Document Accessibility

We strive to provide a digital environment usable by as many people as possible affording everyone an opportunity to experience all our web content has to offer. This means websites, tools, documents, and digital technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them.

Formatted Structure

Text editors in common applications like Microsoft Word can help you format your web content and documents. Good structure is the foundation of an accessible document or webpage. Using proper headings, lists and columns is essential to help those who use assistive technologies navigate and interpret your content.

Heading Structure

Organizing documents with heading structure helps people to get a sense of the page's organization. It is crucial for the structure to be portrayed both in a visual and technical manner, so the organization can be viewed as well as allowing screen reading technology to be able to identity the structure as it reads it out loud.

Structure and Headings [Video]

Bulleted and Numbered Lists

Lists help to organize content on a screen and make it easier for people to scan for information.

Keep lists as simple as possible. When possible, avoid compound lists (i.e. lists within lists). They can be confusing, particularly for non-visual users. Consider breaking complicated lists into separate sections with formatted headings.

List Examples: The Original Rice Krispies Treats™ Recipe

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 package (10 oz., about 40) Marshmallows
- 6 cups Kellogg's® Rice Krispies® cereal

Directions

1. In large saucepan melt butter over low heat. Add marshmallows and stir until completely melted. Remove from heat.
2. Add RICE KRISPIES cereal. Stir until well coated.
3. Using buttered spatula or wax paper evenly press mixture into 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan coated with cooking spray. Cool. Cut into 2-inch squares.

Formatted Columns

Page layouts that use multiple columns can be tricky for screen readers to read. Screen readers will read a document left to right, top to bottom.

If you create a document with more than one column avoid using the tab key to create spacing between columns. a screen reader will read the content out of order by reading across all the columns instead of down the column.

The document editor in Word can format columns in a way that maintains the proper reading order. You can format the whole document or just a small section. To add column layout to a small section of your document in Word, select the text you would like to be formatted as columns. Navigate to and select the Layout tab from the toolbar then choose columns. Select the column options appropriate for your document.

Paragraph Spacing

In digital documents, spacing of text is important for visual readability.

Document editors, like Word, have features that can help you provide spacing without having to add extra carriage returns. Extra carriage returns can be confusing for screen reader users because the screen reader reads "blank" for each line without content. Also use functions like Insert Page Break or Blank Page to allow assistive technology to move right to the next content. Below is an example of white space added by setting the paragraph spacing settings for Before/After in Microsoft Word.

Tables

Tables may be necessary to display data, but often can be confusing for people who rely on assistive technology to navigate through the data. Semantic table mark-up is important to allow assistive technologies to translate header and data cells in the proper order.

Simple Data Tables

A simple data table is a more accessible table typically has one header row and/or one header column and does not have any merged cells. Visually, table header cells should be visually distinct from the data cells. Consider adding banded row coloring to help distinguish the rows.

Which of the following is your primary desktop/laptop screen reader?

RESPONSE	# OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
JAWS	832	53.7%
NVDA	476	30.7%
VOICEOVER	100	6.5%
ZOOMTEXT/FUSION	72	4.7%

Screen Reader announces: "Table with three columns and five rows. Response Column 1, Row 1. Number of Respondents Column 2. Percent of Respondents column 3. Response: JAWS Column 1, Row 2. Number of Respondents: 832 Column 2. Percent of respondents: 53.7% Column 3."

Data source: Screen Reader User Survey #9 Results

Meaningful Link Language

Hyperlinks are used to connect to other webpages on your website or to other websites on the internet.

Avoid:

- long and complicated URLS: **Read the Web App**
- generic words like "click here" and "learn more."

Instead Use:

- Short URLs when available. For example, www.IllinoisState.edu.
- If short URLs are not available, include meaningful link language that references the target of the link. For example, "use this form to select your team members" or "view our events calendar."
- Email addresses such as ReggieRedbird@ilstu.edu can be hyperlinked text when it opens in an email browser.
- If hyperlinked text opens a contact form use a phrase like "Contact Reggie" instead of an email address.
- Hyperlinking phone numbers (309) 438-8835 allows people to directly call the number on mobile devices.

Image Descriptions and Alt Text

A good image description provides a text representation of the images' content.

*We don't want our images to be a barrier for people.*

The typical length of an alt text is about 100-125 characters. It can be longer or shorter if necessary. A good alt text for an image will depend on the image and its surrounding content. Ask yourself, what important message is the image telling your audience? Or what is the function of the image?

Choose Color Carefully

It is easier to address color issues in the original document.

- Use high contrasting colors
- Avoid using color as the only source of information.

In the example images below, the inaccessible map has new construction sites indicated with a red square; future construction sites indicated with a green square. In the accessible map example, new construction sites are marked by a red star and future construction sites continue to be indicated by a green square. Therefore, color is not the sole indicator.
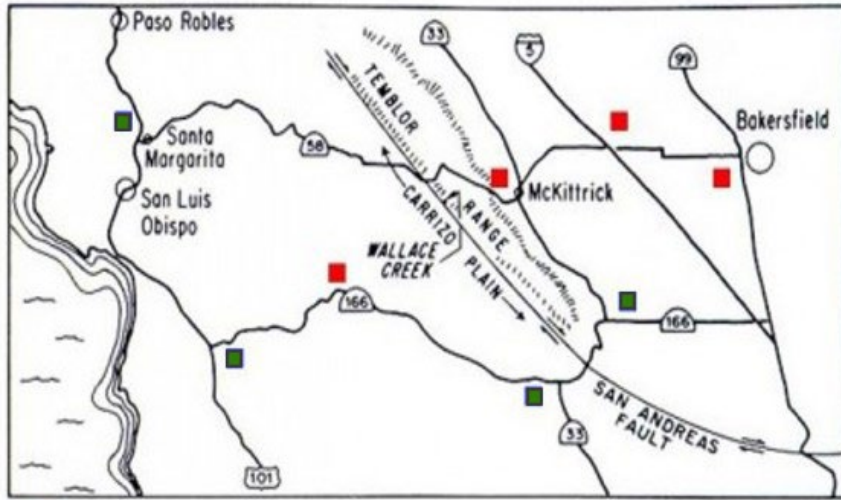
■ New construction sites
■ Future construction sites
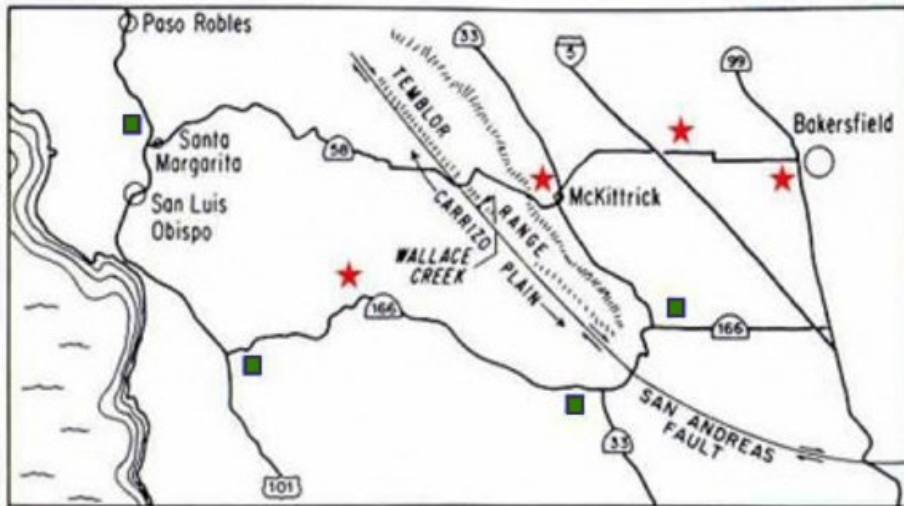
★ New construction sites
■ Future construction sites

Forms

Forms should be interactive and able to be filled out using a computer. For better accessibility, convert forms to PDF. If the form is going to be exported to a PDF, do not add the interactive form fields in Microsoft Word. You will add interactive form fields in Adobe Acrobat Pro.

Sample Form (PDF)

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Attachments

The following documents are included in the proposal submission:

☐ Budget (Required)   ☐ Scope of Work (Required)

☐ Budget Justification (Required)   ☐ Other: _____

☐ Collaboration Letter

Is form completed in its entirely?

☐ Yes ☐ No   Reason for omissions: _____

Recommendation to approval:

☐ Yes   ☐ No

By signing below, I verify that the information provided is accurate.

_____
Signature

_____
Position Title

_____
Date

_____
Print Name

Multi-Media

Remember any media embedded or linked from your document should also follow [best practices for multi-media accessibility](). Even if you are not the media creator, you should check the media for accessibility before use. This includes:

- An accessible media player
- Videos with captions
- Transcripts for audio-only content
- Audio description for videos with important visual details
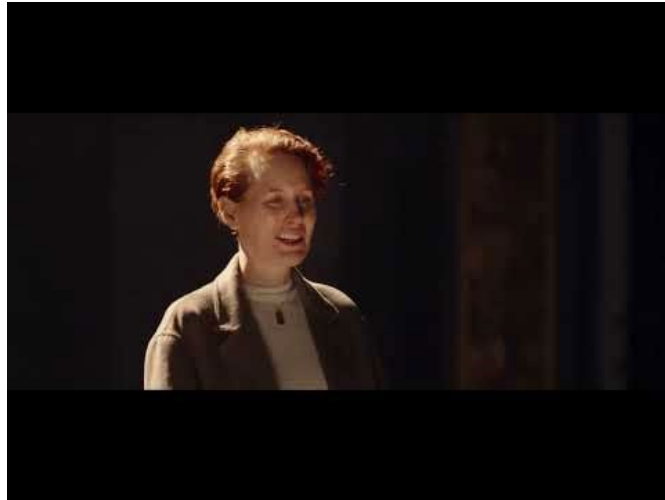
Have Questions?

Visit the ISU Website and Digital Accessibility Pages:

- https://help.illinoisstate.edu/accessibility

Microsoft Resources

- [Microsoft Accessibility Video Training]()