**Microsoft Word Accessible Table of Contents**

In addition to providing a quick and necessary way for persons using Assistive Technologies to navigate a document, applying Headings has another excellent benefit for content creators and document reviewers. A Table of Contents can be added to a document in four easy steps.

1. Place cursor at the desired Table of Contents location
2. Go to References tab
3. Click on Table of Contents
4. Choose a style and click
5. To navigate by Keyboard, Alt, S, T

The Table of Contents will include all Headings, show their relationship to each other, and they will automatically be ‘hyperlinks’.

Table of contents showing three heading levels with multiple items under each heading.

**List Formatting**

When bulleted or numbered list formatting is used, screen readers will properly announce the text as being part of a list. List formatting provides the user with a means to quickly navigate between items as well as move in and out of lists.

When lists are made with repeated use of the Tab key or Spacebar, screen readers will not recognize them as lists, meaning that the list reading controls are inoperative.

Set lists in Word by: **Home Tab, Paragraph Group** and use the list controls.

Navigating by Keyboard - make a list by first highlighting the text then pressing Alt, H, then U for Unordered list (bulleted list), N for Numbered list, or M for more options for the list.

To **indent** - Alt, H, then AI for increasing indent, or AO for reducing indent.

Lists: Bulleted or Numbered lists and built-in indents.

**An Accessible ‘Text Box’ Alternative**

Do not use Text Boxes, as they are inaccessible. A screen reader will not read the contents of Text Boxes until it has reached the very end of the document.

To highlight some text as an, ‘Example’, ‘Case Study’, ‘Quotation’ or any of the other reasons to build a Text Box into any document, here is an accessible alternative:

1. Highlight the text.
2. Click on ‘Outside Borders’ from the drop down borders menu in the Paragraph area of the Ribbon.
3. Choose a fill color for the inside of the box from the ‘Theme Colors’ bucket. (Be careful to ensure the contrast level between text and background stays within limits)   
   An accessible alternative to the text box.
4. Since screen readers do not announce the color of text, clues may be included in this box to indicate to a person using a screen reader what this text is for, and when it begins and ends. Words like ‘Case Study’ at the beginning and ‘End Case Study’ at the end are very beneficial. Highlight the text and make it the same color as the Theme Color and no one except the screen reading software will see it. Adding this ‘invisible’ text will make the document more fully accessible

# Check Accessibility

Perform a test of the document’s accessibility prior to distributing it either via email or by posting it to the internet. Use a screen reader such as JAWS, NVDA, WindowEyes, etc. Preferably, develop an Accessibility Testing team of persons experienced at using Assistive Technologies.

Microsoft Word 2010 also has a built-in accessibility feature. However, do not rely on ‘machine’ testing alone to test for accessibility.

To access the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word 2010: In the **File** tab, click on **Info**, **Check for Issues**, and then **Check Accessibility**.

## Compatibility Mode

Compatibility mode was introduced in the 2007 Microsoft Office system to offset compatibility issues between the 2007 Office system and earlier versions of Office. Compatibility mode makes sure that content that is created in the 2007 Office system or in the 2010 Office system can be converted into a form that earlier versions of Office can use. Read more about that in the [The Office Word title bar displays "[Compatibility Mode]"](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/kb/2117661" \t "_blank) article.

Note: If a document is opened in compatibility mode it cannot be checked for accessibility until you turn off compatibility mode.

To turn off compatibility mode: In the **File** tab, click on **Save As** and save the document as a docx (word 2010 or later file).

# Resources

[Lynda.com](http://lynda.com) – take the Microsoft Word course for the version of word you are using.