

Microsoft Accessibility Checker What You Should Worry About.

Errors

If content in the file makes it very difficult or impossible for someone with a disability to use, the Accessibility Checker classifies it as an error.

Rule	Accessibility Checker Verifies	Why fix this?	Applies to these Applications	Should I worry about this?
All non-text content has alternative text (alt-Text)	All objects have alt text and the alt text doesn't contain image names or file extensions.	Screen readers speak the alternative text to describe images and other non-text content that users can't see. Based on alt text, users can understand the purpose and meaning of the described content.	Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook, OneNote, Visio	Yes
Tables specify column header information.	Tables and/or blocks of cells have the header box selected or a header row indicated.	Users rely on the table headings to understand the content that is subsequently read by the screen reader. Also, assistive technology often uses the table header row to help convey to the user the current cursor location in the table and to provide information that enables the user to navigate the table.	Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook, OneNote	Yes
All slides have titles.	Slides have titles.	Slide titles enable users to navigate within a presentation, including finding and selecting a single slide to immediately go to.	Power Point	Yes
Cells in an Excel worksheet don't use red-only formatting for negative numbers.	Cells that are set to Number format and use only the red color for negative numbers (e.g. show 1000 in red instead of -1000).	Users who have difficulty distinguishing color won't be able to tell the difference between positive and negative values.	Excel	Yes
Image or object is inline with the text.	Images or objects are positioned inline with the surrounding text.	If the image or object is not inline, it may be difficult for screen reader users to interact with the object. It may also be difficult to know where the object is relative to the text.	Word	Yes
Document access is not restricted.	Any document that has disabled the Access content programmatically option in the document permissions settings: Review > Restrict Editing > Restrict permission.... Select	Information Rights Management (IRM) protection may prevent devices such as screen readers from having access to this document.	Excel, PowerPoint, Word	Yes

Rule	Accessibility Checker Verifies	Why fix this?	Applies to these Applications	Should I worry about this?
	Restrict permission to this document > More options.			
Repeated Blank Characters	Avoid the use of repeated blank characters (According to documentation this has been removed but still shows up in our testing)	Screen readers can read blank characters as "blank". This can be very irritating, especially if there are multiple blank characters.	Word	No

Warnings

If the content in most (but not necessarily all) cases is difficult for people with disabilities to understand, the Accessibility Checker gives a warning.

Rule	Accessibility Checker Verifies	Why Fix this?	Applies to these Applications	Should I worry about this?
Table has a simple structure.	Tables are simple rectangles with no split cells, merged cells, or nesting.	Users navigate tables via keyboard shortcuts and assistive technology, which rely on simple table structures.	Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook, OneNote	Yes
Sheet tabs have meaningful names.	Sheets in the workbook include descriptive information and there are no blank sheets.	Descriptive sheet names, such as "October sales totals," make it easier to navigate through workbooks than do default sheet names, such as "Sheet1."	Excel	Yes
Sufficient contrast between text and background.	Colors of the text and background are different enough to make the text easy to see.	People with low vision often find it hard to read text that does not contrast with the background. If your document has a high level of contrast between the text and background, more people can see and use the content.	Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook	Yes
Closed captions are included for inserted audio and video.	All audio and video objects have closed captioning.	Without captioning, the information in a video or audio segment may be entirely lost to people with disabilities.	PowerPoint, OneNote	Yes
Slide titles in a deck are unique.	Non-blank slides have unique titles.	Users rely on titles to know where they are in the deck and to navigate the deck.	PowerPoint	Yes

Tips

When there is content that people with disabilities can understand but that could be better organized or could be presented in a way that can improve their experience, you see a tip.

Rule	Accessibility Checker verifies	Why Fix this?	Applies to these Applications	Should I worry about this?
The reading order of the objects on a slide presentation is logical.	Objects on a slide are in a logical order.	Assistive technology reads slides and the elements on them in the specified order. If the reading order isn't logical, the content doesn't make sense.	PowerPoint	Yes
Layout tables are structured for easy navigation.	The layout order is logical for the language, and the tab order is not circular.	Users rely on the table layout to navigate through the content. It must be ordered logically for users to understand and navigate the content.	Word	Yes
Documents use heading styles.	Content is organized with headings and/or a Table of Contents (TOC).	Headings and TOCs provide structural context to users and enable navigation and easier searching in the document.	Word, Outlook, OneNote	Yes

Recent Changes

In the last few years Microsoft has made updates to the Accessibility Checker, depending on what version you are running you may still see some of these Errors, Warning, and Tips come up in the checker.

Change Type	Change	Released	Should I worry about this?
Removed Error	"Avoid the use of repeated blank characters" Error removed. Blank characters aren't inherently inaccessible, except when used to create the impression of layout or structure, such as faking a table or multi-level list.	October 2018	No
Removed Tip	"All headings are in the correct order" Tip removed. Using Heading levels that are not in order are not inherently inaccessible.	October 2018	Yes
New Error	Cells in an Excel worksheet don't use red-only formatting for negative numbers Error added.	October 2018	No
Upgraded Rule	Image or object is in line with the text upgraded from a Warning to an Error.	Summer 2017	N/A
Downgraded Rule	Documents use heading styles downgraded from an Error to a Tip.	Summer 2017	N/A
Removed Warning	"Hyperlink text is meaningful" Warning removed. Using the link URL as the display name of the hyperlink doesn't necessarily mean that the hyperlink isn't accessible. For example, http://www.microsoft.com is not an accessibility issue.	Summer 2017	No
Removed Warning	"Tables don't use blank cells for formatting" Warning removed. There are valid accessible tables that contain empty rows and columns, and most screen readers know how to communicate that information accurately.	Summer 2017	No
Upgraded Rule	Closed captions are included for inserted audio and video. upgraded from a Tip to a Warning.	Summer 2017	N/A
Upgraded Rule	Slide titles in a deck are unique upgraded from a Tip to a Warning	Summer 2017	N/A
Removed Tip	"No image watermarks are used" Tip removed. Alt text can be added to watermark images.	Summer 2017	No