

## 25-08 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Website Accessibility and Compliance

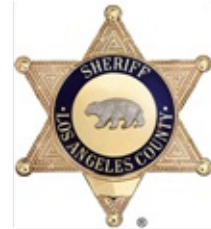
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**Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department**

**NEWSLETTER**

Field Operations Support Services

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VOLUME 25 NUMBER 08

DATE: November 6, 2025

### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this informational newsletter is to provide guidance to all Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Department) personnel to ensure that content submitted for inclusion on the Department's website (<https://lasd.org/>) is accessible to individuals with disabilities and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

#### **BACKGROUND**

The ADA is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all aspects of daily life. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability just as other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion, and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else in employment opportunities, purchase of goods and services, and participation in state and local government programs.

Title II of the ADA, updated in 2024, outlines equal treatment and accessibility requirements for all services, programs, and activities of state and local governments, specifically including standards for effectively communicating with people with disabilities. This encompasses web pages and applications operated by government entities, and includes "conventional electronic documents," which are defined as web content or content in mobile apps that is in the following formats: portable document formats (PDF), word processor file formats, presentation file formats, and spreadsheet file formats.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is a set of criteria for making websites ADA-compliant. The Department strives to meet these guidelines and maintain a website that provides accessible information to all Los Angeles County residents.

This informational newsletter is designed to assist Department personnel in submitting only documents and materials that meet accessibility standards. Materials that are not accessible risk being excluded and removed from the Department's website.

## **WEB DOCUMENT ACCESSIBILITY**

The following information outlines how to ensure that documents, tables, or spreadsheets provided to the Sheriff's Information Bureau (SIB) for inclusion in the Department's website are accessible to people with disabilities, as well as best practices in developing accessible digital documents. Following the guidelines below will ensure that individuals with visual or other accessibility impairments can access and listen to document content using screen reader devices.

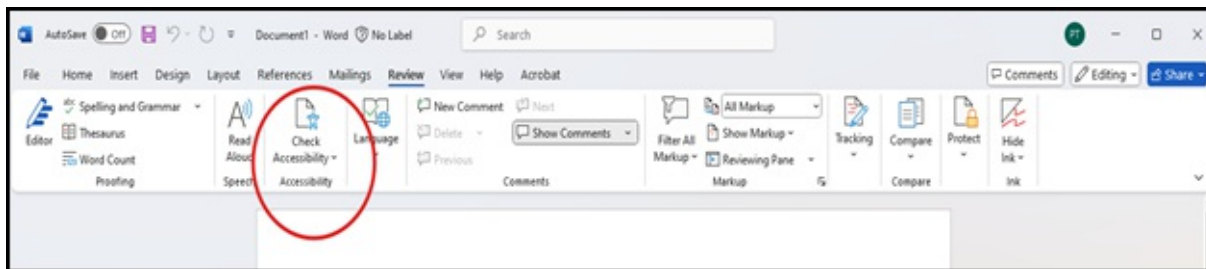
### **Guidelines for Producing an Accessible Document**

#### 1. Use the Accessibility Checker

In Microsoft Word documents, use the built-in Accessibility Checker on the Review tab to identify and fix issues, apply built-in heading styles for structure, add alternative text (alt text) to images, ensure sufficient color contrast and font size, and create accessible hyperlinks. Regularly check for issues as you write to create a document that is accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility Checker How-To:

- Go to the **Review** tab on the Word ribbon.
- Select **Check Accessibility**.
- A panel will open with a list of errors and suggestions.
- Select an item in the panel to see recommended actions and highlight the corresponding issue in your document.



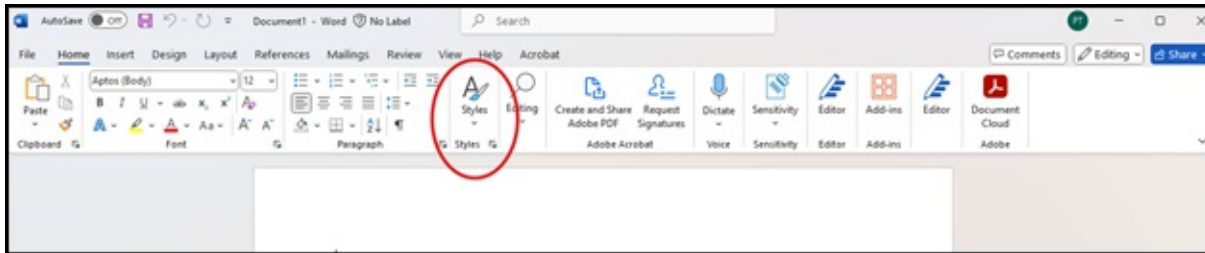
#### 2. Apply Heading Styles

Using a logical heading order and the built-in formatting tools in Word documents helps preserve tab order and makes it easier for screen readers to read your documents.

Heading Styles How-To:

- Use Word's built-in Heading Styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.), rather than just making text bold and larger.

- Headings are located in the **Home** ribbon within the **Styles** grouping.
- Ensure headings are in the correct order (e.g., Heading 1 for the main title, Heading 2 for section titles) and do not skip levels, as this provides a clear structure for screen readers.
- The font and color of Headings can be changed by right clicking the **Style**. When modifying an existing template, please ensure **Headline** styles are used to make the template ADA compliant.

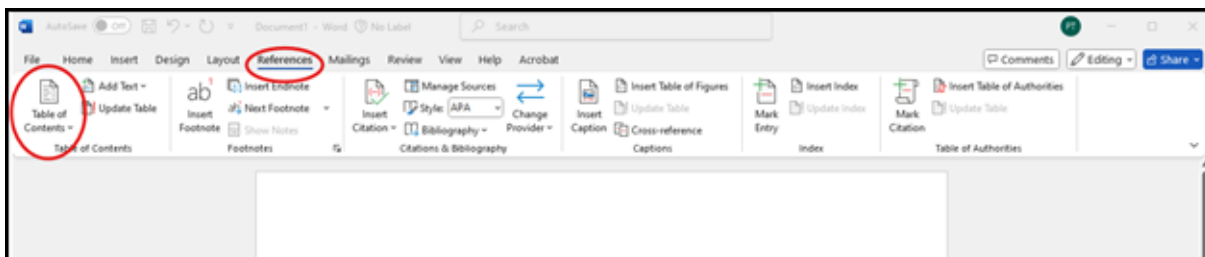


### 3. Table of Contents (TOC)

A table of contents (TOC) is recommended for large documents. A document larger than 20 pages may report an accessibility error if it does not have a TOC or Bookmarks.

TOC How-To:

- Choose a location for your TOC.
- Use the built-in **Table of Contents** tool, which can be accessed in the **References** menu.
- Choose your format preference. Customize your TOC to select the 'Levels' based on nested heading levels (Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, etc.).
- It is recommended to use page numbers that are right-aligned and utilize Tab leaders.



### 4. Add Alternative (Alt) Text to Images

Alt text helps people who are visually impaired to understand what's important in images and other visuals. It allows screen readers to describe the content of images.

Alt. Text How-To:

- **Right-click** on an image and select **Edit Alt Text**.
- Provide a brief, descriptive text explaining the image's content.
- If an image is purely decorative and provides no information, mark it as decorative.

#### 5. Use Accessible Fonts, Colors, and Spacing

People who are blind, have low vision, or are colorblind might miss out on the meaning conveyed by particular colors. If your document has a high level of contrast between text and background, more people can see and use the content.

#### Fonts, Colors, Spacing How-To:

- Choose a sans-serif font (e.g., Arial, Calibri) and a font size of 12 points or larger.
- Use high contrast between text and background colors.
- Do not use color alone to convey meaning, as it may not be visible to everyone.
- Avoid italics and underlining unless it is for a hyperlink.
- Use a minimum of 1.0 line spacing and add paragraph spacing before and after document sections.

#### 6. Create Accessible Hyperlinks

To determine whether hyperlink text makes sense as standalone information and whether it gives readers accurate information about the destination target, visually scan your document. People who use screen readers sometimes scan a list of links.

#### Hyper-link How-To

- Use **descriptive text** for hyperlinks that clearly indicate the destination of the link, rather than just "Click Here."

#### 7. Test Your Document

Once your document is drafted, ensure you have used the Accessibility Checker one last time (as outlined in Step 1) to check for issues.

#### Test How-To

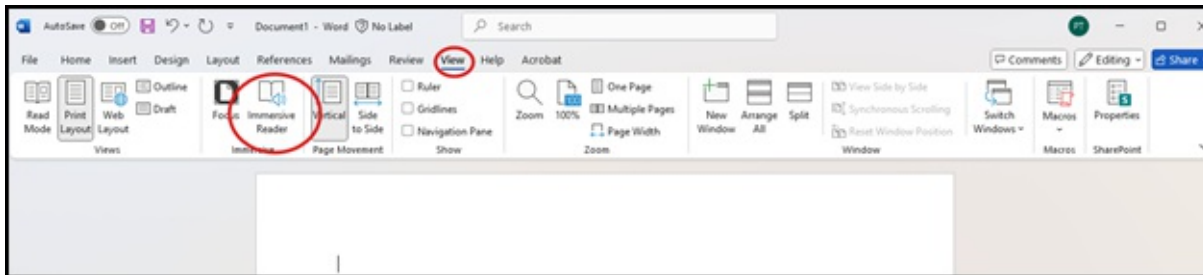
- Use the **Accessibility Checker** to identify and fix issues.
- Consider testing your document with different tools or asking someone with a disability to review it.

## Accessible Data Tables

Tables should be used only for data presentation, not as a page layout tool. To utilize a table, follow the guidelines below:

### 1. Tables in Microsoft Word

- Use table headers and avoid fixed-width tables.
- If you have hyperlinks in your table, edit the link texts so they make sense and don't break mid-sentence.
- Ensure the document is easily read with a Magnifier. Send the document draft to yourself and view it on a mobile device to make sure people won't need to horizontally scroll the document on a phone, for example.
- Test accessibility with Immersive Reader.
  - In your document, select **View** > **Immersive Reader**.
  - On the **Immersive Reader** tab, select **Read Aloud**.
  - To exit **Immersive Reader**, select **Close Immersive Reader**.



### 2. Tables in Excel

- Tables in Excel are used to manage and analyze groups of related data, not for page layout. Tables must be manually created within a spreadsheet for table features to be available. Visit Microsoft 365's Overview of Excel Tables for more information on how tables are managed in Excel.

### 3. Tables in PowerPoint

- Only include simple tables in PowerPoint presentations, and include a table header row in tables. Large or complex tables should be shared using a different format.

## Accessible Charts and Graphs

### 1. Data Categories

- Color alone should not be the only means of conveying information, such as a category or source of data. Include labels or additional visual characteristics such as a 'Pattern fill' or 'Border' to differentiate data.
- When using labels for data, place labels inside or adjacent to pie slices.
- Ensure that the labels include value, category name, and leader lines.

## 2. Increase Font Size for Readability

- Text in charts and graphs, such as labels and legends, often has default font sizes that are difficult to read. Increase the font sizes for better readability.

## 3. Chart Names and Captions

- Because the chart title may not be read aloud by a screen reader, you should include a caption for each chart as a description.
- The caption should include a brief and unique name for the chart or graph. The caption may be used for reference throughout the document and can be utilized within a table of contents.

## 4. Provide Alternative Text in Charts

- Describe the chart structure and or data presented in the Alt Text. For simple charts, also include the chart data and labels separated by commas.
- For charts and graphs with complex data, include a text description within the document to provide context.
  - If the text description is not directly adjacent to the item, reference the location of the information in the Alt Text.
  - Alternatively, provide an adjacent data table that contains all the same information as the chart or graph.
  - If the accessible complex data alternative is provided in a separate location, provide a hyperlink directly adjacent to the chart.
- Position your chart in line with the text to maintain a logical reading order.

## **Exporting Documents to Accessible PDFs**

To produce an accessible PDF, start by creating an accessible Word document using the guidelines outlined above. Do not use print options to save to a PDF format.

- Your PDF export process may depend on the version of Word that you are using. Choose "**Save as**" or

“**Save a Copy**,” and then select “**PDF**” from the formatting options. Alternatively, if Adobe Acrobat Pro is installed, you may be able to choose “**Create and Share Adobe PDF**” and use the Adobe cloud service to create a PDF.

- If there are additional PDF save options available, select **Document structure tags for accessibility**, or **Best for electronic distribution and accessibility**.
- Use the option to create Bookmarks for documents (12 pages or longer is recommended), especially those without a Table of Contents. Existing headings can be used to create Bookmarks.
- Enter a concise, meaningful filename that is free of spaces, special characters, and unfamiliar abbreviations.
- Editing restrictions and Read-Only permissions are not recommended and may prevent users of Assistive Technology from accessing document content. However, the document can be password-protected using additional **Options**.
- Contents within the **Header** and **Footer** sections of a Word document will not be available to some users of assistive technology. Do not provide information in these sections that is not found elsewhere within the document.
- Document Titles embedded in the body of a document will not retain Their Heading designation when converted to PDF.
- Open your PDF document in Adobe Acrobat Pro. Use the Accessibility tools to perform an Accessibility Check.
- Please **retain a copy in the original document format** (e.g., “.docx”) for your records. PDFs cannot be easily changed or updated.

## **CONCLUSION**

If you have any questions regarding the content of this newsletter, please contact the Office of Constitutional Policing (OCP) at [OCPOPS@lasd.org](mailto:OCPOPS@lasd.org) or the Sheriff's Information Bureau (SIB) at [SIBOPSCENTER@lasd.org](mailto:SIBOPSCENTER@lasd.org).

Please note that the specific locations, tool icons, and links described and pictured herein are subject to change over time due to software updates.

## **REFERENCES**

Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act | [ADA.gov](http://ADA.gov)

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability; Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities

[Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities - Microsoft Support](#)

[Accessibility best practices with Excel spreadsheets - Microsoft Support](#)

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