UMW ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES AND CHECKLIST

Microsoft Word Documents, PDF's, and Canvas Pages

- ☐ Establish a clear reading order by using the hierarchical headings available in the text editor.
    - o Nest headings by their level, with 1 being the most important or top level and successively larger numbers being less important.
    - o Do not skip a heading level within a section.
    - o Do not use heading styles to increase text point size.
    - o If you need to set headings but wish to retain the current formatting of the text, follow these directions.
- ☐ Provide meaningful descriptions or "alt text" for all images that are not decorative.
    - o A decorative image is one that simply adds embellishment; if an image conveys or enhances content, alt text must explain that image.
    - o Avoid images that are pure text but are meant to convey meaning or enhance content.
    - o Images with text, such as memes, can be described using special guidelines.
- ☐ Use unique, descriptive links, where appropriate words and phrases are formatted as the hyperlink.
    - o Avoid URL's as links, especially if they are long. In general, only (and very rarely) use an actual URL as a link if it's short and it equivalent to saying, "this is the address."
    - o Limit the use of extremely short links, such as a single number or letter. They are often confusing to those using a screen reader and can be difficult to navigate by those with muscle control issues.
- ☐ When tables are needed, keep them simple and define headers on columns and rows.
    - o Use tables only for tabular data. When trying to create columns of text, use Word's layout function instead.
    - o Do not merge cells or embed tables within tables.
    - o Use headings, textual descriptions, and/or alt text to designate the purpose of a table.
- ☐ Use color carefully.
    - o Ensure appropriate contrast between the text and the background so that those with low vision can easily read the text. When in doubt, use a contrast checker.
    - o Do not use color alone to convey meaning. To add emphasis to text, use bold or italics.
- ☐ When appropriate, organize information with bulleted or numbered lists.
    - o Use the text editor tool when creating lists.
    - o Finish each item with a period or comma as appropriate.
- ☐ Use the built-in Microsoft, Adobe, or Canvas accessibility checker to identify accessibility issues and fix them.

If you start with a simple but accessible Word document then convert that document into a PDF, you generally end up with an accessible PDF. However, if you have a complicated PDF document with many accessibility issues that you can't easily resolve, submit a request to eLearning so that we can remediate that document for you.

PowerPoint Presentations

- ☐ Use built-in slide layouts to easily establish a reading order.
    - o If you customize a slide, you will need to use the accessibility checker to ensure the intended reading order.
- ☐ Give each slide a unique title.
    - o If a single topic continues across multiple slides and you wish to use the same title, consider adding a dash and successive numbers to each slide's title. For example, "Organic Foods-1," "Organic Foods-2," and so on.
    - o If you don't want a title to appear on a slide, do not delete the title placeholder. Instead, add an appropriate title then move the placeholder off the slide and onto the canvas; a screen reader will still recognize the title when needed.
- ☐ Avoid adding textboxes. Instead, copy and paste a text-based placeholder. You can fix the reading order, including giving an appropriate identifier to the placeholder, using the accessibility checker.
- ☐ Keep animations and transitions subtle and to a minimum.
- ☐ Follow basic accessibility guidelines:
    - o Provide alt text for images.
    - o Create descriptive hyperlinks.
    - o Designate column and row headers in tables.
    - o Ensure appropriate color contrast, and do not use color alone to convey meaning.
    - o Use the text editor to create bulleted and numbered lists.

Special Considerations when Presenting

- ☐ Use 24-point or larger font sizes.
- ☐ Describe images on the screen for those who can't see them.
- ☐ If providing PowerPoint handouts, provide a link to a digital version.
- ☐ When presenting through video conferencing, minimize the amount of text per slide.
- ☐ If using PowerPoint for Microsoft 365, consider turning on the real-time captioning feature.

Video and Audio

- ☐ Any video must be captioned. It's considered best practice to turn on captions by default in the classroom.
- ☐ Make live captioning available for synchronous class sessions on video conferencing software.
- ☐ For audio-only content, provide a written transcript.
- ☐ People who are blind benefit from audio description, audibly explaining key visual elements between the dialogue in videos. Unfortunately, that option is not often available.
    - o YouDescribe has added audio description to many YouTube videos and accepts requests to have descriptions added to other videos.
    - o In a classroom setting, instructors can sit next to a student and explain key visual details between dialogue.

If you need assistance, please contact eLearning at elearning@umwestern.edu. If you need help making specific course materials accessible, please complete the Accessibility Support Request form.