Minnesota Department of
Educati☀n

How to Make Accessible Tables in Word 2010

Introduction

Tables can be great for presenting data, but using tables to format other types of content may cause issues. Using tables for layout—for example, just to line things up neatly—makes difficult for people who use assistive technologies to access our information unless tagging is corrected in the PDF version of your document.

To create accessible tables for the presentation of data, keep them simple and follow a few easy procedures.

Setting the Table

Before you insert your table, it's a good idea to know how many columns and rows you need. Remember to add a row at the top for the column headers.

The width of your columns should also be considered, so that the table does not exceed the width of the page. For some tables, you may need to change the page orientation to Landscape to give yourself more room horizontally. Text should be at least 10pt Arial in tables, but 11pt is preferred.

Things You Should Do (in your Word document):

- Create your table with the Insert Table tool in the Tables section of the Insert ribbon.

- Identify the header row and restrict to not allow rows to break across pages:

- Highlight just the top row of your table, right click, and choose Table Properties.

- o Select the Row tab.

- o Uncheck the box labeled "Allow rows to break across pages."

- o Check the box labeled "Repeat as header row at the top of each page."
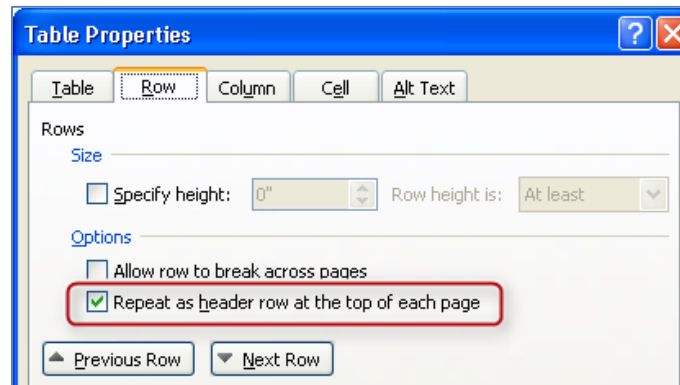
- • Insert a bookmark in the first cell of the table:

  - o Place your cursor inside the first cell.

  - o From the Links section of the Insert ribbon, choose Bookmark.

  - o Enter a bookmark name, beginning with "Title" and then some brief, descriptive text with no spaces. (Example: TitleStudentName)

- • Put the title of the table outside and above your table. Any description should also go outside of the table.

Things You Should Not Do

- • **Do not** create your table using the Draw > Table tool, which is available in the Table tools on the Insert ribbon.

- • **Do not** add a merged cell at the top of your table for the title.

- • **Do not** control spacing in your table with blank rows or columns. Adjust line spacing instead using the choices in the Paragraph section of the ribbon.

Most Common Errors in Tables

- • Do not merge cells!

- • Do not split cells!

- • No empty cells! – Put text into each cell, even if it's "0", "null", "n/a", or "none."

  This text can be made white in color if you do not want your sighted users to be distracted by it.

Things You Should Do (in your PDF document):

Tables used to format text without really containing data elements have a unique structure that doesn't convert well into PDF. Follow these steps to make a non-data table clear:

- Open the Touch Up Reading Order (TURO) tool.

  o Select the Table.

  o Right-click and choose "Delete Selected Item Structure."

  o Use the selection tool to draw a box around each text element individually, starting in the top left and moving in the order in which you want your text read. Tag each selection as "text." This step effectively removes the table tag and replaces it with plain text.

- Set header rows

  o If the "header row is not set" error comes up during the Adobe check, you can easily set this without going back to the Word version.

  o Open the Touch Up Reading Order (TURO) tool.

  o Right-click on the table that is causing the error, then select "Table Editor." This will highlight your table in red.

  o Hold down the Shift key while clicking across the entire header row to select every cell across the top. Once done, right-click and select Table Cell Properties and then Header Row from the menu.