Top Ten Best Practices for Digital Accessibility

Titles

In PowerPoint presentations, it is required to have a unique title for each slide. In Word documents, it is required to have at least a Heading 1 for your document. That serves as the title of your document. You can find these on the ribbon at the top of the document.

Simple Language

Readability is considered accessible at a ninth–grade level. This cannot always be achieved; however, using simple language will allow more students to understand.

Headings

Headings are required in Word and in PDF documents. They should go in numerical order, beginning with Heading 1, then going to Heading 2, Heading 3, etc. You can also go from Heading 3 to Heading 2 if needed. You should not skip levels, such as going from Heading 2 to Heading 4.

Alt Text

Alt text is required for all images, shapes, and other non-text attributes. It can be marked as decorative if there is no instructional value from the image. Otherwise, ask yourself, "What do I want to convey with this picture?" or "What do I want my students to see when looking at this picture?" The answer to those questions is your alt text. In Office 365, click on the picture. You will see the ribbon at the top of the page change; click the alt text button at the top left.

Color Contrast

People with low vision are a large portion of our students; and it is difficult for them to see faded colors, pastels, yellows, and other colors that do not work well with the background used. Save time and download the Colour Contrast Analyser (https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast- checker/). It is a fantastic tool to check the color contrast for your document or PowerPoint presentation.

Avoid Red and Green Combinations

You cannot convey information using color only; there are several reasons for this. People who are colorblind cannot tell the difference between certain combinations, especially red and green. Also, screen readers do not take into consideration the information you are trying to convey with color.

Keep Tables Simple

Do not merge cells. Make sure you have a header row and alt text for your table. In the desktop version of Word, you click on repeat Header Row on the top ribbon. To include alt text, right-click on the table and choose Table Properties. There is a tab at the top right corner for alt text.

Use Descriptive Links

When embedding a link, use descriptive language. Do not use the full web address as I did for Colour Contrast Analyser unless you are printing the document (which I am). Refrain from using "click here" as your link. Be descriptive like I did in the link before the website (Colour Contrast Analyser).

Avoid SmartArt or Images with Text Inside

Screen readers cannot pick up on SmartArt, and you would have to include alt text if used. Sometimes it creates a block for screen readers, and it will not pick up anything from the document. Images with text inside, such as memes, also need to be used sparingly and with alt text.

Use a Screen Reader

One of the best ways to check your document is to use a screen reader. If it works the way you intended, then it is likely you do not have any digital accessibility errors.