



Creating accessible online content

As a government agency, ASIC must meet the Australian Government's accessibility requirements. This means all information on our internal and external websites (including downloadable files such as PDFs) should be able to be understood or accessed by people with disabilities. **Accessible content is not just for people with disabilities - it helps everyone.**

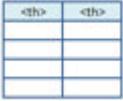
The following guides will support you to create accessible content:

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1. Creating accessible online (webpage, intranet, SharePoint) content

The information below explains **why website structure & presentation is important** and **what you can do** to ensure your content complies with the basic [WCAG 2.1 requirements](#).

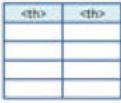
Criteria	Why it is important	What you need to do
Use plain language & scannable content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plain English helps all users (including people with non-English speaking backgrounds and low levels of literacy) comprehend our information. Helps make our content readable and scannable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid using le.g.al, industry or technical jargon. Spell out acronyms and other unfamiliar abbreviations. Use short, simple sentences and paragraphs. Use list items (bullet points, numbered lists) to break up content. Text should always be HTML, never an image.
Add alternative (alt) text on all images 	<p>Image content cannot be read by a screen reader, but 'alt text' can. Providing alt text allows a screen reader user to understand the structure of a page and how the images visually support the message:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the image a logo, icon or banner? Is the image a photograph? <p>Remember: Complex charts or diagrams cannot be read by a screen reader and are also difficult to read on small screens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When inserting an image, complete the 'alt text' field - make sure you convey the image meaning (e.g. ASIC logo; young woman with credit card bill; bar chart showing increase in fees over time; clock icon;) Never use images that contain messages in text – the text should always be in HTML. Complex images (chart/diagram/infographics) should key messages and/or summary in HTML. Scanned text should be avoided as it is completely inaccessible (retype in HTML).
Use strong colour contrast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists vision impaired users (colour blind or poor vision) distinguish text from background colour, and differences between colours (e.g. line graphs). Avoids messages being lost when colour alone is used to convey the message (e.g. red indicates danger) Helps combat screen glare (using a mobile phone outside). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print key pages containing charts/diagrams in black and white to see if any messages are lost. For charts and diagrams, explain key messages within the preceding content and use solid, dotted, thick lines etc, in line graphs). Request access to Vision Australia's Colour contrast analyser tool from ASIC IT (packaged up for virtual environment) to check colour contrast ratio or follow guidance from ASIC style guide.
Use meaningful links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful links helps users scan and comprehend links at a glance. Helps users predict the link destination (no surprises). Provides meaningful jump points for screen-reader users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid meaningless link text such as 'Click here' Use meaningful text such as 'ASIC's tips on investing' or 'ATO website' (once the acronyms have been explained in full!). Avoid using complete URL path as link text.

<p>Apply heading levels</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear content structure helps users scan and find relevant sections quickly (similar to scanning a newspaper!) • Heading levels help to clearly represent content hierarchy. • Heading provides meaningful jump points for screen reader users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use descriptive key words in a heading which summarise the section. • Ensure all headings are nested logically (e.g. Heading 1 followed by Heading 2 followed by Heading 3) - do not skip a level. There should be an obvious reduction in font-size to portray hierarchy. • Aim to use no more than four level headings. • Apply heading levels using drop-down styles to ensure consistency. • Never use heading styles to format text that isn't a heading. Update style templates in Word to suit your needs to allow easy formatting. • Headings should be HTML, never an image.
<p>Structure tables correctly</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables should only be used for presenting data. • Tables used for presentation and layout is confusing to screen-reader users. Content developers should use <div> tags instead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist screen reader users to understand a data table structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apply one 'table header' <th> style to relevant row or column. ○ Avoid specifying column widths in pixels (use percentages or nothing at all) so tables adapt to changes in screen size. ○ Avoid merging table cells. ○ Do not leave empty rows, columns, cells.
<p>Create adaptive content</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive content helps users with poor or no motor skills navigate via the keyboard (no mouse). • Helps users with poor vision increase font size to improve readability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the browser, test you can interact with all online content by navigating around a website, webpage or form using only the keyboard (e.g. TAB key, Enter key). • Test you can increase/decrease font size retaining website integrity (e.g. Cntl +/-). • Provide a 'skip to content' link on websites to allow screen-reader users skip over repetitive navigation. • Ensure content adapts to smaller screen sizes (e.g. mobile phone). For example, define image width as % so it can adapt to different screen sizes. Test by making your browser smaller – does the text adapt well?
<p>Validate code</p> 	<p>Valid code ensures online content will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compatible with a wide range of browsers, devices & assistive technologies (e.g. screen readers). • future-proofed against new technologies. 	<p>Use any of the following online tools to check code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check (X)HTML - W3C - HTML • check CSS - W3C - CSS • check accessibility: WebAim • WCAG cheat sheets and checklists
<p>Add text equivalent for video and audio</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing-impaired users unable to hear audio files (e.g. Podcasts). • Users may have restricted access to programs (e.g. YouTube videos). • Users may be in surroundings not conducive to sound (e.g. public transport, workplace). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a transcript for all audio files. • Provide closed captions and a transcript for all video files.
<p>Add text alternative for PDF files</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDFs can be problematic with screen readers and voice-over software. • PDFs are difficult to read on small screens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an alternative text version of PDFs preferably in HTML so the content is adaptive. • If HTML is not possible, consider providing an alternative format such as a Word document. • PDFs should still be made accessible - see below for more information.

2. Creating accessible Word documents

The information below explains **why creating accessible Word documents is important** and **what you can do** to ensure your content complies with the basic [WCAG 2.0 requirements](#).

TIP: In Word - run an accessibility check (**Go to 'Review' ribbon > Check accessibility**) and fix issues highlighted within the report. If the Word doc is accessible, the generated PDF should also be accessible (but may still requires manual checking).

Issue	Why it is important	What you need to do
Check document properties 	The document properties (Author, Title) provide metadata that may be used by a search engine and displayed within the search result.	Word: Go to File > Info > Properties > Advanced properties > Summary panel and fill in the Title and Author (or other fields as necessary).
Apply heading levels 	Clear content structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> helps users scan and find relevant sections allows Word docs to generate a Table of Contents and PDFs to generate bookmarks allow screen-reader users to navigate via headings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the 'Styles' located on the 'Home' ribbon to apply correctly marked up headings. You can modify styles by clicking on the down arrow icon in bottom-right). Apply logically structured heading levels via the 'Home' ribbon > styles menu (H1, H2 etc). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical structure means H1, H2, H3 – Not H1 followed by H3. To check headings, select View > Navigation Pane > Headings to generate bookmarks panel. Use descriptive key words which summarise a section. Avoid using text boxes as they are problematic with screen readers.
Add alternative (alt) text on all images  	Image content cannot be read by a screen reader, but 'alt text' can. Providing alt text allows a screen reader user to understand the structure of a page and how the images visually support the message: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the image a logo, icon, banner? Is the image a photograph? Remember: Complex charts or diagrams cannot be read by a screen reader and are also difficult to read on small screens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inserting or clicking on an image in Word should bring up the 'Alt text' panel to fill out. Otherwise, right-click on the image > Select 'Edit Alt text' > Fill in 'Title' and 'Description'. Never use images that contain messages/text. Key outcomes of complex images (charts/diagrams/Infographics) should be summarised/repeated within the content. Scanned text should be avoided as it is completely inaccessible. Retype text.
Use strong colour contrast 	Strong colour contrast: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assists vision-impaired users (e.g. colour blind) distinguish text from background colours (e.g. line graph) avoids messages being lost when colour alone is used to convey the message (e.g. red indicates danger) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print key pages containing charts and diagrams in black and white to see if any message is lost. For charts and diagrams, explain key messages within the content and use a mix of lines (e.g. solid, dotted, thick) in line graphs. Request access to Vision Australia's Colour contrast analyser tool from ASIC IT (packaged up for virtual environment) to check colour contrast ratio.
Structure tables correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tables should only be used for presenting data. Tables used for presentation and layout is confusing to screen-reader users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check data tables have been marked up correctly (all 'table headings' must be marked up with <th>). Use the 'table design' ribbon in Word to select accessible template styles.
Provide text alternative to Word files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everyone has Microsoft software installed so may not be able to use Word 	Provide an alternative text version preferably in HTML so the content is adaptive or accessible PDF (Adobe Reader is free).

3. Creating accessible PDF documents

The information below explains **why creating accessible PDF documents is important** and **what you can do** to ensure your content complies with the basic [WCAG 2.0 requirements](#).

TIP: In Adobe Acrobat Pro, run a full check (Go to Tools > Accessibility > Accessibility Check) and fix any issues highlighted within the report. It is good practice to fix issues within the original Word document and re-PDF.

Generally, if the Word doc is accessible, the generated PDF should also be accessible (but may still requires manual checking).

The screenshot below provides an example of what the results of the Full check look like and how to navigate them:

	<p>Tips to navigating the results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Click on the > to expand nested results. • When it says 'Needs manual check' you should know from your original document (e.g. Word) if the colour contrast or reading order is logical. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If correct, right click and select 'Pass'. ○ If unsure, right click and select other options to find out more. • Some bold elements will highlight the issue if you click on them (e.g. Images, Elements). If they require fixing, it is best to go back to the original document (e.g. Word) and correct it there before re-PDF-ing. • If the report shows 'Title - Failed': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check file > Properties > Description > Title. ○ If OK, right-click on the error in accessibility report and select 'fix'.
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Additional checks you should complete in the PDF include:

Issue	Why it is important	How to check
<p>Check document properties & title</p>	<p>The document properties should be inherited by the original Word file. You should check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document properties are correct (Author, Title) as they provide metadata that may be used by a search engine to be displayed within the search result. • Define the relevant language which allows search engines to serve results to users in that language and country. 	<p>Within the PDF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to 'File > Properties > Description - check the 'Title' and 'Author'. Also make sure it says 'Tagged PDF: Yes' in the bottom-left. • Go to 'File > Properties > Security - check everything is 'allowed'. • Go to 'File > Properties > Advanced - select 'English' or 'EN-AU' for 'Language' (or relevant language).
<p>Check heading levels & logical reading order</p>	<p>Heading levels & logical reading order helps screen-reader users visualise the structure and flow of a document, which in-turn, helps them navigate.</p> <p>Bookmarks are generated from the heading levels applied to the document.</p>	<p>To check heading levels and logical reading order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the left-hand toolbar and click on 'bookmarks' icon and expand levels to ensure all headings are nested correctly, or • use the right-hand accessibility toolbar, select 'Reading order'. Page elements will be numbered in reading order (e.g. by screen reader). <p>To fix any issues, return to the Word file to repair and re-PDF.</p>

4. Useful links

The following organisations have fantastic guides and information:

- [Australian Network on Disability \(and.org.au\)](http://AustralianNetworkonDisability.and.org.au)
- [Government of south Australia - Online Accessibility Toolkit](#)