



North Carolina Department of
Natural & Cultural Resources

Complying with Digital Accessibility Standards

NC State Historic Preservation Office | Andrew Edmonds

Digital accessibility

01 What, Why, Who, When?

02 Break for questions

03 Live demonstration using Microsoft Word: How?

04 Expectations and take away materials

05 Finish with more questions

What is digital accessibility?

Digital accessibility means making websites, apps, and downloadable documents **usable by everyone**, including people with disabilities.

It helps ensure that people who use **assistive technology** can access information.

Access by disability type:

- **Visual** – screen readers, invert colors, magnification
- **Auditory** – captions, transcripts, tactile output
- **Mobility** – alternative keyboard and input devices
- **Cognitive** – simple, intuitive, text read software
- **Other / Hidden** – make accessibility an opt out

Why does this matter?

- Digital accessibility is the **right thing** to do.
- Digital accessibility creates a **better experience** for all users.
- Digital accessibility is also **the law**.
 - Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act – **State and Local Governments**
 - Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – requires **federal agencies** to create, purchase, and use information and communications technology that is accessible to people with disabilities.

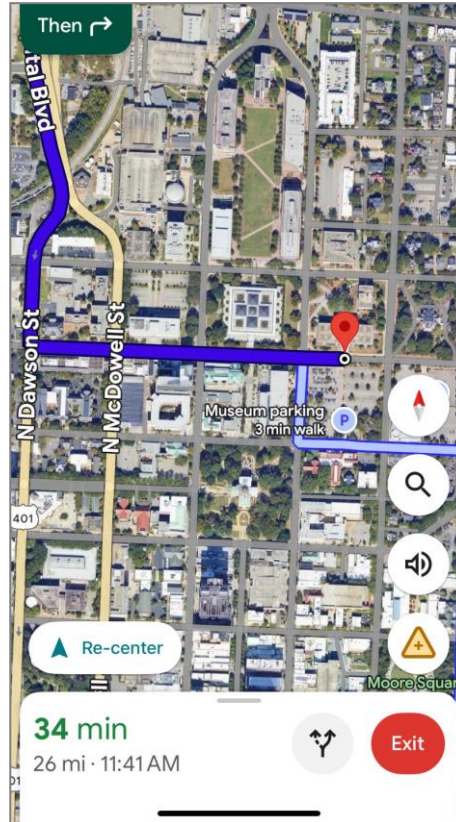
Accessibility design benefits everyone



Accessibility design benefits everyone (2)



Accessibility design benefits everyone (3)



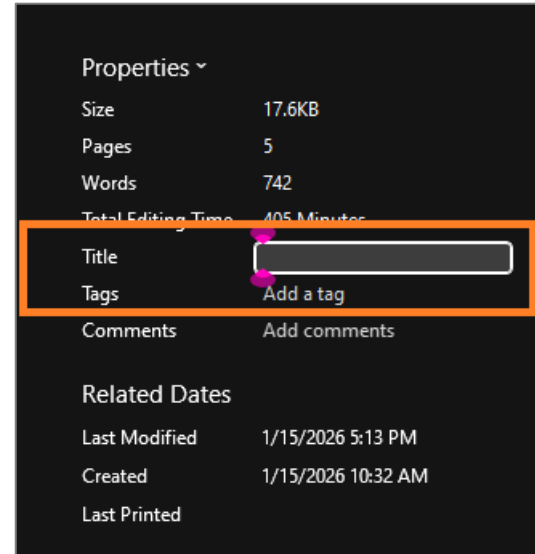
Common accessibility issues

1. Structuring content
2. Images
3. Font choice
4. Color choice
5. Tables and Lists
6. Links



Making accessible reports: Structuring content

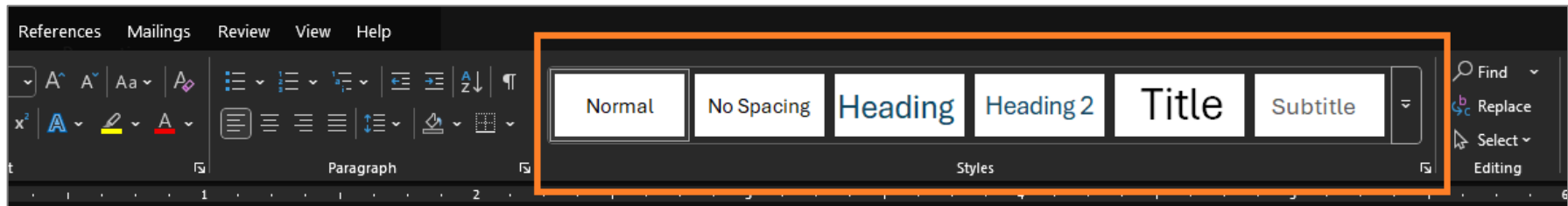
- Setting up the Word document
 - **Title** (File > Info > Title)
 - (a) unique, (b) meaningful, (c) dated, (d) draft, confidential, final, etc
 - Watermarks, headers & footers
- **Create a template**
- Consider a **Table of Contents**



Making accessible reports: Structuring content (2)

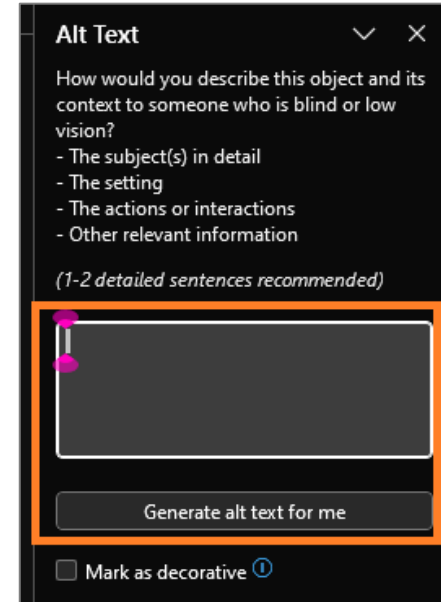
- **Establish an outline** – logical heading order
- **Use the Styles menu** – modify Headings, Normal text, and hyperlinks
- **Avoid**
 - Manual formatting
 - Full justification of text
 - Text boxes

- Heading 1
 - Heading 2
 - Heading 3
 - Normal text
 - Heading 2
 - Heading 2
 - Normal text



Making accessible reports: Images

- **Every image** needs “alternative text”
 - Pictures, illustrations, images of text, shapes, charts, & maps
 - Alt text = the purpose and context
 - **Be succinct** – maximum of 15 words
- *However* –
 - Should not be redundant
 - “Jane Q. Public House as described in report”
- Place images “**in line with text**” for proper reading order
- Mark as “**decorative**” in rare instances



Alt Text ✓ ✕

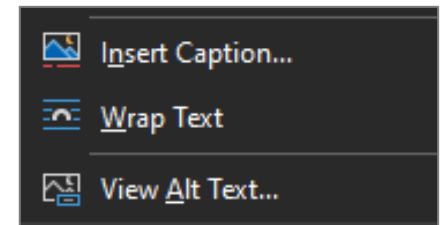
How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind or low vision?


- The subject(s) in detail
- The setting
- The actions or interactions
- Other relevant information


(1-2 detailed sentences recommended)


Generate alt text for me

☐ Mark as decorative ⓘ



 **I**nsert Caption...

 **W**rap Text

 **V**iew Alt Text...

Making accessible reports: Font choice

Sample sans serif fonts

Arial

Calibri

Century Gothic

Tahoma

Verdana

Sample serif fonts

Book Antiqua

Bookman Old Style

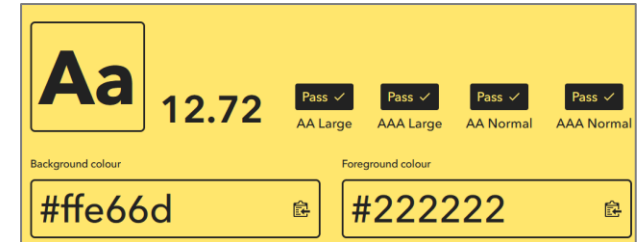
Georgia

Palatino

Times New Roman

Making accessible reports: Color choice

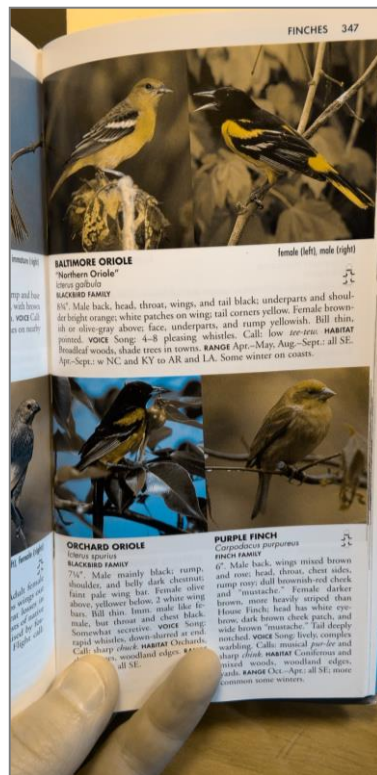
- **Color contrast ratio**
 - 4.5:1 color contrast ratio for body text
 - 3:1 for larger text (18 pt regular; 14 pt bold)
 - [Color contrast checker](#)
- **Color blindness** concerns
 - Color alone should not convey meaning
 - Vary icons, size, and patterns
 - [Color Brewer for maps](#)



Designated Historic resources and Historic District boundaries (with center points)		
●	★	National Register
■	★	Study List
▲	★	Determined Eligible
▲	★	Study List & Determined Eligible
■	★	Local Landmark / District

Low Vision? [Enable high contrast mode](#)

Making accessible reports: Color choice (2)

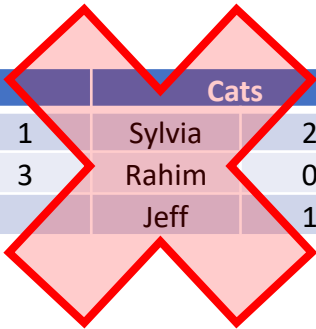


Making accessible reports: Tables

- **Avoid** or use Word's **built-in options**
- **Simplify** – no blank cells, no merged cells
- **Use headers** – left column and/or top row
- Provide a **caption**
- Do not paste an image of a table!

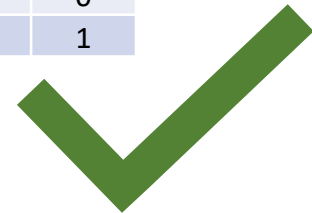
Table 4.1: Ward Mill Site Information Table.

Resource Name	B.O. Ward House and Mill
HPO Survey Site Number	WT0358
Location	443 Old Watauga River Road, Sugar Grove, Watauga County
PIN	1961486427000
Date of Construction	1939-1970
NRHP Recommendation	Eligible under A and C



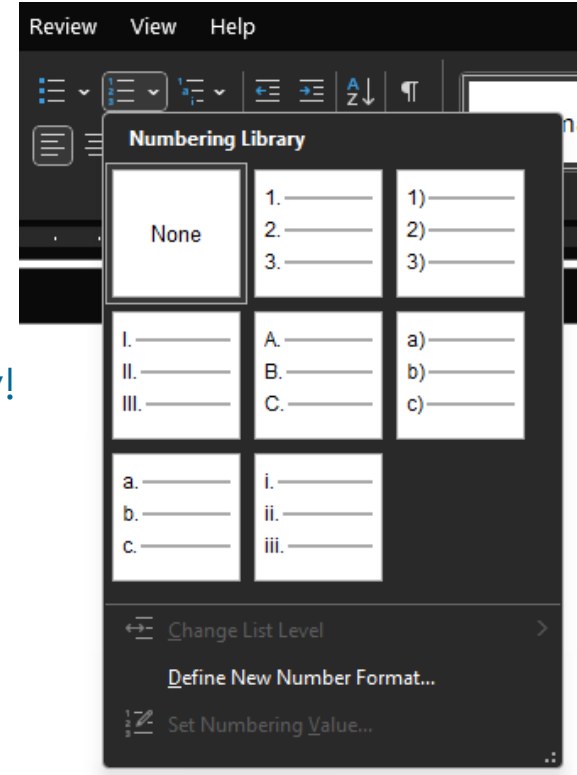
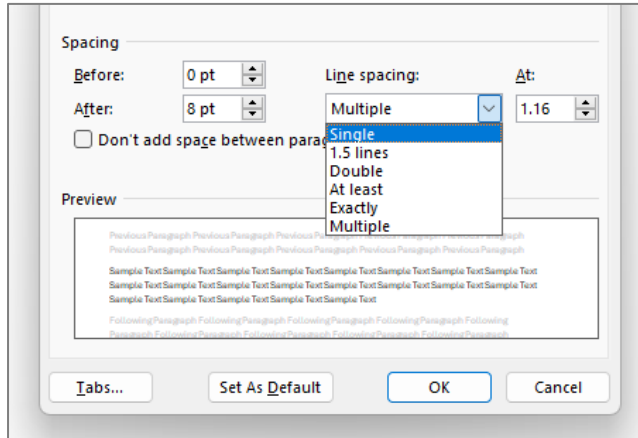
Dogs		Cats	
Sylvia	1	Sylvia	2
Rahim	3	Rahim	0
Jeff		Jeff	1

Person	Dogs	Cats
Sylvia	1	2
Rahim	3	0
Jeff	0	1



Making accessible reports: Lists

- **Use built-in formatting**
 - Ordered – 1, 2, 3 or A, B, C
 - Unordered – Bulleted
- Home > Paragraph > Line spacing – *not* the Enter key!

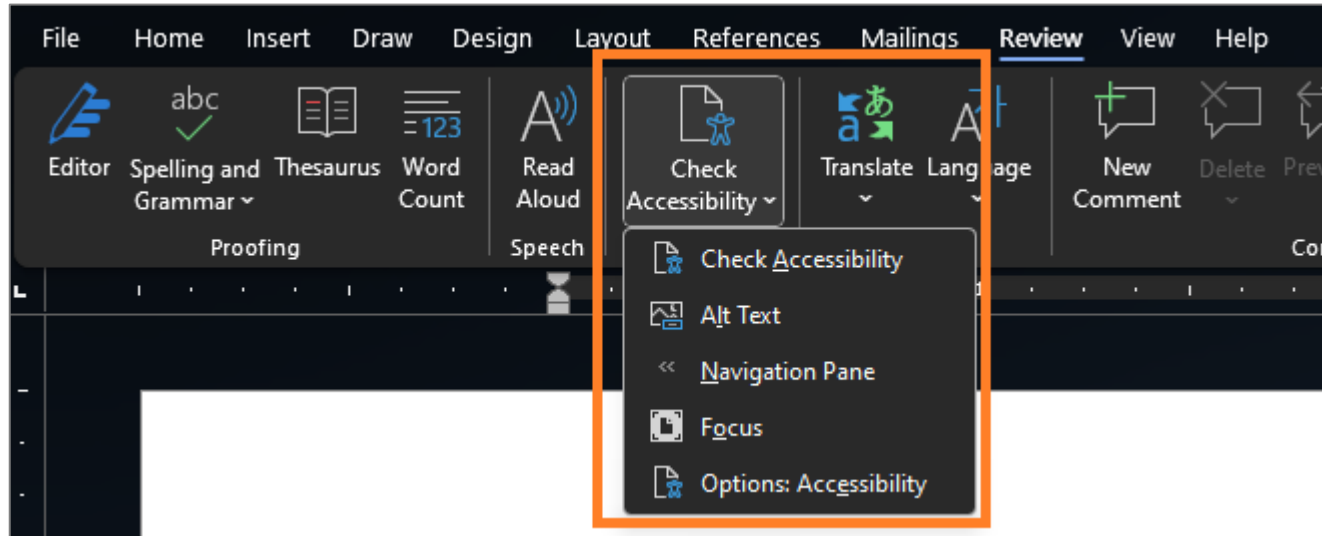


Making accessible reports: Links

- Use **descriptive** hyperlinks
- Use **underlines**
- Do *not* use “Click here” or the generic “Read more”
 - ❖ Find out more on the [City's Sanborn Maps collection](#)
 - ❖ [Several biographical studies](#) were used in research
 - ❖ Map generated from the [HPOWEB mapping application](#)

Making accessible reports: Accessibility checker

Use Word's accessibility checker tool! **Review menu > Check Accessibility**



When does this go into effect?

- ❖ State and local governments must meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 Level A & AA by April 24, 2026.
- ❖ The NCHPO will require delivery
 - ❖ Of National Register nominations and Survey Reports in Microsoft Word format
 - ❖ In accessibility compliant format
 - ❖ **After March 31, 2026**



Resources

- ❑ Screen readers
 - ❑ Job Access With Speech ([JAWS](#))
 - ❑ NonVisual Desktop Access ([NVDA](#))
- ❑ Services
 - ❑ Adobe Acrobat Pro DC needed to remediate existing PDFs
 - ❑ Durham-based Ablr is a full-service disability inclusion organization
 - ❑ [Ally](#)
- ❑ Tips
 - ❑ Ablr ([Creating Accessible Documents, part one](#)) ([part two](#))
 - ❑ [Alt text decision tree](#)
 - ❑ [California accessibility videos](#)
 - ❑ [Duke Top 8 Tips](#)
 - ❑ [UNC Top 10 Tips](#)
 - ❑ [Microsoft Word](#)
 - ❑ [Monroe College tips](#) (good info on columns)
 - ❑ NCDIT ([Digital Accessibility](#)) ([Web Content Accessibility](#))

Questions?

- ✓ Structuring content
- ✓ Images
- ✓ Font choice
- ✓ Color choice
- ✓ Tables and Lists
- ✓ Links

