U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Section 508 101 – Five Things Anyone Can Do to Get Started Right

FHWA-HAD-21-010

The checklist below covers five areas to incorporate accessibility into products, which may include a **Word file, email, or GovDelivery Bulletin**. These five things establish the groundwork for accessibility and are the foundation to making a Section 508 conformant version as easy and frustration-free as possible. *This assumes a working knowledge of authoring tools options.* See other documentation for detailed discussion on any area or bullet point*.*

Structure

Use built-in options for structuring the product.

- Title – Use the "Title" style once. This is based on the Normal Paragraph style.
- Headings – Style all visual headings and subheadings. Start with "Heading 1" and work down in hierarchal order.
- Paragraph – Use the "Normal Paragraph."
- Lists – Use the "List" Tool to create lists.
- Tables – Use the "Table" Tool to insert tables.
- Links – Use unique and descriptive terms for linked words. Do not use 'click here,' 'read more,' etc.
- Space between elements – Adjust the space before and after an element by editing the element's style. Do not create a blank paragraph by pressing enter twice.
- Note on Styles – Pick the correct style for the content. Do not select a style for the look.

Graphics

- Add alt text to images. Use as few words as possible to convey the meaning of the image.
- Provide alt text in a separate file for equations and other objects that do not have alt text option. Add the file to the final conformant version.
- Do not repeat the caption as alt text.
- Avoid text as graphics. This applies to content copied from another source. Acceptable uses of text as a graphic include logos, infographics, and flow charts.

Sensory Characteristics

- Avoid references to shape, size sound, color, or location.
- Do not use color alone to convey information.
  - Recommend using underlines only for links.
  - If changing color for a reason, (i.e., green text for updates or highlight for new items) that information also needs to be conveyed in a different way.

- On graphs and charts, provide category/series labels (not the value of the point or segment), unique markers or line styles, or some other non-color visual way to distinguish lines/segments.
- Ensure minimum color contrast between font color and the background. This includes graphics where an image of text is unavoidable.
- Avoid text on a patterned or image background.
- Avoid flashing, blinking, or any other movement.

Tables

- Avoid tables for layout. If unavoidable, tab through content to confirm correct reading order.
- Ensure table is rectangular and that there are no missing cells in any row. Blank data cells are acceptable.
- Ensure each column and row has a header(s).
- Ensure the data in each column or row belongs to that header(s). Avoid visually structuring a table by placing a row header above its associated data.
- Avoid putting two or more tables together either side by side or top to bottom.
- Ensure that only data is in the table. Do not use a table cell to caption the table or add footnotes/endnotes.

Saving

- If the product can be saved, save as an accessible version (e.g., docx for Word and pptx for PowerPoint).