Accessible

Communications:

Reference Guide

April 2015

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Accessibility: It's the Law

Most people take for granted the fact that they can call their favourite pizza place and order food, take a bus to the mall and find their way around, or pick up a newspaper and read it.

This is not the case for many Ontarians. In fact by 2031, it is expected that over 6 million people in Ontario will either be living with a disability or be 55 years of age and over.

This is a huge number of people whose disabilities may affect their hearing, speaking, reading, writing and understanding, making it difficult to communicate.

The City of Stratford is committed to complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the Accessibility Standards that have become law since 2008, as well as our legal "duty to accommodate" under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

We have a shared responsibility in ensuring that not only are our services and facilities accessible to all, but the ways in which we communicate are also accessible.

We must remain flexible in our thinking and be open to accommodating persons with disabilities in different ways. Even if we comply with the Accessibility Standards, our services may still not be accessible to everyone.

This "accessibility thinking" will ensure that the City of Stratford is respecting the dignity and independence, and promoting integration and equal opportunities, for persons with disabilities.

Tips for Successful Communications

In order to make information accessible, you need to consider the needs of people with disabilities. This involves:

- **Thinking about accessibility when you are creating new information.** This makes it easier when someone asks for it, and makes our organization more accessible, inside and out.

- **Looking for potential barriers in our information and communication processes.** Is there anything that would make it difficult for someone with a disability to read, see, hear or understand what we are communicating? This applies to things like brochures, reports, signs, emergency plans, surveys, email, website, email, telephone, meetings, presentations and announcements.

- **Making it accessible, upon request.** Even though we attempt to make our documents more accessible using specific fonts, font sizes and formatting, people with disabilities may have different needs, and it would be impossible to have every type of alternate format readily available.

- **Providing accessible information as soon as possible.** How quickly you can provide it may depend upon the amount of information, it's complexity and the format requested, along with what resources are readily available to you.

- **Letting the public and employees know that you will make information accessible, upon request.**

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Font Size

The size of the font is a fundamental factor in accessibility. The City of Stratford has adopted a font size of 12 point for main body text in a document. A font size smaller than 10 is inaccessible.

Font Styles

The City of Stratford has chosen the Tahoma Font for documents. All fonts should be a "sans serif" font (meaning without curls). Highly stylized font styles should be avoided as they are difficult to read.

When choosing a Sans Serif Font, narrow versions of the font should be avoided.

Serif (Inaccessible)	Sans Serif (Accessible)
ALGERIAN	Arial
Bradley Hand ITC	Tahoma
Edwardian Script ITC	Calibri

Emphasizing Text

- Avoid the use of *italics* and underlining as they can be hard to read. To emphasize a word or heading, use **bold**.

- Don't use ALL CAPS either. Mixing upper and lower case gives words shape, making them easier to recognize and read.

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Numbers

When choosing a font, make sure that it clearly identifies numbers. Readers with sight problems can easily misread 3, 5, 8 and 0.

Dot Leaders

Avoid the use of dot leaders, which are often used in Tables of Contents. A person using a screen reader will hear each dot being read to them. **Avoid this style:**

Employment Standard ………………………… page 1

Accessible alternatives are:

Employment Standard   page 1

Employment Standard _____ page 1

Layout

- Align text with the left margin. This makes it easier to find the start of the next line. Also, by not justifying text, the spaces between words remain even, which also helps the reader navigate the document.

- Group information into bulleted or numbered lists.

- Use wide margins and leave spaces between lines—ideally 25-30% of the font point size.

- Make sure the margin between columns clearly separates them.

- Keep page numbers and headers consistent throughout the document.

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Contrast

It is important to ensure that there is enough contrast between the background and text for legibility. Black text on a white background provides the best contrast, but is not the only option. The suggested guideline for effective colour contrast is 70%.

Accessible   Not Accessible

You should avoid setting text over images or textures, unless there is sufficient contrast.

More information on accessible colour contrast can be found at the following websites:

http://www.lighthouse.org/accessibility

http://www.contrastchecker.com

Make whitespace your friend

As important as the right font and size is in achieving an accessible document, so, too, is the amount of whitespace on a page. An adequate amount of space between lines of text and the amount of space between individual characters will increase its readability.

Monospaced fonts can be used to ensure proper tracking. Monospaced fonts are fonts in which all the letters and characters each occupy the same amount of horizontal space.

Use page breaks to move to the next page instead of repeatedly hitting the enter key.
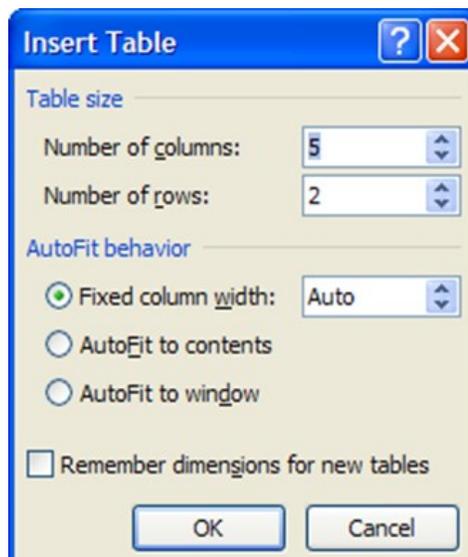
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Tables

Tables can be difficult for screen reading technologies to read correctly. For this reason tables should be used sparingly. However, if a table is required it is important that it be set up correctly.

Screen readers read tables row by row across columns so the table should make sense when read from left to right. To test this, select the first cell and press the <Tab> key repeatedly to make sure the focus moves across the rows then down the next row.

Ensure table headers are repeated on subsequent pages to help readers follow the flow of information.

To Add a Table:

1. From the **Insert** tab, in the **Tables** group, click on the **Table** icon.

2. Select **Insert Table**.
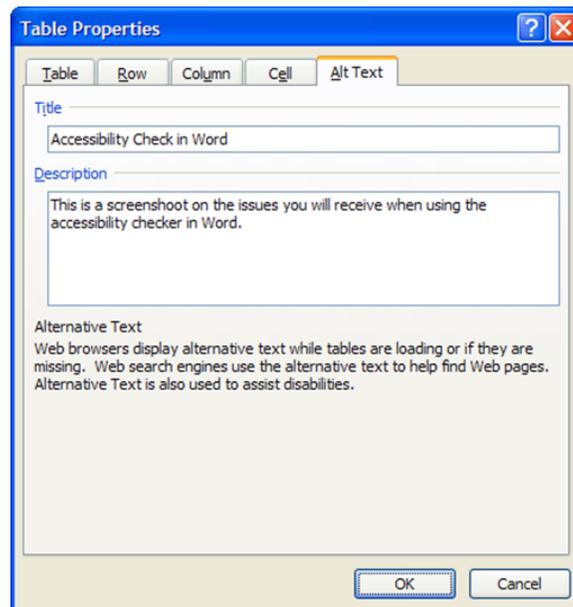
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3. Under **Table size**, for **Number of Columns** enter a number and for **Number of Rows** enter a number.

4. Click on the **OK** button.

To Repeat Header Rows:

1. Click on the first row.

2. Under **Table Tools**, select the **Layout** tab.

3. Click on the **Repeat Header Row** icon.

To add alternative text:

1. Right click on the table then select **Table Properties**.

2. Select the **Alt Text** tab.

3. For **Title,** enter a title.

4. For **Description,** enter a description of the content.

5. Click on the **OK** button.

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Add Alternative Text to Pictures

Alternative text or **alt text** is a description of a photo, image or graphic for persons who cannot see the image. Assistive technology reads this text, allowing users to understand what the images are conveying.

To Add Alternative Text:

1. Right click on the image then choose **Format Picture**.
2. On the left hand side, select **Alt Text**.
3. For **Title** enter a title.
4. For **Description** enter a description of the content.
5. Click on the **Close** button.
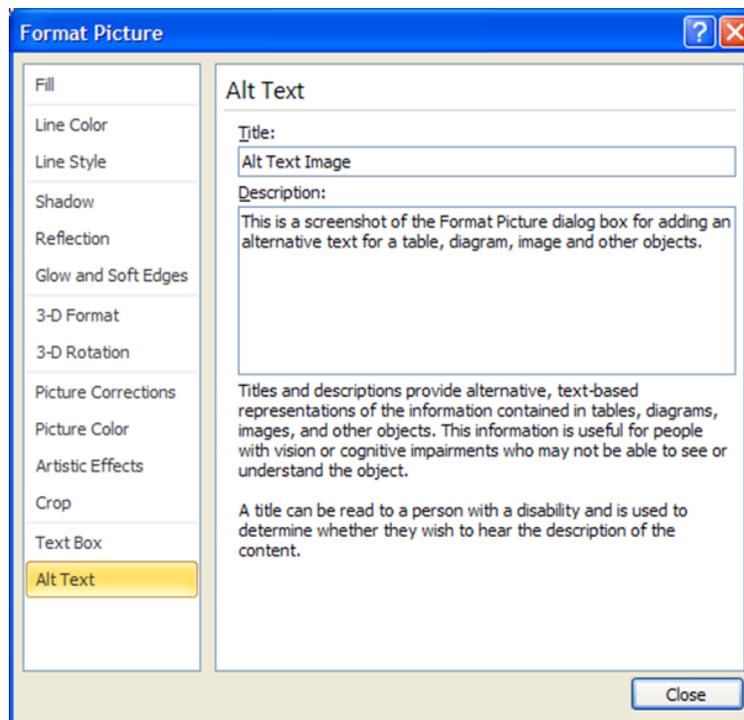
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City of Stratford Logos: Alt Text

The following descriptions are to be used for the two Stratford logos:

1. Stratford Coat of Arms:

"The Corporation of the City of Stratford Coat of Arms"

2. Dramatically Different Logo

"Dramatically Different Logo for the City of Stratford"

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Accessible Links

When using hyperlinks, they should be contextual and concise and not be the entire URL placed in the middle of the text. However, when printing such documents, the URLs will not appear. To solve this issue, use the context links within the document, and then use either footnotes or endnotes to provide the long web address.

To add a footnote or endnote to your document:

1. Place your cursor at the end of the word you want to note. In this case, it would be at the end of your link.

2. **For Footnotes, press Alt +S, F**. This moves the focus to the bottom of the page and the number of the current footnote is entered automatically. Type the information for the footnote and return to your document. Usually the Up Arrow will accomplish this, but you may have to use Ctrl + Up Arrow.

3. **For Endnotes, press Alt + S, E.** which moves your focus to the end of the document where you can enter the information next to the automatically numbered endnote.

When creating contextual links, keep the following in mind:

Don't start every link with "select this link to go to...". People using adaptive technology can use 'first character navigation' to move through lists of links and headings. If every link begins with the same character, this can't be done and every link in a document has to be listed to in order to get that last bit of vital information that tells them where the link will take them.

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Make a Point with Bullets

Use bullets to distinguish important individual points. Non-ordered lists should use the standard round bullet. Use numbered bullets to describe the proper order for a series of steps in a sequence.

To Create a Bullet List:

1. Type in each item on a separate line.

2. Highlight the text you wish to add bullets.

3. From the **Home** tab, in the **Paragraph** group click on the **Bullets** icon.

To Create a Numbered Bullet List

1. Type in each item on a separate line.

2. Highlight the text you wish to add numbered bullets.

3. From the **Home** tab, in the **Paragraph** group click on the **Numbering** icon.

Add a Document Title

A document title is not the same as a document name. Descriptive and meaningful titles are important in case the document is converted to HTML.

To change the title of the current document:

1. From the **File** tab choose **Info.**

2. On the right side, for **Title;** enter an appropriate title.

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Margins

The most accessible page size is 8.5 x 11 with one-inch (2.54 cm) margins on each side. This promotes readability and is most convenient for people using magnifiers.

To Set Margins:

1. From the **Page Layout** tab, click on the **Margins** icon.
2. Select **Custom Margins**.
3. Select the **Margins** tab, if applicable.
4. Under **Margins**, set the **Left:** and **Right:** margins to **1**.
5. Click **Set As Default** button.
6. You will be prompted to change default settings for page setup
7. Click **Yes**
8. Click on the **OK** button.
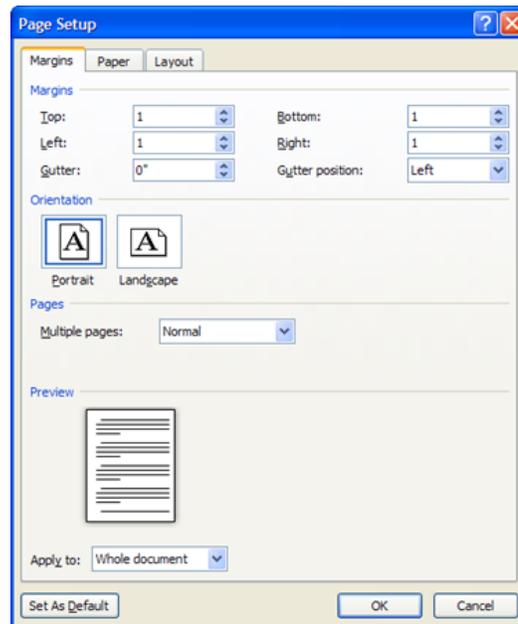
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Setup of Adobe Acrobat to ensure accessibility:

To configure the Adobe conversion settings:

1. From the **Acrobat** tab select on the **Preferences** icon.

2. Select the **Settings** tab under **Application Settings.** Ensure that **Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF** is selected to embed tags in the PDF.

3. Select the **Security Tab** under **Permissions.** Ensure **Enable text access for screen reader devices for the visually impaired** is selected. This allows screen reader devices to read text. If it is not enabled, under **Permissions** ensure **Restrict editing and printing of the document** is selected then enable the setting above. Once done, deselect Restrict editing and print-ing of the document.

4. Click on the **Bookmarks** tab under **Bookmark options**. Ensure **Enable Convert Word Headings to Bookmarks** is selected. For each heading, ensure the bookmark is selected.

5. Click on the **OK** button.

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Heading Styles

When working with large documents in Microsoft Word, headings can be a useful to help organize information and make the document easier to understand.

To set Heading Styles to appear automatically:

1. From the **Styles** Group, click on arrow to open Styles Window

2. Click on **Options** (bottom right of screen)

3. Select **Show next heading when previous level is used**

4. Select **New documents based on this template**

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Selecting Heading Styles

Use the following Heading Styles as a guide:

Title (Tahoma 22pt Bold)

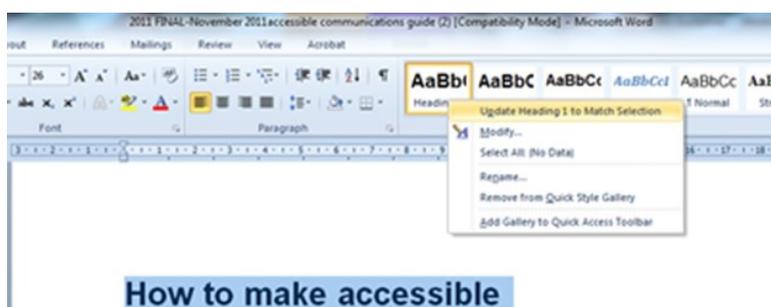# Heading 1 (Tahoma 18pt Bold)

Heading 2 (Tahoma 16pt Bold)

Heading 3 (Tahoma 14pt Bold)

Heading 4 (Tahoma12pt Bold)

Normal (Tahoma 12pt)

To set heading styles:

1. For Heading 1, type out the text you wish to use, and select it so that it is highlighted.

2. From the **Home** tab in the **Styles** group right click on Heading 1

3. Choose **Update (Heading 1) to Match Selection**

4. Repeat for Heading 2, Heading 3 etc., ensuring that you set the font size, colour, and style for each level as you create your document.

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Table of Contents

A table of contents is necessary for everyone to navigate large documents, not just persons with a disability. The use of headings will also allow the creation of a table of contents based on those headings.

To insert a Table of Contents:

1. Position the insertion point where you would like to insert the table of contents.

2. From the **References** tab in the **Table of Contents** group, click on the **Table of Contents** icon.

3. Select **Insert Table of Contents**.

4. For **Tab leader** from the drop-down menu select **None**.

5. For **Show levels** specify the number of levels (headings) in your document – 3 is the default.

6. Click on the **OK** button.

Update a Table of Contents

You will need to update your table of contents as you add and remove content. It will not update automatically.

1. Right click on the existing table of contents, select **Update Field**.

2. Select either **Update Page Numbers** only if you add text or **Update Entire Table** if you added new headings to your document.

3. Click on the **OK** button.

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Plain Language

Plain language means that the language used in communications can be understood by most readers.

Follow these guidelines when communicating with the public:

- Write information to a Grade 9 level or lower.

- Write short sections and sentences.

- Use "you" and other pronouns to speak to the reader

- Omit excess words

- Use "must" to express requirements; avoid the use of the ambiguous word "shall".

- Use lists and tables to simplify complex material.

Readability Statistics

Microsoft Word can determine the grade level at which documents are written.

To review a document and test the reading grade level:

1. From the **File** tab, select **Options.**
2. On the left hand side, select **Proofing.**
3. Under **When correcting spelling and grammar in Word**, enable **Show readability statistics.**
4. Click on the **OK** button.

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Accessible Websites

Technological advances have allowed individuals who previously had difficulties communicating to now communicate and receive information online.

When creating accessible communications online, many of the same guidelines apply as for written communications, including:

- Margins
- Font size and type
- Plain language
- Alt tags

Accessible Documents—All new documents placed online must in an accessible format. This not only means that they should be in a PDF format, but also that the document is formatted to be read by a screen reader.

Accessible Forms—All forms placed online should be fillable. This means a user can complete the form without having to print it and fill it out by hand.

Scanned Documents

Avoid the use of scanned documents, as they appear as an image and are therefore difficult for assistive technology to read. If you have a scanned document, in order to make it accessible, you must run it through Optimal Character Recognition (OCR). This feature can be found in all Profes-sional versions of Adobe. Once OCR has been run, you can manually add tags and alter the reading order.
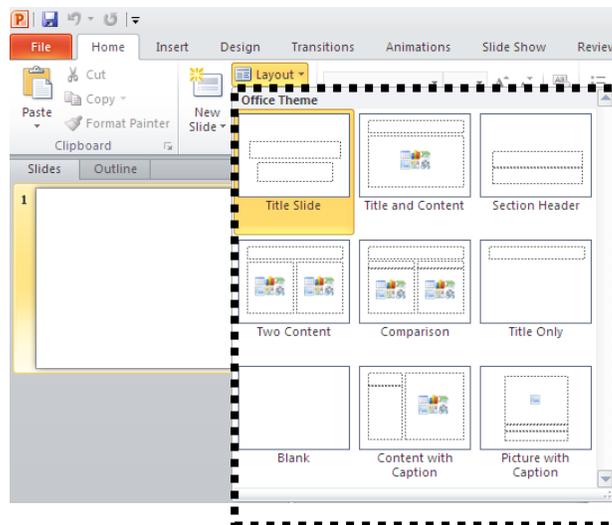
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Accessible Presentations (PowerPoint)

- Use a minimum 30 point font for the main body of a slide and minimum 40 point font for titles

- Avoid dark backgrounds or light coloured text, or images in the background

- Use plain language

- Use bullet points and images

- Offer alternative formats

- Use built-in slide layouts as they can be more accessible to users of assistive technologies.

To apply a "true layout" to a slide:

1. Go to menu item: Home

2. In the Slides section, select the Layout button

3. Select the layout you would like to use from the dropdown menu.

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Microsoft Excel

As you begin adding content, your spreadsheet will require structuring to bring meaning to the data, make it easier to navigate, and help assistive technologies read it accurately. One of the easiest ways to do this is to ensure that you properly format the cells.

Named Styles—you should make use of the names styles that are included with the office application (e.g., "Heading", "Result", etc.) before creating your own styles or using the character formatting tools directly.

Ensure your cells are formatted properly to represent your data, including number and text attributes.

To format cell characteristics:

1. Highlight the cells that you want to format
2. Go to the menu item: Home
3. In the relevant sections (e.g. Numbers, Font, etc.) make your adjustments.

Note: When formatting your spreadsheet, it is best to avoid merging cells. At times, it may seem easier to present your data by merging cells, but this can make it more difficult for users of assistive technologies and people navigating your spreadsheet using the keyboard.

Define Names—naming the different data ranges within your spreadsheet makes it easier to navigate through the document and find specific information. By associating a meaningful name to a data range, you will be enhancing the readability of your document.

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Accessibility Checker

Microsoft Office 2010 introduces the **Accessibility Checker** in Microsoft Word 2010, Microsoft Excel 2010, and Microsoft PowerPoint 2010 to help you identify and resolve accessibility issues in your files.

Accessibility Checker alerts you to certain accessibility issues in your file so that you can fix potential problems that might keep someone with a disability from accessing your content. Turn it on when creating your document.

Notes:

Whenever the **Accessibility Checker** finds an issue, the task pane shows information about why the content might be inaccessible. Selecting the issue then shows instructions on how to repair or revise it.

1. Click the **File** tab.

2. Click **Info**.
3. Under **Prepare for Sharing**, an alert will appear if Accessibility Checker has detected any potential accessibility issues.

4. If you want to view and repair the issues in your file, click **Check for Issues**, and then click **Check Accessibility**.

5. You are returned to your file where the **Accessibility Checker** task pane is open, showing the inspection results.

6. Click on a specific issue to see **Additional Information** and steps you can take to fix or revise the content.

Did you know?

- Approximately 1.85 million people in Ontario have a disability. That's 15.5% of Ontario's population.

- 70 percent of persons with disabilities have 'invisible' disabilities

- 20 percent of Canadians will probably experience mental illness in their lifetime. That is 1 in 5 people!

- By 2036, 47 percent of Ontario's population will be over the age of 65.

- As of March 2013, 1.5 million Ontarians work for an organization that has incorporated accessibility into their policies and procedures, and have implemented the Accessibility Standards.

Acknowledgements