

Creating Accessible Documents in Microsoft Word

If you cannot find a tool, you most likely have a different version of Microsoft Word than used for this tutorial. Please note that this tutorial uses **Microsoft Word 2016 for Windows** (updated to April 2020). Please contact the [Office of Digital Education](#) by phone or email. Include your name, the version of Word you are using, and the problem you are having.

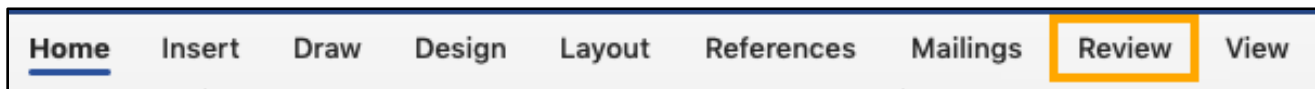
How to Use the Accessibility Checker

The Accessibility Checker is one of the best tools available in your quest to create accessible material. This tool will scan your document and tell you what kinds of problems exist and how to fix them.

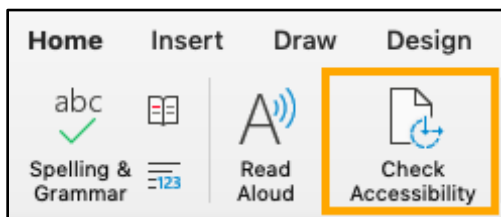
Finding the Accessibility Checker

The location of the checker can vary based on operating system and program version.

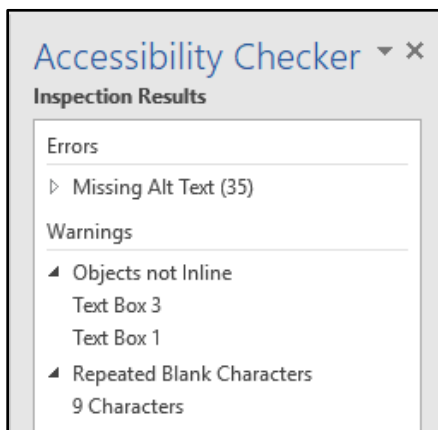
1. Start by opening the document you want to assess. Then, navigate to the **Review** tab.



2. Find the **Check Accessibility** button.



3. You will see the Accessibility Checker appear on the right side of your screen.

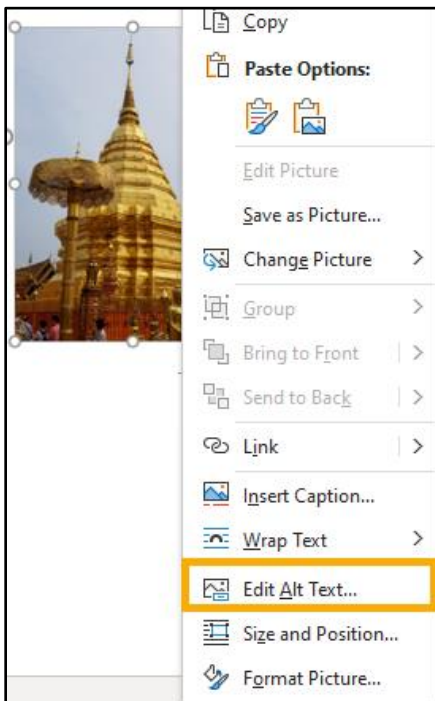


Now that your checker is open and has scanned your document, you can see what parts of your document should be altered.

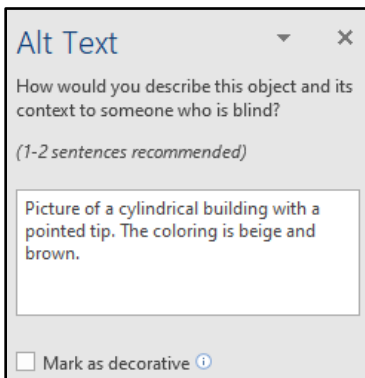
4. **Click on any Errors or Warnings that appear.** Word will highlight the problematic object and give you steps to fix it. Sometimes, it will also provide you with a reason why the current format is not accessible (other times it will just provide an additional set of directions). An **Error** means that this mistake must be fixed for the document to be considered accessible. A **Warning** means that you either need to manually check your choices (like Reading Order) or that your object does not comply with best practices.

Creating Alt Text for Pictures

1. When you insert an image, Word may automatically generate an Alt Text or import a link source code. This text is likely not a true description of the image.
2. Right click the image for which you want to correct the text.
3. A menu will appear. Select the **Edit Alt Text** option.



4. An **Alt Text** pane will appear to the right. Edit the text in the pane to describe the image as you would to someone that cannot see it or mark the image as decorative if not relevant to the document content.

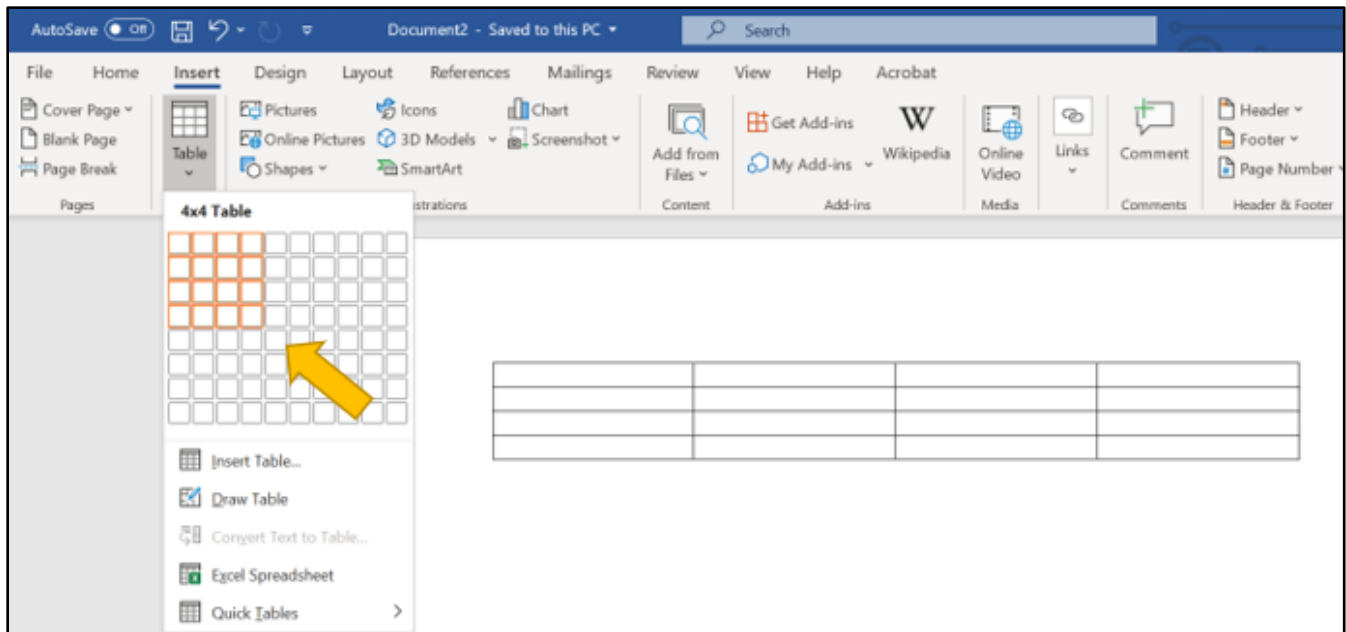


5. When you have described your image, you can click to another image or close the pane. Your edits will automatically save!

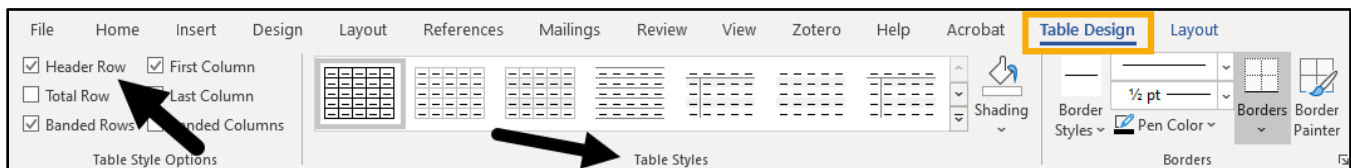
Creating Accessible Tables

Word automatically formats tables in an accessible manner, but, like all technology, it can goof. You might also be using a Word document that was created before Word added the feature. Either way, let's check out how to create and check a table's accessibility. View how to create alt text by [clicking here](#).

1. Start by inserting a table under the **Insert** tab. Use the **Table** tool to create a table with the number of rows (vertical/height-wise) and columns (horizontal/widthwise) you need.

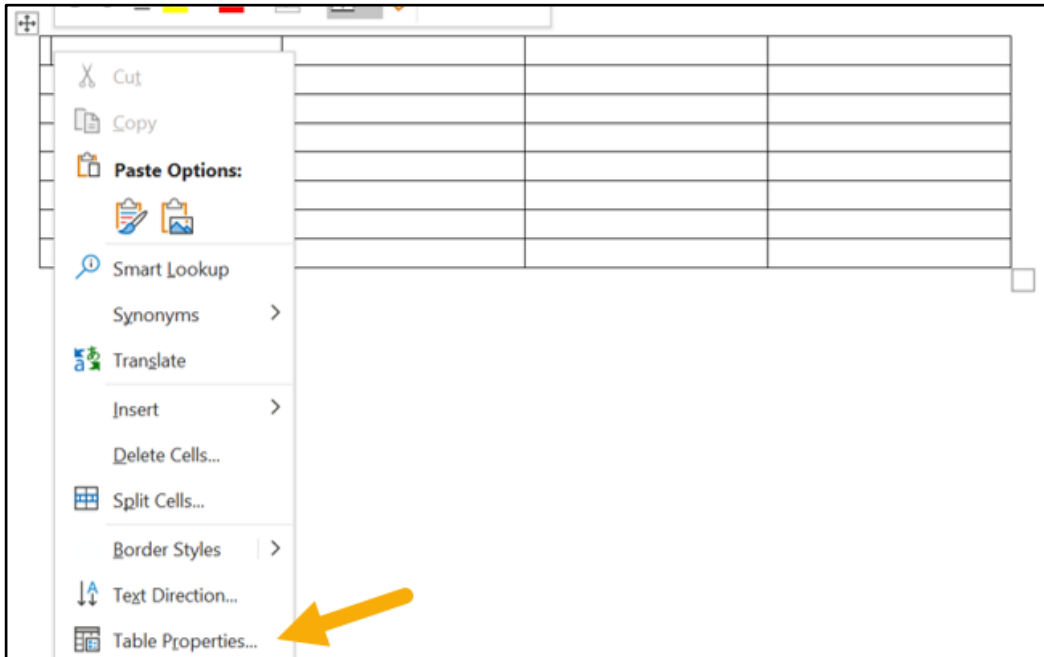


2. The **Table Design** tab should automatically open when you create the table. Make sure that the **Header Row** is marked.

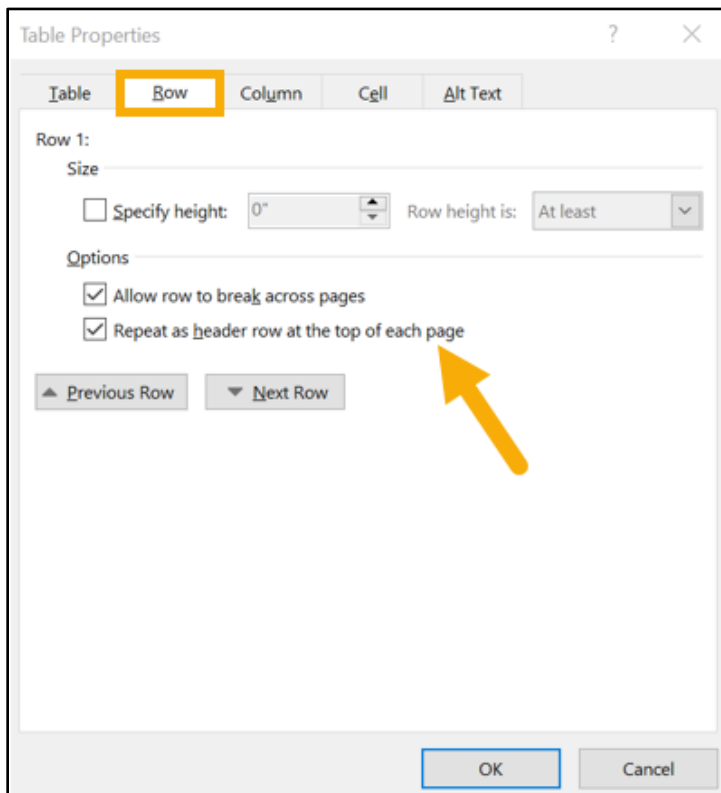


3. With the **Header Row** marked, you can use any of the premade **Table Styles** to format your table and the setting will automatically mark the designated row.

4. You can double check that the correct row is marked as a header by right-clicking the row and selecting **Table Properties**. Make sure your cursor is in a box on Row 1.



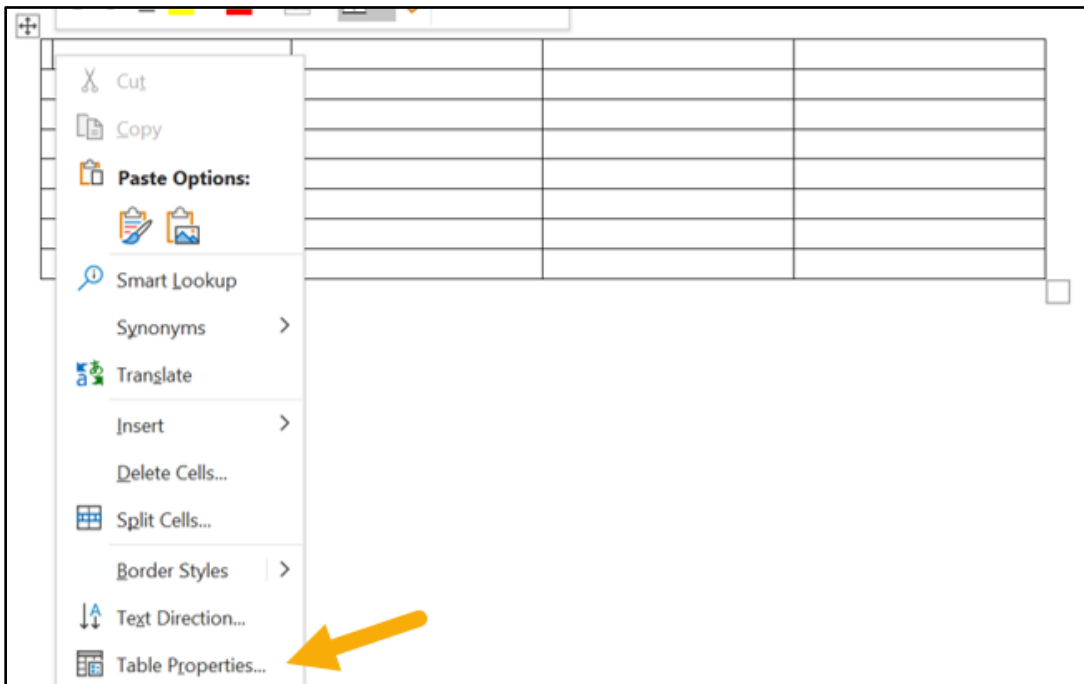
5. Navigate to the **Row** tab. If the checkboxes are clickable, your row has been marked as a table header.



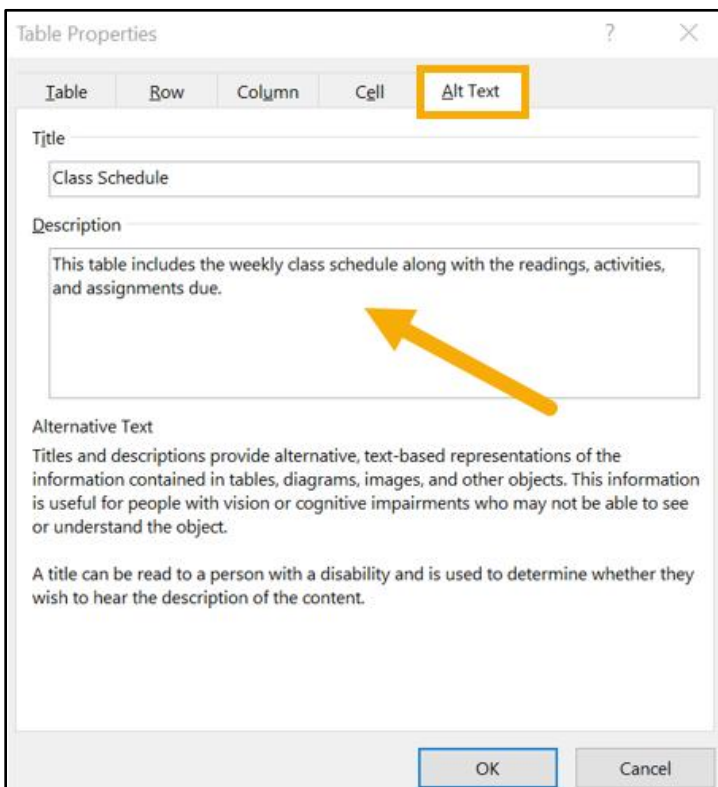
6. **IMPORTANT:** If your table continues onto more than one page, you should check the box next to the **Repeat as Header Row at the Top of Each Page** option.

Creating Alt Text for Tables

1. Right-click on your table and select **Table Properties**.



2. Then, navigate to the **Alt Text** tab. You can name your table and provide a thorough description here. Click **OK** to save your close the box and apply the changes.

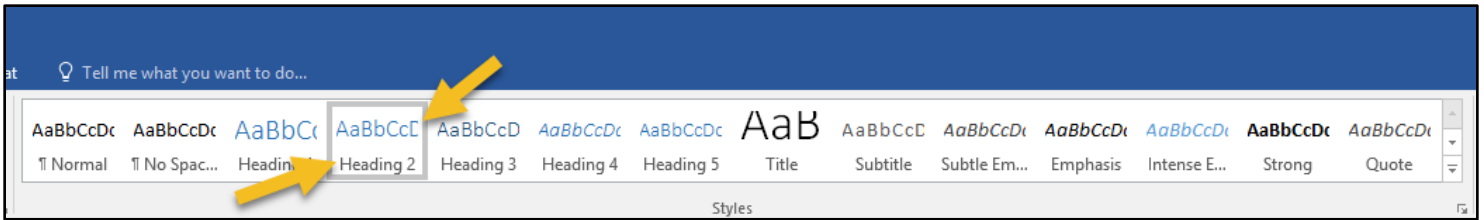


Using Headings

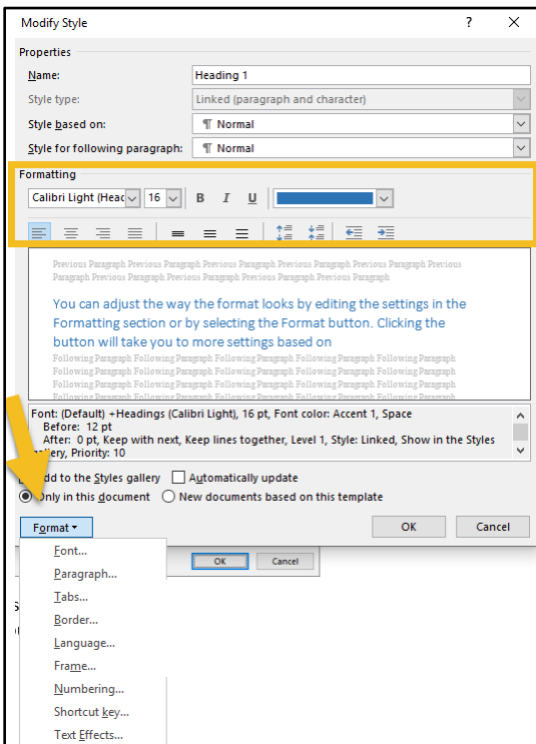
While the Word Document accessibility check will certify a document as accessible without headings, documents with multiple sections (such as a syllabus) should use headings to make navigation easier. Without headings, a sight impaired student would have to listen to the entire document over again to get to information that may be many pages in. Imagine if you had to listen to 10 pages of text every time you needed to access the schedule at the end of the document. By using headings, impaired students can skip around a document to find the needed information in the same way an unimpaired student would. There is the added bonus of a clear and clean organization to the document for all users.

Creating Headings

Let's explore the styles panel to create some headings.



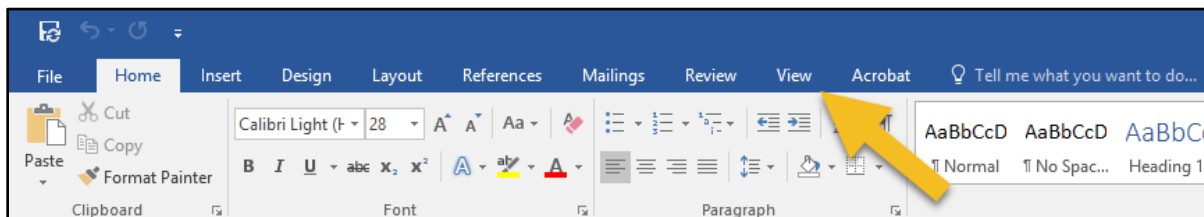
The bottom arrow points out the style name and heading level, while the top arrow points out what the text will look like. These are the default styles set by Microsoft, but you can update them to match your style by right-clicking and selecting **Modify**.



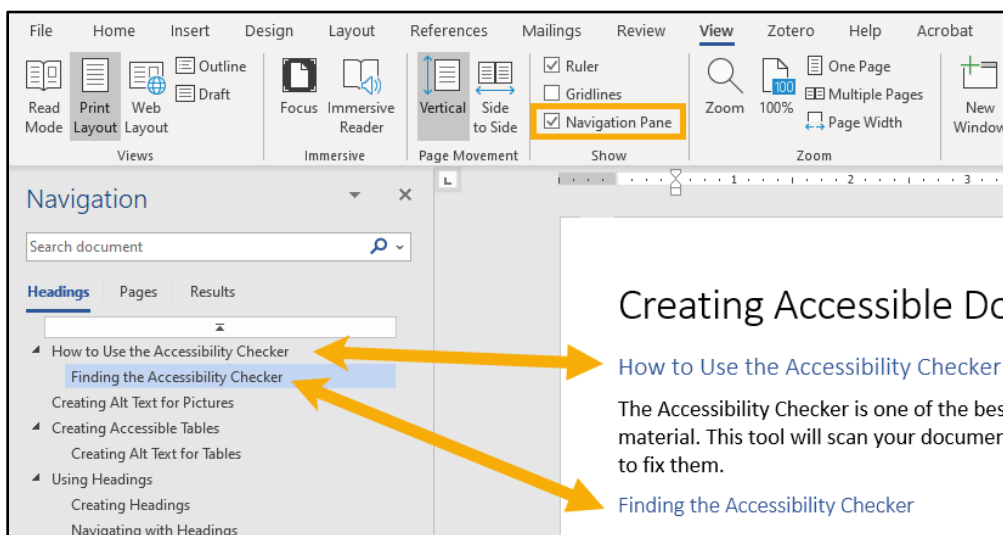
You can adjust the way the format looks by editing the settings in the **Formatting** section or by selecting the **Format** button. Clicking the button will take you to more settings based on specific aspects of formatting. Each page correlates to the sections on your toolbar. For example, the **Font** page will allow you to edit and add effects found in the **Font Toolbar**.

Navigating with Headings

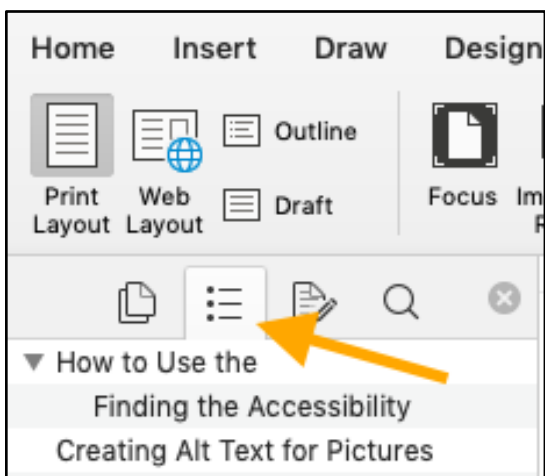
1. First, let's make sure we can see our navigation panel. Click **View** on your toolbar to access this setting.



2. Next, check the **Navigation Pane** box. You should see the windowpane open on the left side of your screen. If your document already has headings, you will see them listed here. This list can serve as an outline and as hyperlinks (click on the heading you want view and the document will take you there).



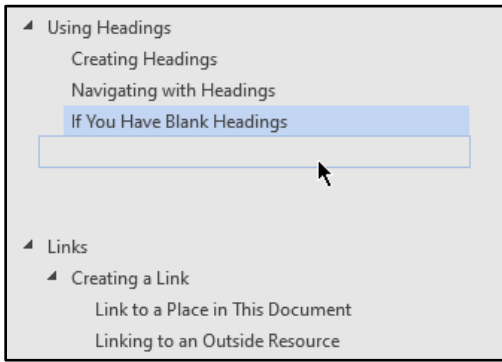
If you are on a Mac, you'll need to click the second tab from the left on the window that opens.



If You Have Blank Headings

Blank headings can be a bit troublesome and are easy to create. To fix these problems, open the **Navigation Pane** and follow these steps:

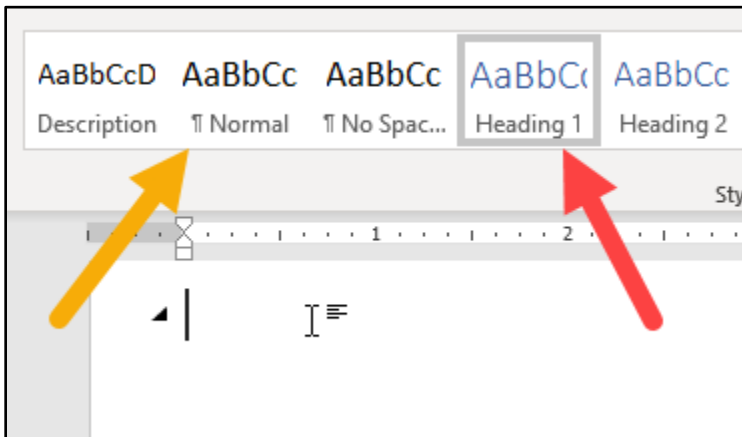
1. Locate the empty headings. In the example below, you can tell that I have two empty headings because there is a ton of space in my existing heading structure. When I hover my mouse over the space, a blue box appears, too.



Also, when I navigate to the space in my document, a small arrow appears.



2. To fix this, simply click the line like you are going to type. Then, change the style from your heading level to **Normal**.



3. Your spaces should disappear in your Navigation Pane but remain in the document.

Creating Headings
Navigating with Headings
If You Have Blank Headings

- Links
 - Creating a Link
 - Link to a Place in This Document
 - Linking to an Outside Resource
 - Formatting Pictures
 - To Create a Table of Contents:

3. Your spaces should disappear in your Navigation Pane but remain in the document.

Links

Links are helpful for redirecting readers to specific parts of your document or outside resources. For example, if this section required information on using the accessibility checker, I could direct you to [How to Use the Accessibility Checker](#) instead of explaining the steps all over again or letting you find the information yourself.

Links

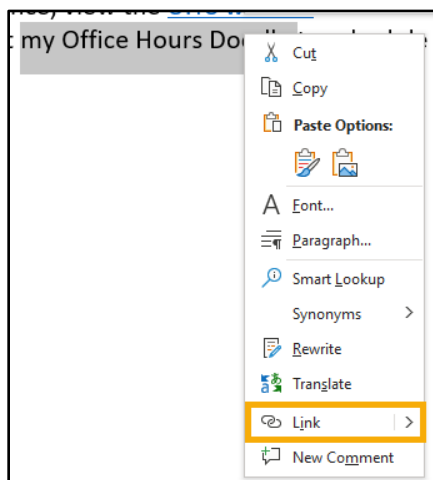
Links are helpful for redirecting readers to specific parts of your document or outside resources. For example, if this section required information on using the accessibility checker, I could direct you to [How to Use the Accessibility Checker](#) instead of explaining the steps all over again or letting you find the information yourself. You might want to include links to outside resources as well. **Please note that your links must be descriptive for your document to meet accessibility standards.** Descriptive links are essentially just hyperlinks that describe where the link will take the person or why the person might click the link to begin with. For example, “For further assistance, view the [UITS website](#) for tutorials or to find information on the student helpdesk.” Or, “You can fill out my Office Hours Doodle to schedule a meeting with me.”

Creating a Link

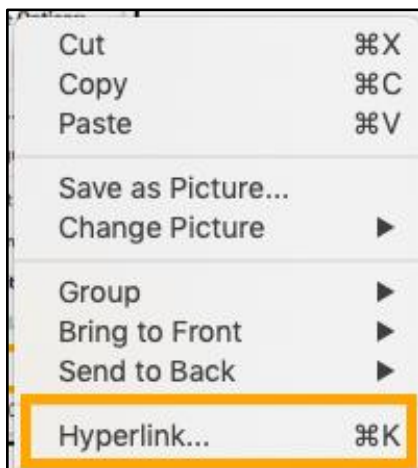
1. Highlight the text you want to assign the text to.

“You can fill out my Office Hours Doodle to schedule a meeting with me.”

2. Right-click the text and click **Link**.

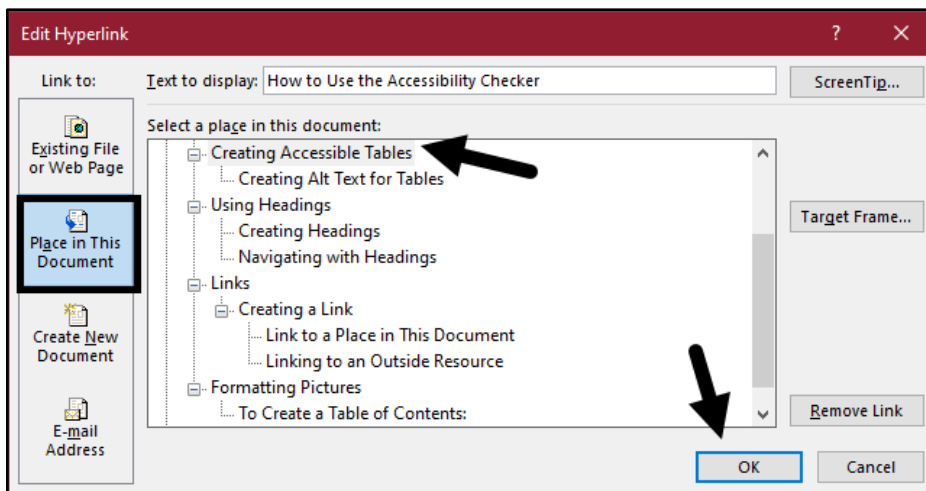


On Macs, the menu may say **Hyperlink**.

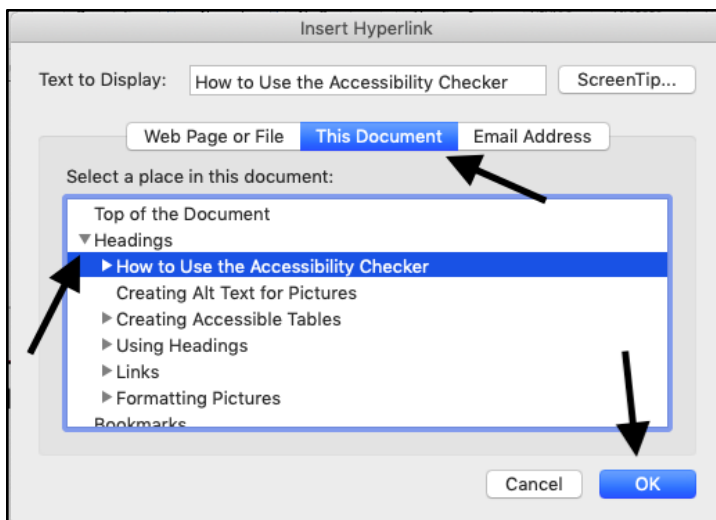


Link to a Place in This Document

1. Once the hyperlink settings menu has opened, click **Place in This Document** in the **Link to:** section. Then, select the heading you want to link to. Next, click **OK**.



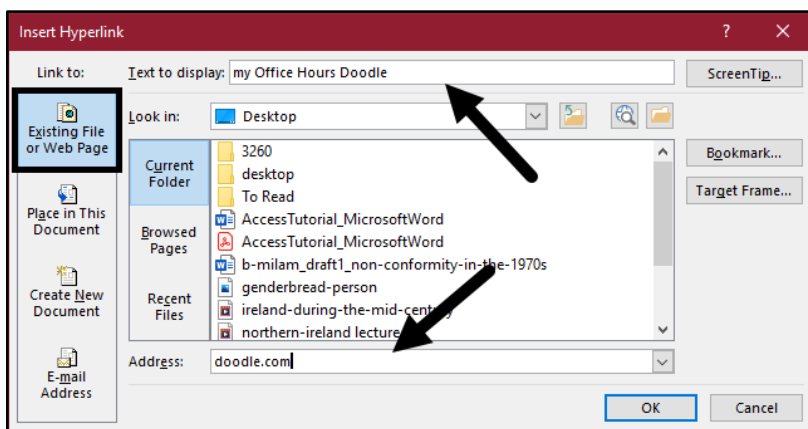
On a Mac, you'll navigate to the tab called **This Document** and use the arrow to view the heading tree. Then, you'll click the heading you want to link to and click the blue OK button.



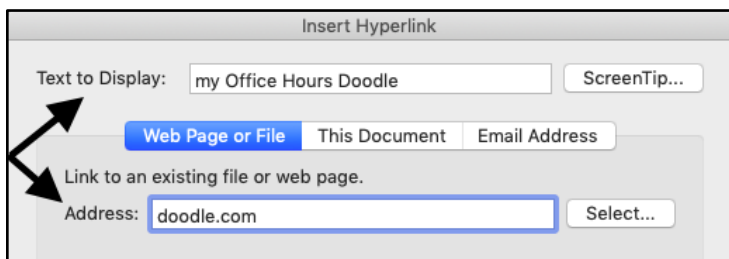
2. Your finished hyperlink should look like the following: [How to Use the Accessibility Checker](#). When you press Ctrl/Cmnd and click the link, you should be taken to that part of the document.

Linking to an Outside Resource

1. Copy the URL you want your readers to visit.
2. In the hyperlink settings menu, click **Existing File or Web Page**. Then, paste your URL into the **Address** box. Next, Click **OK**.



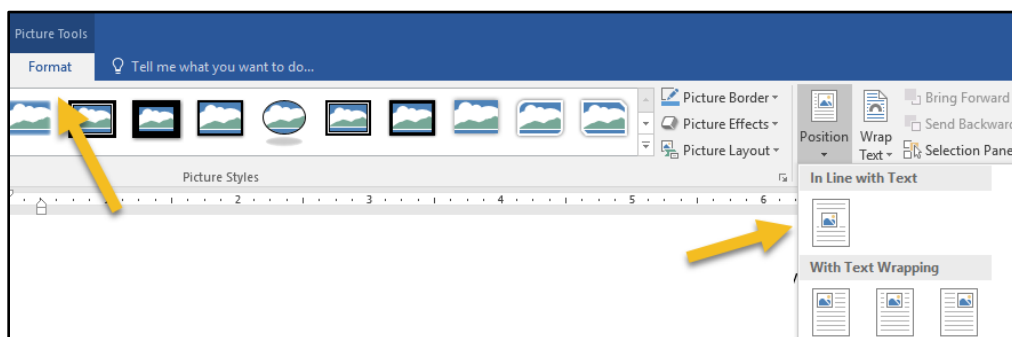
On Mac, however, you will paste the



Formatting Pictures

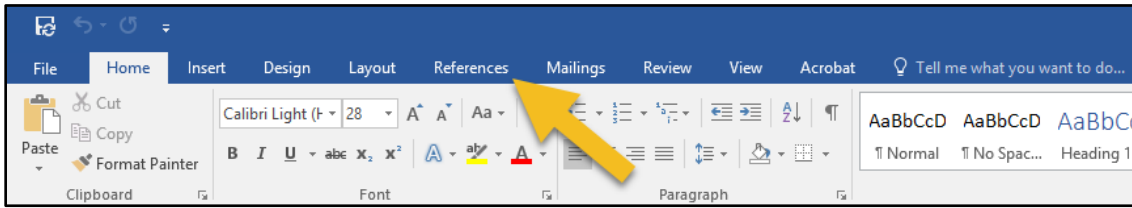
To ensure that sentences and graphics are read in the correct order, graphics should be formatted as **In-Line**. If graphics “float” or are not formatted with a clear reading order in mind, misinformation and confusion can be spread.

1. Click on the picture and navigate to the **Picture Format** tab.
2. Then, find the **Position** option. Select the **In-Line** option. You may need to put the picture on its own line to get the look you want.

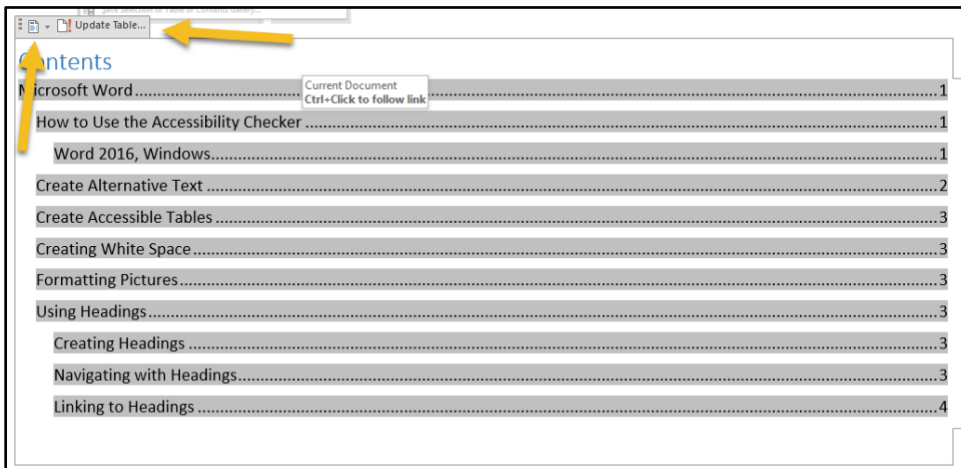


To Create a Table of Contents:

1. Navigate to the **References** tab.



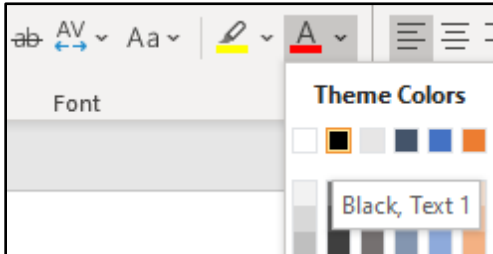
2. Next, open the **Table of Contents** menu and choose whichever design you want. You can click one of the **Built-In** templates, or you can use the tools at the bottom to create your own design.
3. After selecting the design you want to use, your table of contents should be automatically inserted. You can select **Update Table** to update page numbers and heading names after you have edited the document or click the little check box to change the design of the table.



NOTE: You cannot type directly into the Table of Contents box. You must edit your headings and update the table to see your changes.

Color Contrast

1. The background behind text and the font color itself must contrast enough to be easily distinguishable. This is not recognized by the accessibility checker, so it's something to keep in mind while making/editing your presentation. To change font color, first navigate to the Home tab. Under the **Font** section, select the font color option and change it to one that contrasts the background.



2. Avoid red and green, as color blind people have trouble distinguishing those colors from each other and from gray.

Created by Brayden Milam, July 2019

Updated by Brayden Milam and Sam Lee, June 2020