

# Making Your Microsoft Word Documents Accessible

## Welcome & Framing

10min (9:30-9:40)

### Slide 1 – BGSU Intro

BGSU slide, [Chelsea introduces Caitlin and the session](#)

### Slide 2 - Intro

Caitlin continues intro – have been taking several accessibility courses and studying to get an accessibility certification through the International Association of Accessibility Professionals this Spring.

BGSU graduate, Hilliard City Schools w/ Instructional Design & Accessibility Consulting

### Slide 3 – At the end of this workshop you will be able to...

Introduce learning objectives

You have access to video tutorials for everything we will cover in this workshop today, as well as a document that you can access in your “Just In Time” resources.

You can watch and learn today if that’s what you’re comfortable with, but this is a hands on workshop and you will have the opportunity to begin remediating your own documents during this workshop.

### Slide 4 – Ways to Interact During the Workshop

Raise hand icon, questions in chat, unmute and talk. Stay muted when not talking.

Feel safe to ask questions and discuss – zero judgement zone. You’re all here because you want to learn more about making accessible content, and that’s our focus today! There are no bad questions. Please be respectful in discussions.

## Slide 5 – Warm-Up Poll

CHELSEA opens the Zoom Warm-Up poll immediately. Caitlin reads the question while everyone enters their answer. Brief acknowledgement of comfort levels.

“This is just to get a sense of the room. There’s no ‘right’ answer here - accessibility has a learning curve, and we all start in different places. Go ahead and choose what feels closest to your current comfort level.” Can use the poll or enter number in the chat if having difficulty with the poll. AFTER - “Thanks for sharing. Now that we have a sense of the room, let’s briefly discuss WHY accessibility is important”.

## Why WCAG and which is easier to read activity

5min (9:40-9:45)

### Slide 6 – Why WCAG?

Accessibility increases equity, improves student experience, and reduces remediation workload later. Today we’re focusing on high-impact, low-complexity guidelines you have control of every day.

Beginning April 24, 2026, US Higher Education institutions must make all digital content accessible under ADA Title II rules requiring conformance to WCAG 2.1 Level AA – websites, apps, course materials, documents, etc.

Reflect – Why is accessibility important? Think of a time you weren’t able to access a place or information. Could be as simple as a broken link. Not being able to use stairs when recovering from surgery. Etc. Many people deal with invisible disabilities and have trouble accessing digital content every day.

### Slide 7 – Which is easier to read?

Which of these at first glance looks easier and more clear to read? Left or Right? (Discuss) Let’s walk through the five areas that will give you the highest accessibility impact with small changes.

Feel free to open a Word document you would like to try to remediate while we go through each step, or open the practice document provided to you. ← Do they know how to access?

# Color Contrast Intro & Hex Demonstration

15min (9:45-10:00)

## Slide 8 – Color Contrast

You will see WCAG Success Criterion with each new concept we cover today – you do not need to memorize these, but we are dropping a link in the chat to the “plain English” version of the WCAG 2.1 Guidelines and Criteria, which is not all encompassing but a great place to start when you’re digging deeper into making accessible digital content.

CHELSEA ADD LINK TO CHAT - <https://aaardvarkaccessibility.com/wcag-plain-english/>

Introduce ratio (don’t have to memorize, we have a great tool to use)

On the right are examples using BGSU branded colors in smaller and larger font sizes, and you can see some are definitely easier to read than others. (Compare to success criterion).

## Slide 9 – BGSU Brand Colors

Here are some examples of using BGSU branded colors with acceptable color contrast. These can go either way – foreground & background. Some are better than others – if it looks difficult to read to you, don’t use it.

## Slide 10 -Color Contrast Key Points

Color alone cannot convey meaning – can’t just use red for no and green for yes, but could use a red X for no and a green check for yes. Show graph examples.

CHELSEA ADD TO CHAT: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

Bookmark this – you can practice in real time with me while I demonstrate.

Image 1 source: <https://help.venngage.com/hc/en-us/articles/11013077501709-Convey-Meaning-Without-Relying-on-Color>

Image 2 source: <https://webaim.org/techniques/images/>

**Pause here to demonstrate the color contrast checker – how to find HEX in word, and check it with WebAim.**

## **\*WORD – Demonstrate Color Contrast Checking\***

Accessibility Checker

Review – Check Accessibility

Great to check old documents to remediate

Creating new content, how to find Hex:

Green “Available” text – highlight, get hex, plug into WebAIM, adjust WebAIM to meet requirements, copy hex, paste in Word.

How to use dropper.

## Heading Hierarchy

15min (10:00-10:15)

### **Slide 11 - Heading Hierarchy**

Headings need to be structured correctly within Word, not just by use of visual elements like bold, font size, underline, etc.

Headings need to follow a consistent hierarchy, always beginning with Heading 1 and working numerically from there.

Screen readers do not always pick up “Titles” so only use “Title” if you have a cover page where the title is also listed.

### **Slide 12 – Heading Hierarchy Key Points**

Benefits of using proper heading structure.

**Brief demonstration in Word, then back for Breakout Rooms.**

## **\*WORD – Demonstrate Heading Hierarchy\***

Demonstrate opening Navigation Window

Demonstrate how to open Style Pane

Highlight text, and either select Heading 1 OR arrow and “Update to match selection”

Try it with a Heading 2

## Slide 13 – BREAKOUT ROOMS (10min)

At this point we will split into two different rooms.

Breakout Room 1 – you have your own Word Document you’d like to work on in real time with assistance from Caitlin

Breakout Room 2 – you can open a provided demo document and work on heading hierarchy with Chelsea

If you don’t see the breakout room invitation pop up in just a moment, you can select the breakout room icon in the bottom menu.

*CHELSEA OPENS BREAKOUT ROOMS and helps people in. Lead Breakout Room 2.*

We have 10 minutes - so enough time to really dig in and ask questions as you go! Choose your room now.

*Spend 10 minutes in breakout room. CHELSEA will give 2 minute warning.*

## Alternative Text & Padlet Activity

15min (10:15-10:30)

### Slide 14 – Alternative Text

Or Alt text, should be kept under 150 characters, which is usually less than 30 words. You may use more for graphs or charts depending on the situation.

All images including photos, icons, graphs, and charts would need alternative text. Images that do not convey added meaning need to be marked as “decorative” – but also consider, if the image doesn’t add meaning, does it need to be there?

### Slide 15 – Alternative Text Key Points

Read slide

*This activity is a maybe depending on time, might skip to slide 16*

**Show example on WebAIM: <https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/>**

Example 1: “Astronaut Ellen Ochoa”

Example 2: Mark as decorative

Example 3 (not on site): If this was about astronaut fashion, the alt text would include a description of her outfit, for example.

## **Slide 16 – Alternative Text – Graphs & Charts**

Alt Text – brief description.

Image Description (Or Figure 1 depending on context) – information user needs to know from the chart. The purpose of displaying the chart. Do not need to describe colors.

Best Practice (depending on context): Create accessible table or list as an alternative. Can create longer Alt Text dependent on situation.

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/complex/> (does not need to go in chat)

## **Slide 17 – Alternative Text – More Graphs & Charts**

Alt Text – brief description

Image Description (Or Figure 2 depending on context) – information user needs to know from the chart. Again, do not need to describe colors of the chart, just the important information. This can also be displayed alternatively as a list or table, but in this case it's reasonable to remain as a longer description.

<http://diagramcenter.org/specific-guidelines-e.html#53> (does not need to go in chat)

## **Slide 18 – Padlet Practice**

We're going to move over to Padlet – you can use the link in the chat or scan the QR code with a mobile device.

CHELSEA - Put link in chat: <https://padlet.com/caitlinbartholic/adding-alternative-text-28hmg38uqlr0vlnh>

You will see THREE images. One will need to be labeled as “Decorative” so it is ignored by screen readers. One is a photo that needs appropriate alt text considering the given context, and one is a chart that needs alt text, and you can decide if you would give it a longer image description, or create a table or list as an alternative to the image.

**Go to Padlet.**

## **\*PADLET\***

Slideshow – I will pull up the images larger here so you can see them clearly with the descriptions. Remember to use under 30 words for photo alt text and consider the context.

(Open Padlet and show plus sign to comment) It's anonymous!

Slideshow (Read and describe each – “let me know if you need to see any again” - then go back to Padlet)

Discuss answers (add some of the good ones on Padlet)

IMAGE 1: Bar chart of event sales for Monday through Friday. Amounts for ticket, food, and merchandise sales show a slight decline from Monday to Wednesday, with a dramatic increase to a peak on Friday. Table 1 further details the event sales by category.

<https://www.section508.gov/create/alternative-text/>

IMAGE 2: Decorative (let the screen reader skip as it provides no additional information or context). <https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/>

IMAGE 3: A stack of three pancakes drizzled with maple syrup, topped with a whole strawberry, two blueberries and a dollop of whipped cream on a round blue plate.

If this were an ad for a diner, it might include the name of the company and dish. If this were an ad for artisanal flour, it would mention the pancakes are made with that flour.

<https://venngage.com/blog/image-alt-text/>

### **Demonstration in Word**

## **\*WORD\***

Quick demonstration on adding alt text. Right click, view alt text. DO NOT use the AI generated.

## **Descriptive Hyperlinks**

5min (10:30-10:35)

### **Slide 19 – Descriptive Hyperlinks**

Links must be clear both in and out of context.

## **Slide 20 – Descriptive Hyperlinks Key Points**

Avoid non informative text – screen readers will read these as they appear.

### **Demonstrate how in Word**

#### **\*WORD\***

Show one e-mail example

Show one link example copying the link and changing text into a link.

Show one link example copying text and changing the link text.

Show one example of linking to a document (add document type and size DOCX, 5MB)

## **Fonts & Readability**

5min (10:35-10:40)

### **Slide 21 – Fonts & Readability – Institutional Best Practices**

Read guidelines – tight spacing can be judged visually, Justified text is when text aligns to left and right – NOT ACCESSIBLE!

FONTS – stress importance. Italic, especially in some fonts, can be very difficult to read. (For reference, the paragraph bullet text on this slide is Calibri 26)

## **Putting it All Together & Reflection**

10min (10:40-10:50)

### **Slide 22 – Putting it All Together**

Start with heading structure – this will also update your Navigation Pane and help you navigate your document

Check hyperlinks for descriptive text, and check for errors like leaving in a parenthesis or period.

Evaluate images and add alt text, and only use images with good color contrast

Review contrast using the WebAIM checker (bookmark it!)

Final pass – check for readability. Font, spacing, cognitive load, etc.

## **Slide 23 – Padlet Reflection and Q & A**

CHELSEA ENTERS LINK IN CHAT: <https://padlet.com/caitlinbartholic/accessibility-wrap-up-ayensn8ezjmi6den>

I have just two reflection questions for you if you want to use the QR code on a mobile device, or the link in the chat to hop on over to Padlet one more time. This is anonymous!

What is one accessibility practice you feel comfortable beginning to implement after today's session?

What is one question you still have about implementing accessibility into your digital content?

**Go to Padlet**

### **\*PADLET\***

Give everyone a few minutes to answer questions, and discuss as they come in. Look for any common questions to answer before closing and opening up Q & A.

## **Closing & Q&A**

**10mins (10:50-11:00)**

## **Slide 24 – Thank you!**

CHELSEA add reflection form to chat: <https://forms.office.com/r/GFEth438Sg>

Wrap-up – thank you for having me! It's a passion of mine to help create more accessible content for all learners and I'm happy to answer any follow up questions you may have. We have (insert time here) remaining still. If you have specific questions for me after today my e-mail is on the slide, and I'll let Chelsea jump in with some more information before opening this up to any questions you may have.