

SCHOOL WEBMASTERS

Creating Accessible, Section 508 Compliant Documents

WHAT:

Accessibility refers to the way we design products, devices, services, or environments to make them available to as many people as possible; specifically, to people with disabilities. This includes access by people who are mobile impaired, blind, low vision, deaf, hard of hearing, or who have cognitive impairments.

WHY:

School Webmasters is dedicated to providing accessible Web content. What's more, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires that all electronic and information technology be accessible to people with disabilities. Not only are educational institutions bound by these standards, it just makes sense that schools would want their publications to be accessible by everyone. It's important that the documents included on school websites be 508 compliant. School websites are our business, so we have a vested interest in helping you comply.

HOW:

It is the responsibility of school staff to submit Section 508 compliant documents, which we will then post to your website. In this document, we will demonstrate **how to make a Microsoft Word document accessible** and **how to convert your now-accessible document to PDF format**. The steps for checking accessibility and making the necessary adjustments for compliance may vary slightly across different versions of Word, but will remain very similar.

A fully accessible document meets the following requirements:

- Alternative Text on Images (Section 508-1194.2 a)
- Style Elements
- Header Rows and Alternative Text on Tables

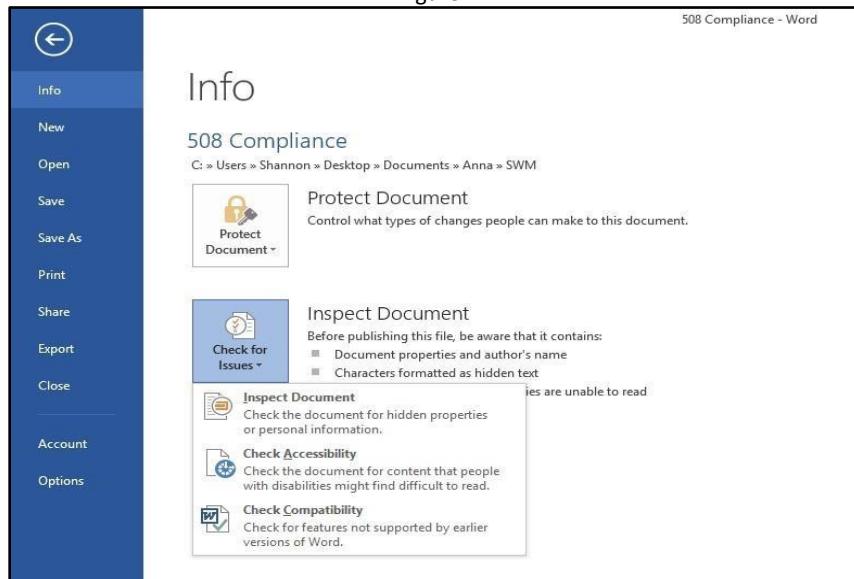
Checking for Accessibility

So, you've got a Word document you'd like to post on your website, but you're not sure if it meets the above requirements for accessibility. To test how accessible your document is (or isn't), we're going to use Microsoft Word's built-in Accessibility tools. While there are more thorough compliance tools out there, MS Word allows you to target any issues you may need to correct.

STEP 1

With your Word document open, select the **File** tab. Choose **Info** from the menu on the left, select **Check for Issues**, and a drop-down menu will appear (see Fig 1).

Figure 1



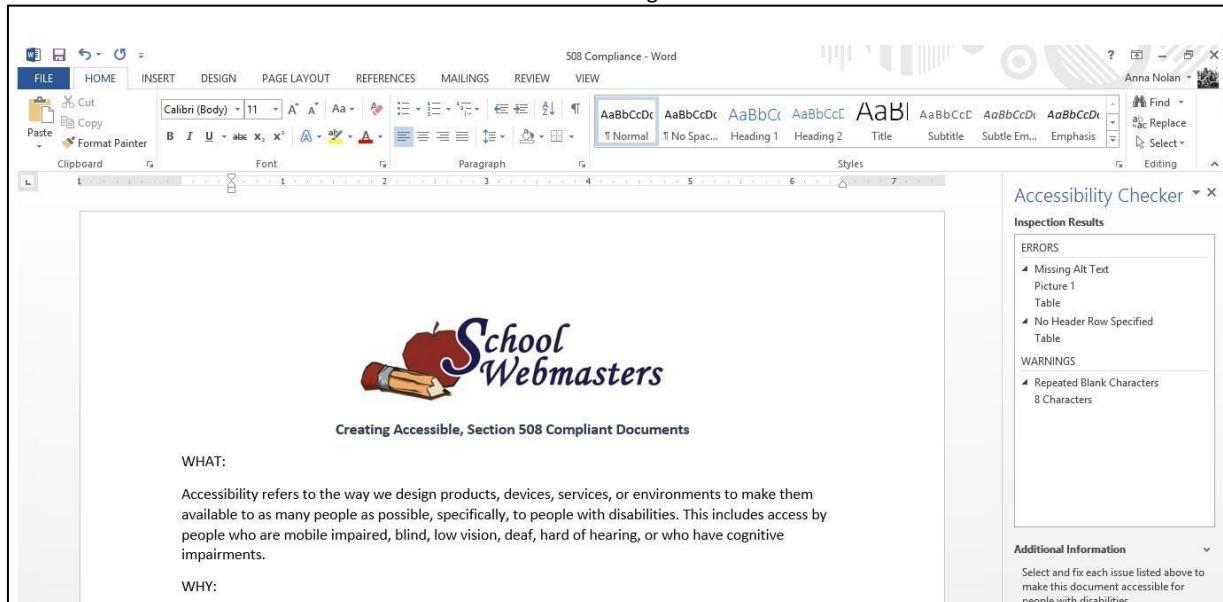
STEP 2

Choose the **Check Accessibility** option from the **Check for Issues** drop-down menu.

STEP 3

When you choose **Check Accessibility**, the **Home** tab will appear and an **Accessibility Checker** pane will load on the right side of the screen (see Fig 2)

Figure 2



STEP 4

In the **Accessibility Checker** pane, there is an **Inspection Results** window which shows **Errors** and **Warnings** per Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (see Fig 2). Make a note of any errors and/or warnings listed there. When you're ready, move on to the next section to learn how to repair your document's accessibility and make it compliant.

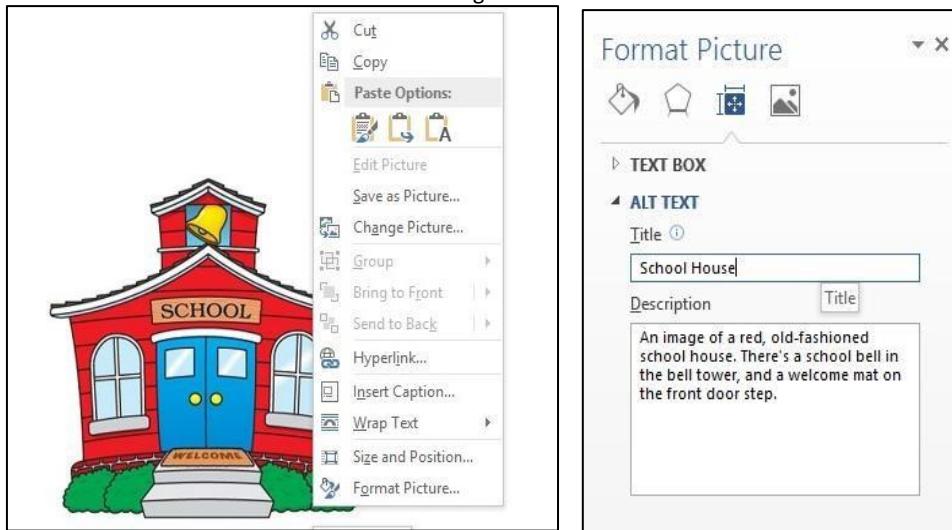
Making Your Word Document Compliant

Adding Alternate Text to Images

Every non-text element on your document (so, any image) must include **Alternate Text** that describes the image. Alternate text allows visually impaired people to understand what the image means to communicate. To add Alt Text, follow these steps:

1. Insert the image on your document as usual.
2. Right-click on the image, making a pop-up menu appear (see Fig 3). Select **Format Picture**.
3. From the **Format Picture** window, select the **Layout and Properties** tab to prompt a dialog box to appear. Now, you just need to describe the image by typing the appropriate text in the **Title** and **Description** boxes (see Fig 4).

Figures 3 and 4



4. Repeat this process for each image in your document.

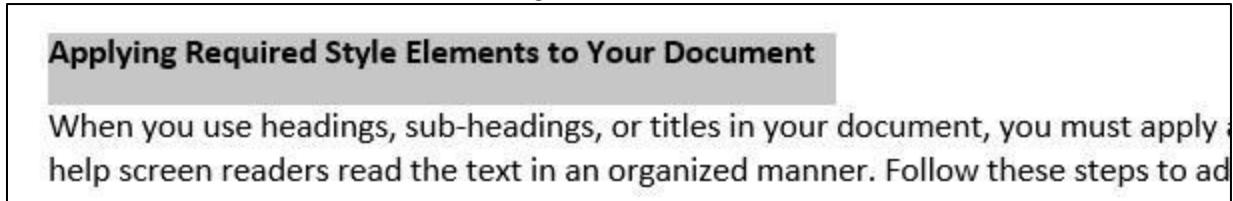
NOTE: Per section 508 Of the Rehabilitation Act, all images must have alternative text. This includes ornate symbols or lines used for decorative purposes. If the image has no bearing on the overall message of the document, use a set of two quotation marks ("") in both the **Title** and **Description** fields. This allows accessibility software to simply skip the image.

Applying Required Style Elements to Your Document

When you use headings, sub-headings, or titles in your document, you must apply a **Style Element** to help screen readers read the text in an organized manner. Follow these steps to add style elements:

1. Type your heading and highlight the text (see Fig 5).

Figure 5



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document with a highlighted heading. The heading is enclosed in a grey box with a dark grey header bar above it. The header bar contains the text "Applying Required Style Elements to Your Document". Below the header, the text "When you use headings, sub-headings, or titles in your document, you must apply a" is visible, followed by a large portion of text that is cut off at the bottom.

2. At the top of the page, select Home from the top menu and select a Style from the Styles menu (see Fig 6). Tip: When choosing a Style, you can preview each one by hovering your mouse over it.

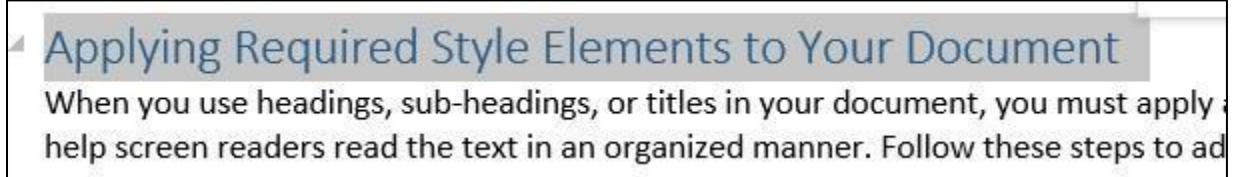
Figure 6



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word ribbon with the "Styles" tab selected. The ribbon bar includes tabs for Home, Insert, Page Layout, References, Mailings, and Review. Below the ribbon, a horizontal row of style buttons is visible, each with a preview of the text format. The "Normal" style is currently selected, indicated by a blue border. Other styles shown include "No Spac...", "Heading 1", "Heading 2", "Title", "Subtitle", "Subtle Em...", and "Emphasis". At the bottom of the ribbon, the word "Styles" is written in a small font.

3. Word applies the new style to the highlighted text only (see Fig 7).

Figure 7



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document with the applied style. The heading "Applying Required Style Elements to Your Document" is now displayed in a larger, bold, blue font, indicating that the "Heading 1" style has been applied. The rest of the text in the document is in a smaller, standard black font.

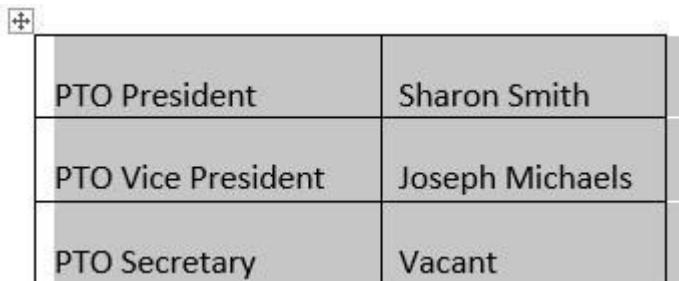
NOTE: At the very least, using the Title Style and Heading 1 Style should ensure that your document will pass a compliance check. Use additional styles as needed.

Adding Header Rows & Alt Text to Tables

If your document contains any tables, they all must include a clearly defined header row (the first row in the table) so that your reader can easily read and understand the table. Follow these steps to add header rows:

1. Create your table and select it by clicking on the four-way cursor in the top, left corner (see Fig 8)

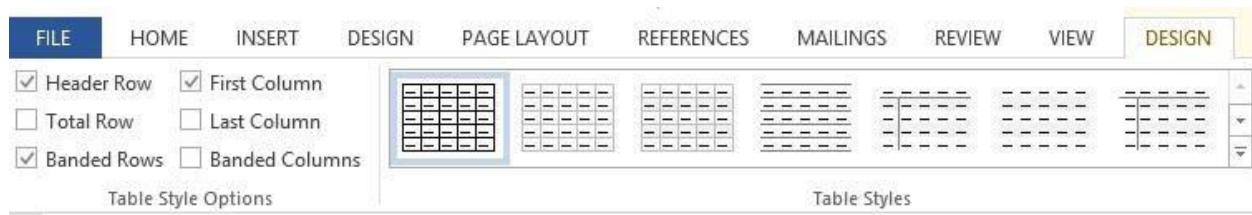
Figure 8



| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| PTO President | Sharon Smith |
| PTO Vice President | Joseph Michaels |
| PTO Secretary | Vacant |

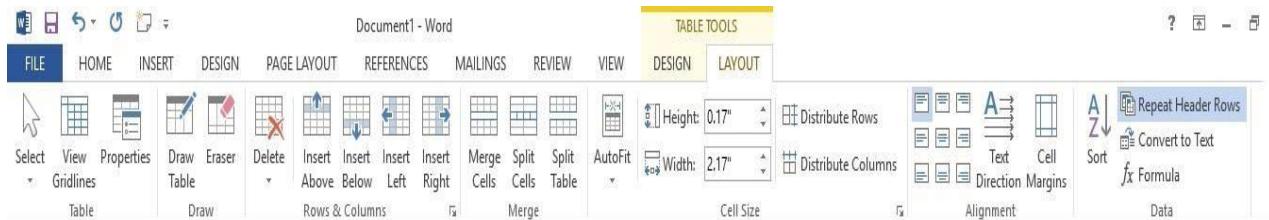
2. From the menu on the top of the page, select **Design** and choose a Table Format from the **Table Styles** group (see Fig 9).
3. From the **Table Styles Options** section, place a check mark in the **Header Row** box (also Fig 9).

Figure 9



4. Now select **Layout** from the top of the page and click on **Repeat Header Rows** (see Fig 10)

Figure 10



5. Finally, you'll add Alt Text by right clicking the table and choosing **Table Properties**. Now select **Alt Text**, enter the title and description, and click **OK**. Your table is now compliant.

Converting your Accessible Document to PDF Format

Now you have created a compliant document in Microsoft Word, you will need to convert it to PDF format, the universally recognized format for Web documents. Readers can view a PDF (Portable Document Format) on both Mac and a PC, as well as on mobile devices.

Converting your Word document to a PDF is as simple as 1-2-3.

1. With your Word document open, select the **File** tab from the top menu and then click **Export** from the menu on the left (see Fig 11).
2. Select **Create PDF/XPS**, prompting the **Publish as PDF or XPS** dialog box to open (see Fig 12).
3. Give the PDF document a name and click **Publish**. Your newly converted PDF will open in Adobe Acrobat Reader (which you can install from [here](#) if you don't already have it).

Figure 11

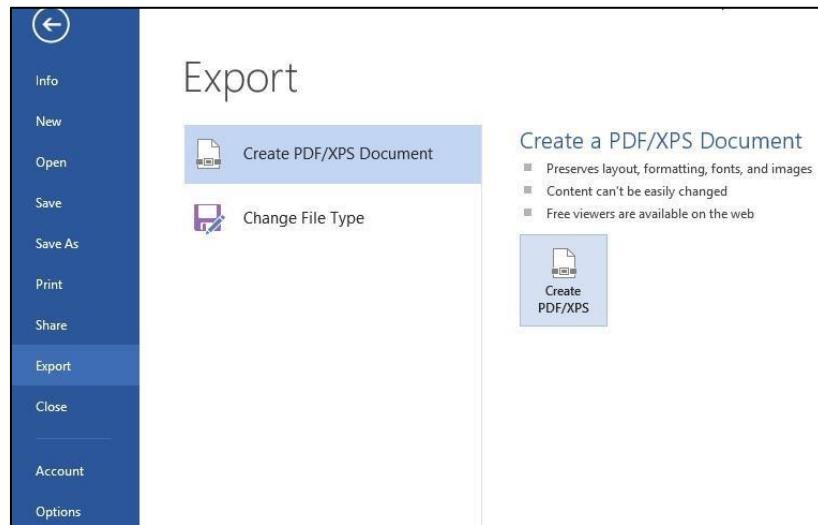


Figure 12

