

GGC Checklist for Section 508 Compliant Documents

To ensure GGC documents are accessible, review the checklist below and use Microsoft Word version 2010 or later to access the software's accessibility checker. Word's help index is a great resource, as well as numerous online tutorials that are available using an internet search.

MS Word formatting features

- Limit fonts to ensure readability. Here are examples of readable fonts: Arial, Courier, Verdana, Times New Roman, Tahoma, Helvetica, Calibri.
- Set font color (black) to automatic (generally, this is the default).
- Use MS Word styles instead of font attributes like italics or bolding to create emphasis, titles and section headings. Screen readers for the visually impaired don't read font attributes, but will recognize applied styles.
- Turn off and remove hyphenation.
- Use bulleted and numbered lists instead of manually tabbing to create lists.
- Avoid using multiple tab(s) or space(s) to create spacing. Styles, columns and tables features are acceptable practice.
- Define paragraph spacing to adjust spacing between paragraphs. Hitting the <enter> key to create blank space could be misinterpreted by screen reader users as an indication that they've reached the end of the document. Page breaks may also be inserted to force a new page.
- Generate page numbering using MS Word's automated page number feature instead of manually adding page numbers.
- Replace text boxes with tables, if borders are needed for styling.
- Create multiple rows in a table, when needed. Using a single row and manually spacing to give the appearance of multiple rows will be interpreted out of order by screen readers. All data will be read in the left column before moving onto the next column.
- Define a repeating table header row in tables with multiple rows.
- Avoid merged cells in tables. A good indication to determine the order in which screen readers will read your content is to simply tab through the information. It should move from left to right, down the content in a logical order.
- Generate a table of contents, automatically, with MS Word. This feature pulls from the heading styles used in the document and is the easiest way to generate and update a table of contents.
- Verify the structure of the document, using the navigation pane in MS Word. Heading styles used will reflect in the navigation pane and offer a preview of the table of contents. Also, screen readers allow users to jump from section to section (as defined by the use of heading styles), skipping chunks of text to find specific information instead of listening to an entire document from beginning to end.
- Use the underscore keystroke to create signature lines or fill-in-the-blank spaces. Using the border feature or horizontal lines creates drawn line objects, which are treated as images that require alt text for each occurrence.

GGC Checklist for Section 508 Compliant Documents (continued)

Images

- Add alt text as a textual alternative for all images. Add open and closed quotation marks (""") for decorative images with no meaning or null values.
- Format images as "in-line." If they are not, the image may be deleted when creating a PDF.
- Avoid using watermarks or background images.

Basic elements

- Generate hyperlinks using text that makes sense out of context, and avoid generalized hyperlink verbiage like "click here."
- Create file names with no spaces. Hyphens and underscores may be used to create space.
- Edit document properties to add a title that will be read by screen readers.
- Use caution with abbreviations and symbols. Screen readers properly translate some abbreviations while others are read "as is" or ignored completely, depending on the user's settings. As technology improves, some issues will resolve. See some examples that follow.
 - 3 sem hrs of A = 3 x 4 = 12, reads as:
3 sem (the word "sem" not "semester") hours of A (the letter) equals 3 x (the letter "x" not "times") 4 equals 12
 - The equation xx-yy (xx minus yy) is, instead, interpreted as a hyphenated word and the symbol is ignored
 - An abbreviated "ENGL" is spoken phonetically, and not read as "English."
 - The asterisk (*), number sign (#), quotation marks ("""), parentheses (), greater-than symbol (>), less-than symbol (<), underscore (_), italics, and bolding may be ignored.

Testing for accessibility

- Test that all hyperlinks are accurate.
- Complete the checklist above.
- Inspect the document by running the MS Word accessibility checker and addressing all errors. Warnings can be addressed on case-by-case basis.