Accessibility Curriculum Checklists

Use built-in accessibility checkers to help you. They are not perfect and will not catch everything, but they can catch a lot. For Word and PowerPoint, you can select "Check Accessibility" under the Review tab. For Canvas, click on the accessibility icon beneath the editing box. For more information, including directions and examples, please access the linked resources, especially the GSA Document Video Training Modules, which focus on Word.

Essential Accessibility Elements

☐Heading Styles

- Give structure by category or topic
- Allow navigation through a document
- Allow automatic Table of Contents
    - Heading 1 is used for Document Title or major sections; Heading 2 is for major subsection titles…
    - Note: PowerPoint calls them slide titles (not headers)
- Use headings and styles; do not skip headings in the scheme
- [Applying Heading Styles in Word](#)
- [GSA Document Video Training Module 2: Use Styles to Create Headings](#)

☐ Readability

- Use sans serif fonts (Calibri, Helvetica, Arial)
- Use concise, understandable language
- Explain necessary complex terminology, abbreviations, and acronyms
- Left align paragraphs whenever possible
- When available, use Styles to emphasize language such as **Strong** or *Emphasis* vs **bold** or *italicize* which are not picked up by screen readers
    - Note: In PowerPoint, use preset slide layouts with simple, clear contrast color themes, and check read order as part of checking accessibility

☐ Images

- Pictures should be inline with text
- Images, objects, and diagrams should be described using brief alternative text
- Do not need to state "image of" or "photo of" in description, only what image is
- Captions are a good approach as they are equally accessible to all users
- [GSA Document Video Training Module 9: Create Accessible Images and Other Objects](#) (note video mentions using " " for decorative images – you may also select the checkbox)

☐ Color

- Ensure accessible color contrast (at least 4:5 except for large text, which requires 3:1) between foreground and background using the [Colour Contrast Analyser](#) or https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

- Avoid using red for bad and green for good (red and green are common issues for those with color blindness)
- Avoid using color as the only way to convey meaning; if you use color, also use captions and clear delineations between sections of color
- [GSA Document Video Training Module 12: Create the Required Color Contrast](#)

☐ Links

- Link names indicate the action to be taken and the title or heading of the linked page
- Do not say "[Click here for more](#)…", "[Read More](#)", or "[PDF](#)"; Rather provide clear context and usable links: "[Instructions for Creating Compliant Handouts](#) are available online", "Story 1: ([Read More](#))", or "Syllabus ([PDF](#))".
- Each link name should be unique, and if a link is used more than once, it should be named consistently
- Use smart links rather than URLs
- [GSA Document Video Training Module 7: Create Unambiguous Names for Links](#)

☐ Tables

- Best used only to organize data
- Read only from left to right, top to bottom
- Avoid creating merged, split, or blank cells (complex tables must be created in non-Word documents to be accessible)
- Must have a title, summary, and heading cells for columns or rows
- [GSA Document Video Training Module 5: Use Built-in Features to Create Layout and Data Tables](#)

☐ Multimedia

- Videos must have closed captioning
- Audio files must have transcripts
- Media should never auto-play, and users must be able to pause it
- [GSA Document Video Training Module 13: Create Accessible Embedded Files](#)

Tool Specific Notes

Word

1. For long documents use a table of contents based on the headings provided.
2. Use the built in bullet and numbering tool located in the paragraph section to make lists
3. For tips refer to: [Accessibility in Word](#)
4. Use the [Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office](#)

[GSA Document Video Training Modules 0-13](#) – Microlearning instructions, demonstrations, and accessible and inaccessible examples on specific topics in MS Word

PowerPoint

1. Use preset slide layouts rather than creating your own
2. Each slide title should be unique and meaningful. If necessary, add **1 of 3**

3. Use slide layout placeholders to ensure proper navigation by screen readers.
4. When pasting or using a link in a PowerPoint presentation, be sure to right-click the link and select Edit Hyperlink to enter descriptive link text
5. Stick to templates and do not add text boxes, they are not recognized by screen readers.
6. Check the reading order – if slide has multiple elements use the arrange tool to order the elements
7. Use the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office to scan your presentation

Canvas

1. When working in the rich content editor to build canvas items (i.e. assignments, pages, modules), use headings, color, and fonts as you would in Word or PowerPoint to make it easier for a screen reader or person with low vision
2. You can check links using the "Validate Links in Content" function located in Settings.
3. If you upload documents, be sure they are accessible before uploading
4. If you upload / record lecture (often Panopto video), be sure that captions are enabled
5. If you need to accommodate students with additional time, alternate due dates, or additional attempts on quizzes or assignments, you can change those details on a student-by-student basis in the assignment editor, the quiz editor, or the "moderate this quiz feature"
6. Using the Accessibility Checker in Canvas

Excel

1. Avoid merging cells
2. Avoid using blank cells, especially for formatting purposes
3. Include a title before data in the spreadsheet
4. Make sure all data rows and columns are labeled as a data table
    a. Add an "end of table" message in the row after the last row of a data table row
5. If there are multiple data sets, they should be split into separate sheets
6. Be intentional with the naming of sheets
7. Use the names feature, this allows you to name a range of cells so that the header cells are spoken along with the value of the cell (provides clearer structure)
8. Additional information: Excel Tips: Penn State Accessibility and using the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office

PDF Documents

1. Build documents in other programs and utilize the accessibility features in that program
2. Check Accessibility of PDFs (Acrobat Pro)

Videos

1. Videos used in classrooms, events, or training should have the option to enable captioning and/or be accompanied by a transcript. Audio description is also valuable for video images.
2. When materials lack existing captioning, use other live captioning tools to provide it. For example, if an event is hosted via Zoom, you can select "Enable Auto-Transcription" to pick up the audio feed on a video.

3. When you create videos for asynchronous instruction, create them with software that has captioning options built into them, such as Panopto, or plan captioning/transcript creation into the workflow.
4. When possible, allow the end user to control stop, start, and volume, as well as to turn captions on or off.
5. Websites that may be of interest:
   o [Captioning for Video – University Center for Teaching and Learning (pitt.edu)](pitt.edu)
   o [How to Add Captions to your Panopto Video – University Center for Teaching and Learning (pitt.edu)](pitt.edu)
   o [Resources for captioning/transcription with Zoom]