# **Trent University Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Accessibility Logo.**

# **Accessible Microsoft Word Documents: Part 1**

## Font Type

A sans-serif font is easier to read than a serif font. Upper case, lower case and numerical characters of a sans-serif font are easy to recognize. Popular sans serif fonts include Arial, Calibri, Futura, Helvetica, and Verdana.

## Font Size

The [CNIB Clear Print Guidelines](https://cnib.ca/sites/default/files/2018-07/CNIB%20Clear%20Print%20Guide.pdf) state that font should be between 12 and 18 pts depending on font type and considerations for specific audiences. Font size varies between font families. When selecting a font size, use Arial 12pt as the base for determining appropriate font size.

## Typographical Emphasis

Use **bold fonts** for emphasis to make certain words and phrases stand out from surrounding text. Use restraint!

**Underlining** interferes with lower case letters. Do not use underlining to emphasize words and phrases, except in the case of hyperlinks and email addresses.

***Italic fonts*** are more difficult to read than regular fonts. There may be exceptions to using italics, such as when required to meet standard formatting (for example, citation in legal documents or Latin versions of tree species). Avoid italics where possible.

## Descriptive Hyperlinks

Links are more accessible when the link text briefly describes the destination. Avoid non-descriptive link phrases such as “here”, “click here”, “read more” or “learn more.”

## Upper and Lower Case Lettering

Use upper and lower case letters. Lower case letters provide word shape, which gives mental reading clues and speeds up reading processes.

## Styles Tool

**Headings**: Use the Styles tool to access built-in heading features. Consistent use of headings will create structure for the document and make navigation easier. Headings formatted with the Styles tool will also benefit from consistent formatting throughout the document. Start with “Heading 1”. Do not use more than six heading levels in a document.

**Lists**: Use auto generated bullets or numbering systems. Screen readers will not understand how the items in a manually created list are related, and so will interpret these as a series of short separate paragraphs.

CHREA would like to thank the City of Peterborough for allowing us to reproduce content from their publication entitled [City of Peterborough Guide to Accessible Documents (2018).](http://www.peterborough.ca/Assets/City+Assets/Accessibility+Legislation/Documents/Guide+to+Accessible+Documents.pdf)

## **Accessible Microsoft Word Documents: Part 1 (continued)**

## Colour and Colour Contrast

**Colour:** **Do not** use colour alone to make a comparison of information, especially in charts and graphs. **Do** add shapes or symbols when colour is used to compare information.

**Contrast**: Use minimum 4.5:1 contrast ratio for text smaller than 18pt. Use minimum 3:1 contrast ratio for text 18pt or larger, bold text 14pt or larger, and non-text information that has meaning. Use a tool such as the [Colour Contrast Analyser](https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/) to test colour combinations and determine the exact contrast ratio.

## Spacing

**Do not** use enter, space or tab keys to add white space. Properly add space before or after content. Customize the amount of space before or after content with the Paragraph Spacing tool or set default spacing with the Styles tool.

**Tips for spacing**:

* Use a single space between punctuations.
* Page Break tool: **Do not** press enter repeatedly to start a new page. Insert a page break to start a new page.
* Columns tool: **Do not** use blank spaces and tabs to create a column effect. Use the Columns tool in the Layout tab.
* Marker Tool: Use the paragraph marks tool in the Home tab to find any blank spaces in a document.

## Alternative Text

“Alt text”, or alternative text, is a brief description of any object inserted into a document. A person who uses a screen reader will read alt text to understand non-text information.

**Tips for writing alt text:**

* Be brief. Use maximum 125 characters.
* Describe the important content or purpose of the object.
* **Do not** start with “image of”, “table of”, or “link to”. A screen reader will read out what type of content the object is.
* Tell the screen reader to skip the object if it has no meaning. To do this use alt text of two double quotes with no spaces between, for example: “”.

## Tables and Charts

* Avoid tables as a method to layout content in a document.
* Avoid merged cells, empty cells and nested tables.
* Add a header row at the top of the table to describe columns.
* Set the header row to repeat at the top of each page.
* Add alt text.

## Document Properties

In the File > Info tab add document properties, especially document language and title. Subject, author and keywords are also helpful.

## Accessibility Checker

Use the Accessibility Checker in the File > Info tab under Check for Issues. This will help identify accessibility errors, but a human evaluation is still needed to check for aspects like meaningful alt text.

For accessible versions of this document contact [access@trentu.ca](mailto:access@trentu.ca) or 705-748-1011 ext. 6602.