

Creating accessible Excel workbooks

This article offers guidance on ways that Microsoft Excel workbooks can be created in a way to make them more accessible. Because many files are often viewed electronically, governments and industries around the world are implementing policies requiring electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities. For example, the amended Section 508 of the United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires Federal agencies' to make all of their electronic and information technology accessible.

TIP Starting with Microsoft Office 2010 a new tool for Excel, Word, and PowerPoint called the Accessibility Checker is available that you can use to check your Excel worksheets for any issues that might make it challenging for a user with a disability. To learn more, see [Accessibility Checker](#).

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Add alternative text to images and objects

Alternative text, also known as alt text or Alt Text, appears when you move your pointer over a picture or object, and helps people that use screen readers to understand the content of images in your file. For many readers, this is the only information they will have about the images and objects in your file. Alt text should be included for any of the following objects in your workbook:

- Pictures
- Clip art
- Charts
- Tables
- Shapes (that don't contain text and are not in groups)
- SmartArt graphics
- Groups (all objects in this list, with the exception of shapes, should also have alt text when in groups)
- Embedded objects
- Ink
- Video and audio files

NOTE The compatibility checker will display a message when items such as tables or pivot tables have alt text because it isn't supported by some earlier versions of Excel. It does not cause a significant loss, but you may want to remove alt text before you save your workbook as an earlier version.

Add alt text by doing the following:

1. Right click the image or object, and then click Format.

NOTE For tables, click Tables.

2. Click Alt Text.
3. Type a description of the image or object into the Title and Description text boxes.

TIP Use clear, but concise descriptions. For example, "a red Ferrari" tells the reader more about the image than "a car."

4. Click Close.

To learn more, see [Add alternative text to a shape, picture, chart, table, SmartArt graphic, or other object](#).

Specify column header information in Excel tables

In addition to adding alt text that describes the table, having clear column headings can help provide context and assist navigation of the table's contents.

To specify a header row in a block of cells marked as a table, do the following:

1. Click anywhere in the table.
2. On the Table Tools Design tab, in the Table Style Options group, select the Header Row check box.
3. Add your header information.

To specify a header row in a new block of cells you are marking as table, do the following:

1. Highlight the cells you want to include in the table.
2. On the Insert tab, in the Tables group, click Table.
3. Select the My table has headers check box.

4. Click OK.

Use hyperlink text that is meaningful

Hyperlink text should provide a clear description of the link destination, rather than only providing the URL. For example, Mike's Auto Shop is more meaningful than <http://www.mikefixescarsforyou.com>

To add a hyperlink to your workbook, do the following:

1. Place the cursor in the cell where you want to add the hyperlink.
2. On the Insert tab, in the Links group, click Hyperlink to open the Insert hyperlink dialog box.
3. In the Text to display box, type the name or phrase that will briefly describe the link destination.
4. In the Address box, type the link URL.
5. Click OK.

To change the text of a hyperlink, do the following:

1. Select the link, and then, on the Insert tab, in the Links group, click Hyperlink to open the Insert hyperlink dialog box.
2. In the Text to display box, make any necessary changes to the text.
3. Click OK.

Additionally, you can include ScreenTip text that appears when your cursor hovers over a hyperlink, and can be used in a similar way to alt text. To add ScreenTip text, do the following:

1. Place your cursor in the hyperlink you want to add ScreenTip text to.
2. On the Insert tab, in the Links group, click Hyperlink to open the Hyperlink dialog box.
3. Click ScreenTip.
4. Type in your text in the ScreenTip text box.
5. Click OK.

Avoid using blank cells, rows, or columns for formatting

Blank cells, rows, or columns could mislead someone using a screen reader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table. You can fix this by removing unnecessary blank cells, rows, or columns.

Give all sheet tabs unique names

Sheet names should provide information about what is found on the worksheet, making it easier to navigate through a workbook. Any blank sheets in a workbook should be removed.

To rename a sheet, do the following:

1. Right-click the sheet tab, and then click Rename.
2. Type a brief, unique name that is descriptive of the sheet contents.

To delete a sheet, do the following:

- Right click the sheet tab, and then click Delete.

Include closed captions for any audio or video

If you use additional audio or video components in a workbook, ensure that the content is available in alternative formats for users with disabilities, such as closed captions, transcripts or alt text.

Learn More

- [Accessibility Checker](#)
- [Accessibility Checker Rules](#)
- [Accessibility checker Group Policy settings](#)
- [Video: Find and fix accessibility issues in a workbook](#)
- [Add alternative text to a shape, picture, chart, table, SmartArt graphic, or other object](#)