INTRODUCTION

Accessibility is the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Documentation is accessible if it can be used as effectively by people with disabilities as by those without disabilities.

Microsoft Office 2010 includes a number of features that facilitate the creation of accessible documents. This session is designed to provide an overview of the common design elements used to create Office 2010 documents that are electronically accessible to everyone.

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of creating accessible documents
- Understand the basic components of accessible documents
- Identify best practices for handling
  - Alternative text
  - Images and graphics
  -Whitespace
  - Hyperlinks
  - Styles
  - Tables Charts
- Utilize the Microsoft Word 2010 Accessibility Checker

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACCESSIBILITY

The Need for Accessible Content

The Rehabilition Act of 1973 prohibited discrimination in any program or activity receiving more than $2,500 in federal funds. Section 508 amended the act mandating that all electronic information technology used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities.

Under Section 504, postsecondary institutions must provide “appropriate adjustments and provide reasonable accommodations that allow students with disabilities full participation in activities and programs available to students without disabilities.”

Syracuse University is committed to compliance with Section 504 and all other applicable laws prohibiting disability discrimination. Specifically, the Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy Statement states:

The University prohibits discrimination and harassment based on…disability…This nondiscrimination policy covers admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs, services, and activities.
LESSON 2: CREATING ACCESSIBLE WORD DOCUMENTS

Images: Alignment
When graphics are inserted into a Word document, the author has the option of specifying the position as in line with text or with text wrapping. In order for a screen reader to correctly interpret graphics, the position should be specified as in line with text.

To position a graphic in line with text
1. Click Layout Options
2. Choose In Line With Text

Images: Alternative Text
Any graphic that has meaningful content should include alt text. Graphics include shapes, pictures, SmartArt, text boxes, charts, tables, and other objects.

In Microsoft Word, document authors can supply both the title and description when creating alternative text. The title is optional and provides a brief explanation of the graphic. The description provides additional detail and should always be used for graphics with meaningful content. When interpreting MS Word documents, some screen readers allow users to listen to the title and skip the description if they don’t need additional information.

Adding Alt Text
1. Right click your image or object.
2. Click Format Picture, and then click Layout & Properties
3. Click Alt Text
4. In the Title box, give the image or object a meaningful name.
5. In the Description box, type an explanation of the non-text item, and then click Close.

Guidelines for creating good alt text
- Alt text should be succinct.
- When creating alt text, focus on the reason that the graphic is included in the document.
- Describe information that can only be derived by looking at the graphic.
- Do not repeat information that is already provided in the surrounding text.
- Do not include phrases such as “This is a picture of” or “This is a graphic of” in the alt text

Fonts
Although Microsoft Office applications provide a mechanism for magnifying text on the screen, it is still important to choose a font size that is reasonable accessible. Documents are frequently printed as part of a workflow. The best practice is to create the document using a body font size of at least 12 points. This ensures that the document properties such as pagination and table layout will be consistent when the document is printed. Choose a sans serif font with clear character spacing such as Calibri, Arial, or Verdana.

To set the default font and font size in Word 2010
1. On the Home tab, click the Font dialog box launcher.
2. From the Font tab, select the desired font options.
3. Click Set As Default and click OK.
**Styles**

Word styles provide a simple mechanism for structuring, formatting and maintaining documents. When used in conjunction with assistive technologies, styles make it easier to understand and navigate through the content. Word includes a default title and subtitle style and 9 default heading styles.

**To apply a style in Word 2010**

1. Click the **Home** tab
2. Type the text to which you would like to add the style, or highlight existing text
3. Click the desired style from the Styles gallery

**Note:** The heading styles should be used in numerical order. Do not skip heading levels.

**Blank Space**

Sometimes authors create white space in documents by adding blank paragraphs or hitting the space bar multiple times. These invisible characters can be viewed by toggling Show/Hide to show hidden characters. The extra characters may cause confusion for individuals using screen readers. To create visual appeal without compromising accessibility, use the built-in line spacing, paragraph spacing, indent, tab and page break features to add white space to documents. By default, paragraphs are followed by a blank line, and headings have extra space above them.

**To show or hide formatting symbols**

1. Select the **Home** tab
2. Click the **Show/Hide** toggle icon in the **Paragraph** group

**To change paragraph spacing**

1. Select the paragraph
2. Click the **Page Layout** tab.
3. In the **Paragraph** group, click the arrow next to **Spacing Before** or **Spacing After** to choose the amount to space that you want.

**Tables**

Tables provide an effective means of presenting related information. Wherever possible, use a simple table structure with a uniform number of rows and columns. Include column and/or row headings to make the content of the table clear. Use short, descriptive names for the column and row headings.

**Guidelines for creating accessible tables**

- Do not use tables strictly for formatting purposes.
- When tables are appropriate, use true tables. Do not create a tabular structure using tabs or columns.
- Set the option to repeat the header row on each page.
- Do not allow rows to break across pages.
- Include alt text to describe the table contents.

**To repeat the header row at the top of each page**

1. Right-click the first cell of the table and select **Table Properties**.
2. Click the **Row** tab.
3. Check the box labeled **Repeat as header row at the top of each page**.
4. Click OK.

**To add Alt text to a table**
1. Right-click the table and select Table Properties
2. Click the Alt Text tab
3. In the Description box type a meaningful summary of the table content

**Hyperlinks**
Whenever a hyperlink is included in a document, verify that the displayed text provides a short, meaningful description of the hyperlink destination. This will help readers determine whether or not to follow the hyperlink. It is also important to confirm that the hyperlink address contains a complete URL.

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

**Title**
Accessible documents should have a meaningful title.

**Adding a title to your document properties**
1. Click the **File** tab.
2. Click **Info** to view the document properties on the right.
3. To add or change properties, hover your pointer over the property you want to update and click to enter the information.
4. Click the **File** tab again to return to your document. Any changes you made will be saved automatically.

**LESSON 3: USING THE ACCESSIBILITY CHECKER**

The Accessibility Checker can be used by authors to verify that documents are accessible to as many readers as possible. Documents are compared against a set of guidelines, and users are alerted if the content doesn't meet the criteria.

**Rules used by the Accessibility Checker**
- Long documents use styles to provide structure
- Headings follow logical order
- All objects have alternate text
- Objects have text wrapping set to ’in line with text’
- Avoid use of repeated blank characters for spacing
- Tables specify column header information
- Hyperlink text is meaningful
- Tables have simple structure
- Tables don't use blank cells for formatting
How to run the Accessibility Checker

1. Click the File tab and choose Info
2. Click Check for Issues and select Check Accessibility
3. The Accessibility Checker Task Pane will open on the right
4. Review the Inspection Results.

Note: The accessibility checker only works on documents created using MS 2010 or later. If you are editing a document that was created using MS Word 2003 or 2007 you will need to convert the document first. Use File, Info, Compatibility Mode, and Convert.

Interpreting the Results

Issues are classified in the following three ways:

- **Errors** will make it very difficult or impossible for a person with disabilities to interpret the document.
- **Warnings** indicate that it may be difficult to understand the content.
- **Tips** provide suggestions on how documents can be modified to improve accessibility.
- **Additional Information** section contains an explanation of the issue and tips for how to fix it.