



Digital Accessibility

JHU Quick Check for Digital Accessibility

Adapted with thanks from the Bloomberg School of Public Health's [Center for Learning and Teaching document](#). Last updated September 2025.

When evaluating a document or website for accessibility, the process is similar, as the success criteria for accessibility are the same no matter the format of your digital materials. This quick check document guides non-programmers in conducting automated checking and manual testing (steps 1 and 2 below).

Stages of testing for accessibility

1. **Automated checking** –
 - a. Use an accessibility checker within a program (such as [Microsoft Word and Powerpoint](#) or [Adobe Acrobat Pro](#)) to test a document or
 - b. Use an external tool (such as [Siteimprove](#) or the [WAVE tool](#)) to test a website.
2. **Manual testing** – Perform non-automated checks such as keyboard navigation, [testing color contrast ratios](#) and validating appropriate ALT text within a document or website
3. **Test with assistive technologies (AT)** – This final stage of testing should be completed by an experienced user who understands the AT.

Review each item in the table below. Mark it as pass (true) or fail (false). If an item doesn't pertain to your material, then mark it as passing. A document or web page with a single failure is still not accessible. Detailed explanations appear below this list.

Checklist Item	Accessibility Criteria
1. Pass / Fail	The automated accessibility checking tool returns no errors.
2. Pass / Fail	Appearance and reading order have section headings, columns, paragraphs, bulleted and numbered lists. Objects such as images are placed in-line with the text.
3. Pass / Fail	All text is legible – font sizes are at least 11 points and decorative fonts are avoided.
4. Pass / Fail	Acronyms and abbreviations are spelled out the first time they are used.
5. Pass / Fail	Tables are only used to display data and not for layout. Each cell has information and there are visible borders between rows and column. Row and column headings are used.
6. Pass / Fail	Color is not the only method used for emphasis



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7. Pass / Fail	There is sufficient color contrast between foreground text or icons and background.
8. Pass / Fail	Links have meaningful names with context. Full URLs are avoided unless necessary.
9. Pass / Fail	Equations are presented in accessible formats. If the equation is an image, it should have an accurate ALT (alternative) text description
10. Pass / Fail	Non-decorative images have ALT (alternative) text descriptions or captions. Decorative images can be marked as such or given a null ALT tag.
11. Pass / Fail	Videos have closed captioning and audio files have a transcript. Live streamed video events have live captioning.
12. Pass / Fail	Anything that is time-based can be controlled by the user.
13. Pass / Fail	The document or web page has a title in its properties or browser tab.
14. Pass / Fail	Users can determine where they are in a document or web page with page numbers, anchors, or navigation points.
15. Pass / Fail	Web pages and forms can be navigated with keyboard only, as well as with a mouse.

Automated Accessibility Checking Tools

Documents

- [Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker](#) (Word, Excel, Outlook, Powerpoint)
- [Adobe Acrobat Pro Accessibility Full Check](#) (PDF)
- [PAC PDF Accessibility Checking tool](#) (free to use, Windows only)
- [Ally for Canvas](#) (Automated checker for course documents in Canvas)

Websites

- [WAVE browser extension tool](#) for Chrome or Firefox
- [AI Inspector](#) for Firefox
- [Siteimprove](#) (for JHU websites)

Manual Accessibility Checking

Automated checkers are a great start but only [catch about 30 - 40% of accessibility problems](#). So it's important to also do manual checking of your document or website. Here's a summary of what to look for in your manual testing:

Headings – Just [one H1 \(Heading Level 1\) heading is used per document or web page. Subsequent heading levels are in order \(H2, H3, H4, etc...\)](#)



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Text formatting: Document or web page [avoids small fonts \(less than 11 points\) and decorative fonts](#), which are less readable.

Acronyms: [Acronyms and abbreviations are spelled out](#) the first time they appear

Tables: [Tables are used for data only, not for layout](#), and have row and column headers.

Color as only form of emphasis: [Color alone is not the only way to emphasize an item](#).

Color contrast: Use a [color contrast analyzer tool](#) to ensure that foreground and background colors have enough contrast (4.5:1 ratio)

Hyperlinks: [Links have meaningful names](#) (example: “Summary of Available Health Plans” instead of “Learn More”)

Equations: [Documents and websites should contain math notation that is readable with assistive technologies](#) (**Note:** PDFs cannot display math notation correctly. If you must use a PDF, make sure math notation has appropriate ALT text)

Image descriptions: Non-decorative images, charts and tables have meaningful [ALT text descriptions](#)

Multimedia (audio and video): [Videos have closed captions and audio files have transcripts](#).

Media players: [Media players have user controls](#).

Document properties: [Document has a title](#) in the document properties section or a web page has a title in the browser tab.

Page and slide numbers: There is [consistent page and slide numbering](#) for documents. Web pages have consistent navigation.

Keyboard only navigation: Web pages and forms are navigable with [keyboard only commands](#)

Resources and Considerations

This guide is a quick check and does not guarantee accessibility conformance. The next step would be to test the websites or documents with assistive technologies, or have users with disabilities test them.



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Beyond the quick check inspection, are you prepared with tech support, accessibility resources or roadmap for the tool?

For more information, please see these online resources:

- [JHU Digital Accessibility website](#)
- [Easy Checks for Web Accessibility](#) by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)
- [Word and Powerpoint Accessibility Guide](#) by WebAIM (Web Accessibility in Mind)
- [Testing Web Content for Accessibility](#) by WebAIM