



# Authoring Accessible Word Documents



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## Style and Formatting

### USE LOGICAL HEADING STRUCTURE

Logical heading structure creates hierarchy in a document. Instead of “Title”, use “Heading 1” for the document title, use “Heading 2” as the main heading, “Heading 3” next, etc. Avoid fake headings by applying bold, underline, and italics for visual effect.

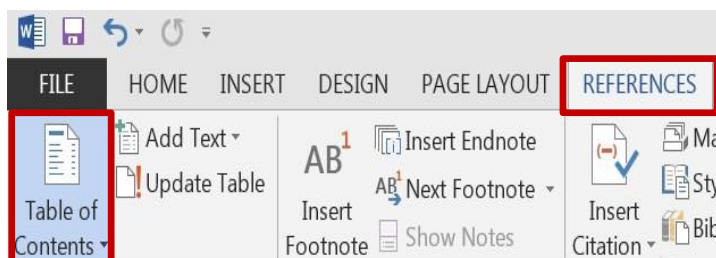
1. Select text or place cursor on line.
2. Click the appropriate heading level on the HOME tab>Styles.



### TABLE OF CONTENTS

A table of contents should be created using the tool, not manually.

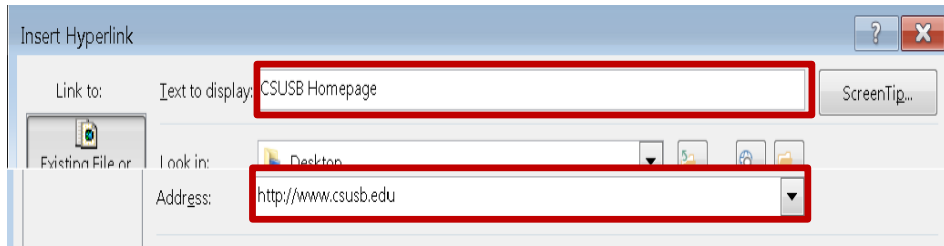
1. Click in the document where the TOC should be inserted.
2. Click REFERENCES tab > Table of Contents, and then choose an “Automatic Table” from the drop-down list.



### HYPERLINKS

Hyperlinks should display a meaningful description and have the full URL masked. To cite the entire URL for print/archive purposes, enclose in [brackets] so it is not formatted as a clickable hyperlink.

1. Select the text you want to make into a link.
2. Right click and choose “Hyperlink”.
3. In the “Text to display” field, use a simple description.
4. In the “Address” field, enter the full Web address.

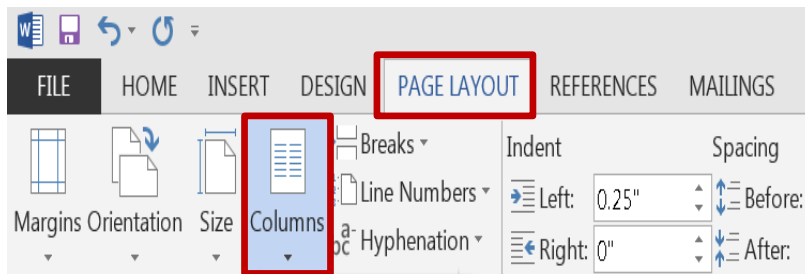


## Layout & Structure

### COLUMNS

Columns are created using the tool; avoid the tab key and spacebar.

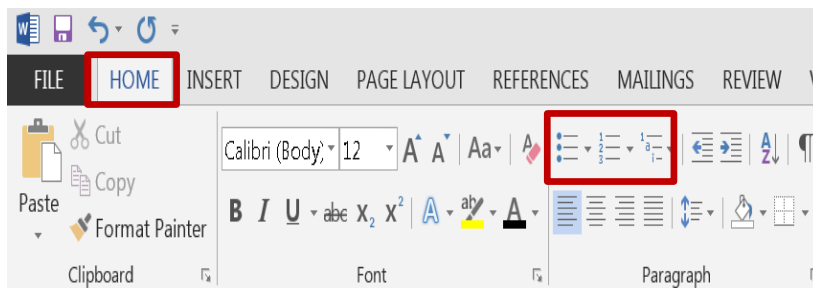
1. Click LAYOUT tab>Columns> choose from dropdown list.



### LISTS

Both bulleted and numbered lists should be created with the tool. Avoid fake lists by manually typing numbers in sequence or using dashes.

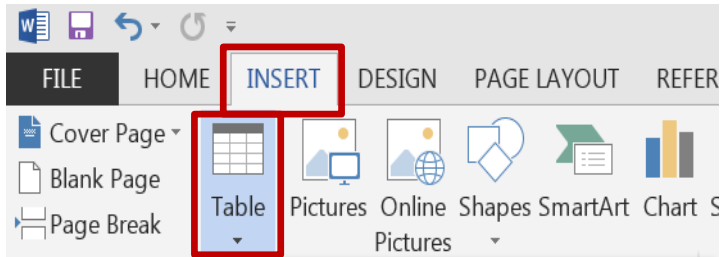
1. On the HOME tab choose numbered list or bulleted list.



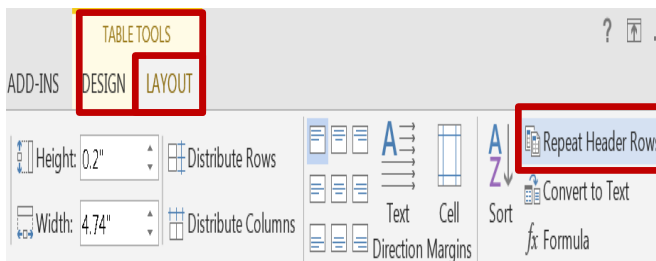
## DATA TABLES

Data tables must have proper structure, which includes repeating header rows. With this, screen readers repeat the header title with each value or cell read to provide context to the non-sighted user.

1. Click the INSERT tab, select “Table”> “Insert Table” and then choose number of columns and rows.



1. To repeat header rows, first click on your table within the document to reveal the TABLE TOOLS tab, then click “LAYOUT”>Repeat Header Rows



## Images

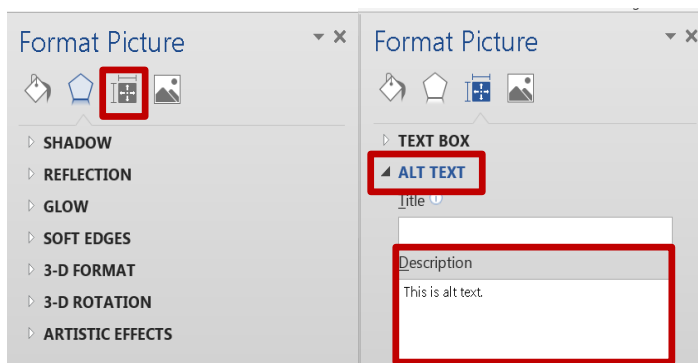
Images can be classified into three categories:

- **Decorative images** do not convey information. Avoid overuse.
- **Informational images** are the most commonly used and enhance text with additional meaning or illustration.
- **Complex images** contain informational data, too much to explain in alt text. Complex images must be summarized in the body of the document.

### ALTERNATIVE TEXT

Alternative text must be assigned to informational images. Screen readers read alt text to describe an image.

1. Right click on the image and select FORMAT PICTURE to reveal the pane on the right side of the document.
2. Select LAYOUT PROPERTIES to reveal the ALT TEXT pane.
3. For informational images, enter a succinct explanation in the “Description” field (screen readers ignore alt text of more than 125 characters). Ignore the “Title” field.



For purely decorative images that convey no meaning, leave the “Description” field and the “Title” field completely empty (not even a space). This signals the screen reader to completely ignore the image.

## Color Use

Avoid using color alone to convey meaning— use redundancy so that individuals who may be colorblind or use a screen reader can differentiate meaning.

Color alone:

**X X**

With redundancy:

**F P**

Use high contrast color combinations and avoid light colored fonts.

Low contrast

High contrast

## Best Practices

### FONT TYPE

Serif fonts are designed for print distribution, whereas Sans Serif fonts are designed for electronic viewing.

E

Serif  
(Times New Roman)

E

Sans Serif  
(Arial)

### FONT SIZE

Avoid using a font size smaller than 12 pt. The National Federation for the Blind recommends a minimum font size of 14 pt. for readability.

## Supplementary

- Avoid use of fully justified text.
- Use Word's built in accessibility checker to detect any glaring errors (FILE> "Check for Issues"> "Check Accessibility")
- Avoid unnecessarily complex language.

## The Accessible Technology Initiative at CSUSB

The Accessible Technology Initiative reflects the California State University's commitment to provide access to information resources and technologies to individuals with disabilities. This commitment is articulated in Executive Order 926 (EO 926), the CSU Board of Trustees Policy on Disability Support and Accommodations. The initiative will facilitate improvements in the following three priorities:

1. Web accessibility
2. Instructional materials
3. Procurement of Electronic & Information Technology (E&IT)

For more information on the Accessible Technology Initiative at CSUSB email [accessibility@csusb.edu](mailto:accessibility@csusb.edu) or call 909.537.5079