impaired hearing

Removing barriers

Accessibility means making our content and design clear and simple enough so that most people can use it without needing to adapt it, while supporting those who do need to adapt things.





An accessible format is one which can be read by 'assistive' or 'enabling' technologies (such as screen reader programs, screen magnification programs and voice input programs). An accessible document is one where information is accessible (that is, searchable, selectable and screen readable).

For example, someone with impaired vision might use a screen reader (software that lets a user navigate a website and hear the content), braille display or screen magnifier. Or

someone with motor difficulties might use a special mouse, speech recognition software or on-screen keyboard emulator.

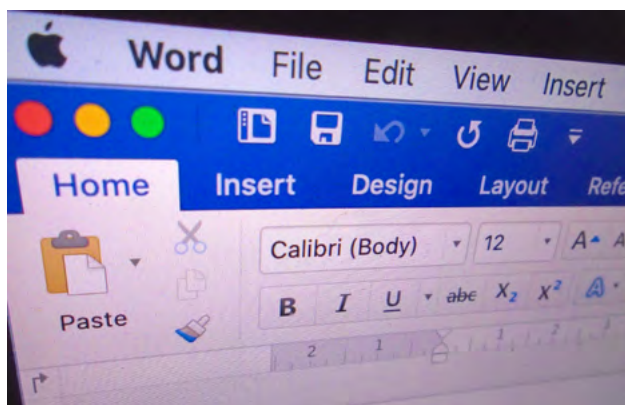
Accessibility is essentially about removing barriers to enable users to engage and take part in everyday activities. In education this involves reducing and overcoming the barriers that might occur in our communications, digital content, teaching and learning materials.



Section 3

Accessible Word documents

An accessible Word document should have a clear structure and easy navigation so that it can be easily understood, particularly by screen readers and other assistive technologies.



Follow these steps:

Language

Write in language that's as simple as possible. Simple language also makes your document accessible to people with cognitive impairments and learning disabilities.

Where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them.

Use plain English. You can find out more about how to write in plain English on the Plain English Campaign website, www.plainenglish.co.uk.

Layout

Keep the layout simple and clear. Break up your document to make it more readable.

Documents with single, continuous columns of text are easier to make accessible than documents with a more complex layout.

Keep sentences and paragraphs short.

Use bullet points, numbered steps and meaningful subheadings.

Make sure pages are numbered and use a table of contents where suitable.

Use web layout if presenting documents on a screen.



Font

Fonts such as Arial, Helvetica or Calibri are recommended.

Use a minimum size of 12 points.

Use sentence case. Avoid all caps text and italics.

Avoid underlining, except for links.

Ensure text can be selected (highlighted and added to clipboard) for use with text to speech tools.

Formatting

Use recognised, rather than 'unofficial', formatting: for example, standard formatting bullet points and numbered lists rather than spaces or dashes.

Alignment

Make sure the text is left aligned, not justified. Justified text creates inconsistencies in how it is displayed, which can affect users with disabilities (for example, spaces between words are different sizes).

Headings

Use headings within the 'Styles' pane in the 'Home' tab. This structures them properly for accessibility in terms of navigating the page.

Title

Give the document a meaningful title. Use naming conventions for files (name and date) that are clear and accessible so that they are easily understood.

Links

Links should be clear and descriptive in context. Use text which describes the link for hyperlinks.

Avoid text links such as 'click here' and 'read more'.

Make sure any link text clearly describes where the link will go. It should also be understandable on its own, even if you read it out of context. This is important because some screen reader users scan through the links on a page one by one to find what they need.



Tables

Only use tables for data. Keep tables simple: avoid splitting or merging cells.

Images

Make sure key images, pictures, charts and diagrams have alternative text descriptions where appropriate.

It's best to avoid images containing text, as it's not possible to resize the text in the image. Your images should not contain text unless it is essential to what the image is conveying, such as in diagrams or logos.

If there is essential text in your image, you can use it providing that an accessible alternative is in place on the page (for example, the image has a short alt text description and is fully described in text on the page or in a long description tag). You can add alt text by right clicking on image, selecting 'format picture', then selecting the 'layout and properties' icon and selecting 'alt text'.

Sensory characteristics

Ensure that your document does not rely on sensory abilities. Do not use things like



colour or shape alone to get across meaning. This is because instructions like 'click the big green button' or 'see the red text for more information' rely on the user's ability to see the page.

Footnotes

Avoid footnotes where possible. Provide explanations in the main body of the text instead.



Word Accessibility Checker

Word for Windows provides an accessibility checker for identifying and repairing accessibility issues. The checker highlights errors, warnings, and provides tips.

In Office 365, you can do this by going to: Review, Check Accessibility.

In Office 2016, you can do this by going to: Info (under file), Check for issues, Check Accessibility.

You should use the accessibility checker before finalising any Word document.

Further information

For more information on making Word documents accessible and how to use the tool, visit the [Microsoft Support website](#).



Section 4

Accessible PowerPoint presentations

PowerPoint templates in Office 365 are designed to be highly accessible if you do not modify them. Prezzi is not an accessible platform where assistive technologies are required for screen readers, etc.

An accessible presentation should have a clear structure, particularly by using unique slide headings, such that it can be understood by screen readers and other assistive technology.

Follow these steps:

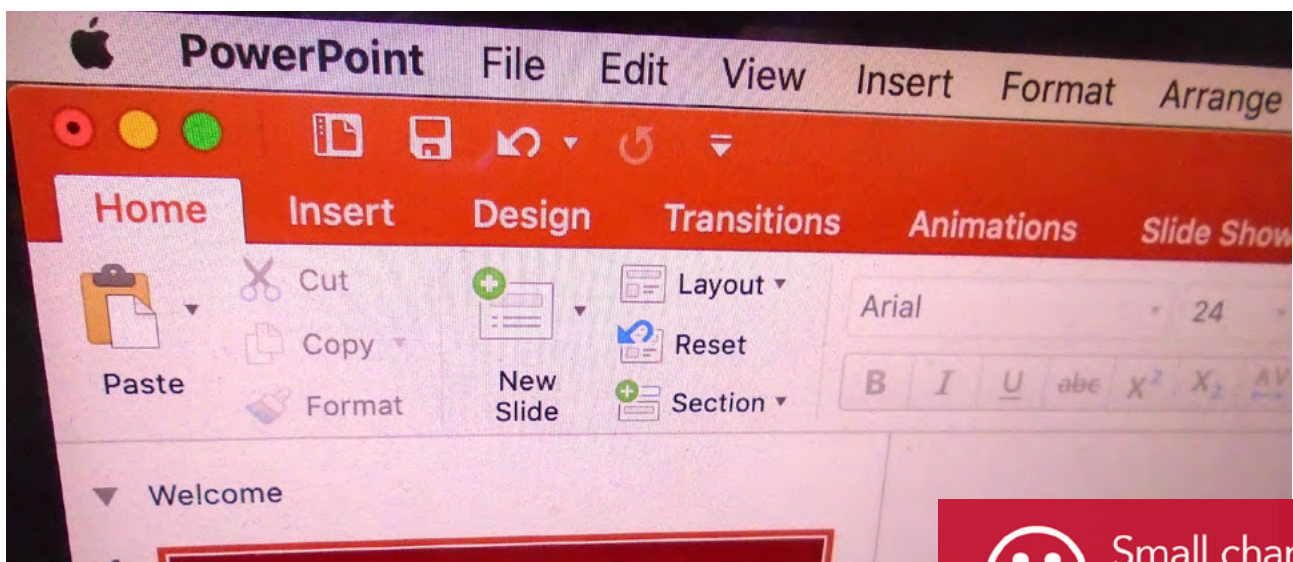
Slide templates

Use the standard slide templates.

The Design tab contains many built-in themes and colour variants that can be used to change the look of a presentation, as well as the ability to create custom themes.

Some of these templates have low contrast between slide text and the slide background, and a few may also have busy backgrounds that can make text even more difficult to read.

Choose a theme with good contrast and with simple backgrounds.



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Slide layout

Keep the layout clear and simple.

Using the right slide layout ensures information on the slides have the correct heading structure and reading order.

Most slide layouts include a slide 'title', usually at the top of the slide. They also typically contain one or more 'placeholder' areas where you add content like lists, images, and tables to each slide.

Each slide should have a different title.

The title will be presented as a heading to screen reader users, and will be the first thing read on each slide. If each slide has a descriptive title, this will make it much easier for screen reader users to read and navigate the presentation.

Text size

Make sure text is not too small. Use a minimum point size of 24.

Font

Use fonts such as Arial, Helvetica or Calibri.



Colour

Do not use colour as the only way to convey information. Make sure there is good contrast between text and background. Use dark text on a light (not white) background.

You can find more information on contrast and colour accessibility on this hyperlink: [WebAIM website](#), including a contrast checker.

Content

Keep the language clear and simple.

Avoid 'crowding' slides with too much information. If lots of information is required, split it across slides, or use the Notes field to provide extra detail.



Make sure all pictures and diagrams have alternative text, using the notes field for fuller descriptions.

Use text which describes the link for hyperlinks, not 'click here'.

Use the notes field to expand on important points or summarise the key points of visual materials.

Transitions and animations

Transitions and animations should be simple. Complex or automatic transitions and animations can be distracting.

PowerPoint accessibility checker

As with for Word, the accessibility checker finds and fixes accessibility issues.

In Office 365, you can do this by going to: Review, Check Accessibility.

In PowerPoint 2016, you can do this by going to: Info, Check for issues, Check Accessibility.

Use the accessibility checker before finalising any presentation.

PowerPoint and PDF

PowerPoint is effective for face-to-face presentations, but it is

usually not the best format for content on the web.

PDF is often a better format to present PowerPoint presentations electronically.

The file size is relatively small, distracting slide transitions are usually removed, and everyone has a PDF reader.

All of the accessibility features outlined will be retained in a PDF file, assuming it is created correctly.

You can find out more in our accessible PDFs section on pages 13 to 15 of this guide.

Further information

For more information on how to make your PowerPoint presentations accessible and how to use the tool, visit the Microsoft Support website. You can also find further guidance on these hyperlinks: [WebAIM website](#).

[Accessibility guide \(office.com\)](#).
[Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities – Office Support \(microsoft.com\)](#).



Section 5

Accessible Portable Document Format (PDF)

Many documents are converted to Portable Document Format, known as PDF, for publishing, particularly when online. PDFs are fixed and non-editable by design, but this causes problems for users who require compatibility with assistive technologies (not compatible with Immersive Reader).



A document created in Word should contain almost all the information necessary for an accessible PDF, including:

- Headings
- Alternative text for images
- Table structure
- Descriptive links
- Lists
- Columns
- Legible text size
- Good contrast
- No colour reliance
- Document title

If possible, explore alternative formats to PDFs when publishing online such as HTML web pages and Word documents.

PDFs are either created from scratch or converted from a source document.

Microsoft Office documents keep their accessibility information intact when converted to PDF.





Converting a document to PDF

To create an accessible PDF, click: Export, Create PDF. Click on the 'Options' button and ensure that the following options are selected:

1. Create Bookmarks Using Headings
2. Document structure tags for accessibility
3. PDF or PDA Compliant

After choosing these options, click 'Publish' to create the accessible PDF.

To ensure that a PDF is accessible, it should be checked by opening it in Adobe Reader and listening to it being read by selecting 'view', then 'Read Out Loud'. You will have to activate Read Out Loud first if you have not already done so, and then can select 'read this page only' or 'read to end of document'.

You can also open a downloaded PDF file in the Edge browser and get it read by 'Read Aloud'.



Scanned Documents

Scanning creates an image of the content, which assistive technologies cannot interpret. For example, text within this scan cannot be read by a screen reader or magnified.

It is recommended that documents that will be published are not scanned, or do not contain any scanned items.

If you must publish a scanned document then there are still options to improve accessibility.

Some software packages, such as Adobe Acrobat, contain optical character recognition (OCR) capabilities which can help convert non-text information into accessible text format.

You could also include the scan in an otherwise accessible PDF, class the scan as an image and ensure there is an equivalent accessible alternative within the PDF (e.g. alt text).

Further information

For more information on accessible PDFs, visit this hyperlink: [WebAIM website](#). You can also find more information on publishing accessible documents on this hyperlink: [GOV.UK website](#).



Section 6

Accessible videos

Some guidelines for making videos accessible. For videos to meet a basic level of accessibility, a transcript and captions should be provided.

Captions

Captions are speech and non-verbal sounds rendered as text at the bottom of a video. You can think of them as transcribed text that appears as the video is being played.

Captions allow the content of web audio and video to be accessible to those who do not have access to audio. Though captioning is primarily intended for those who cannot hear the audio, it has also been found to help those that can hear audio content, those who may not be fluent in the language in which the audio is presented, and those for whom the language spoken is not their primary language.



Captions should be synchronized, which means the text content should appear at approximately the same time that audio would be available, and should be equivalent to that of the spoken word.

Subtitles

Spoken dialogue rendered as text at the bottom of a video. Subtitles are mainly used to accommodate language barriers, translating the audio content.



Transcripts

Written text versions of video (or audio) content. This includes all spoken words and notation for who is speaking, and important sounds.

Publishing a text transcript of your video is important for accessibility. Your audience has the option to read the transcript if they are unable to access the audio or video. This is especially helpful for deaf and/or blind users, who can put the transcript through devices like refreshable braille display, to understand what's happening in the video. Screen reader users may also prefer the transcript over listening to the audio of the web multimedia.

Transcripts are often added as a downloadable document or as part of the video description on services such as YouTube, who have tips for creating a transcript file.

Audio descriptions

For those who have problems with their sight, audio descriptions can bring a video to life. Audio descriptions describe aloud what's visible on the screen. This is especially

important if your video has information on screen that is not referenced by the audio. The audio descriptor could be thought of as the narrator of your video. It's the voice that sets the scene, reveals your character's actions and facial expressions, and gives viewers vital information about the video's message that could potentially be missed otherwise.

Sign language interpretation

A sign language interpreter translates dialogue and important sounds in the video, which is then made visible in the corner of the video.

A deaf or hard of hearing person's first language may be sign language, which provides richer communication than captions, as it can better reflect intonation, emotion and other sounds.



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Colours

Be mindful of colours when using text or captions. People who are colour blind or dyslexic might not see particular colours or colour contrasts. Dark text on a light background is often a good, clear option.

Music levels

Make sure any music isn't too disruptive. Most people will struggle to hear or understand dialogue over certain levels, but autistic people, those with learning disabilities or cognitive disabilities might find it even harder.



Section 7

Useful links

[Accessibility guide \(office.com\)](#)

[CALL Scotland](#)

Guidance on creating accessible documents and formats

[Microsoft Office Accessibility Centre](#)

Provides resources on how to make content accessible

[Office Support \(microsoft.com\)](#)

Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities

[Plain English Campaign](#)

Organisation providing guidance on how to make documents and information as clear as possible

[UK Government Accessibility Guidance](#)

Government guidance on accessibility requirements for public sector bodies

[Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[WebAIM](#)

Organisation that provides accessibility guidance and resources



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