

How to Make an ADA-Compliant Document

This guide shows how to make a document that meets **ADA** and **WCAG 2.1 Level AA** rules using Adobe Acrobat Pro **Microsoft Word** or **Google Docs**. These tools work best for accessibility. **Important:** Always make the document accessible **before** turning it into a PDF.

Step 1: Use the Right Tool

Start with one of these:

- Microsoft Word
- Google Docs
- Adobe Acrobat Pro

Do **not** start with:

- Scanned PDFs
- Images of text
- Old PDFs

If the document is already a PDF, ask for the original Word or Google Doc.

Step 2: Use Built-In Headings

Headings help screen readers move through the document.

What to do

- Use **Heading 1** for the main title
- Use **Heading 2** for section titles
- Use **Heading 3** for smaller sections

What not to do

- Do not just make text bold or bigger
 - Do not skip heading levels
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Step 3: Write Clearly

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- Use short sentences
- Use simple words
- Spell out acronyms the first time you use them

Clear writing helps everyone.

Step 4: Add Alt Text to Images

Images that share information must have **alt text**.

Microsoft Word

1. Right-click the image
2. Select **View Alt Text**
3. Describe what the image shows

Google Docs

1. Right-click the image
2. Select **Alt text**
3. Add a short description

Good example

“Map showing where all elementary schools are located.”

Do not

- Say “image of” or “picture of”
 - Leave alt text blank unless the image is decorative
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Step 5: Use Proper Lists

Always use:

- Bulleted lists
- Numbered lists

Do not type dashes or numbers by hand. Screen readers need real lists.



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Step 6: Use Clear Links

Links must say where they go.

Good links

- “View the school calendar”
- “Download the enrollment form”

Bad links

- “Click here”
- “More”

Many screen reader users jump from link to link.

Step 7: Use Tables Carefully

Only use tables for data.

If you use a table:

- Add a header row
- Keep it simple
- Avoid merged cells

In Word or Google Docs:

- Select the top row
 - Mark it as a header row if available
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Step 8: Check Color and Contrast

- Do not use color alone to show meaning
- Make sure text is easy to read

Use this website for Color and Contrast.

<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

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Step 9: Run the Accessibility Check

Microsoft Word

1. Select **Review**
2. Select **Check Accessibility**
3. Fix all issues

Google Docs

Google Docs does not have a full checker, so:

- Review headings
- Check alt text
- Check links and lists

Step 10: Save the Document Correctly

- Export from Word or Google Docs
- Do not print to PDF
- Do not scan

A good source file makes an ADA complaint PDF.

If You Are Not Sure Your document is ADA compliant

- Ask for an accessibility review
- You can send the document to gbitsicas@cpsk12.org

It is always easier to fix problems **before** a document is posted.