

# DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

## *Submitting your thesis or dissertation to OhioLink*

*As a graduate student preparing for degree completion, digital accessibility of your thesis or dissertation helps ensure equal access to all readers. To aid your compliance with this standard, established by the state of Ohio, the Graduate School's aim is to assist you by providing the following information and resources.*

### Adobe Acrobat Pro Software

The following is a list of options for obtaining the needed software. Please note that Acrobat Reader does not have the tools required to successfully perform an accessibility check.

-Access Adobe Acrobat Pro software by using [Virtual Labs](#) on The University of Akron website.

-Sign up for a free, seven-day trial of [Adobe Acrobat Pro](#). Note that the timing of this free-trial period must coincide with making final corrections and uploading your manuscript for review. Also take into account that time needed for the Graduate School to review your submission may exceed your free-trial window.

-Explore plans and pricing of other [Adobe Acrobat Pro](#) options for best value.

-Check your local library or place of employment for software access

### Minimum Digital Accessibility Standards (MDAS)

In addition to making committee revisions and passing Graduate School format checks, authors must review the manuscript for accessibility. The best approach is to begin within your source document (typically Word), *prior* to saving it as a PDF. [Microsoft Support](#) provides instructions for this process.

- **PDF file includes full text** – Virtually all modern word processing software generates full text when a PDF is created (if unable to highlight and select text in the document, then the PDF is an *image* of the text).
- **PDF accessibility flag is checked** – This permission allows the reader to access the document, even if you have security measures in place.
- **Text language of the PDF is specified** – Setting your text language enables a screen reader to know the appropriate language of the document.
- **Figures require alternative text** – Alt-text is a written description of an image, table, or figure that helps to relay the entirety of the photo. Again, [Microsoft Support](#) offers instructions for this step.
- **PDF includes a title and use of at least one heading level in the text of the document** – A descriptive title to your PDF helps aid screen readers and your audience. This can be the title of your thesis or dissertation and won't necessarily match the file name.

The most comprehensive resource available to you is the Adobe website itself. With detailed bullet points and screenshots, the [Create and verify PDF accessibility \(Acrobat Pro\)](#) section provides you with helpful instructions to ensure you are meeting the above mentioned standards. You may also find the outline on the next page of this tip sheet helpful as well.

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## *Steps to complete prior to OhioLink upload*

### A. PREPARE YOUR SOURCE DOCUMENT IN WORD

#### 1. FULLY DESCRIBE ALL IMAGES

EVERY visual element in your manuscript requires **detailed descriptions**. This is inclusive of ANY NON-TEXT content, such as images, tables, graphs, formulas, or charts. For these elements, the text surrounding the image (whether in the text body, or within captions or legends) must fully describe what is happening in the image. If the image is not informative (a page border, for example), check “Mark as decorative.” See [Microsoft Support](#) for more guidance on writing effective alternative text.

#### 2. CONVERTING TO PDF

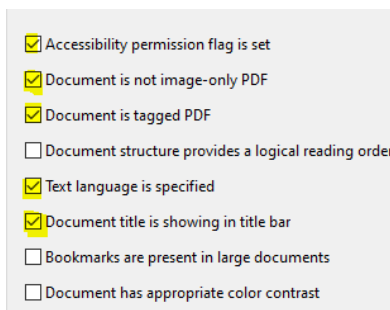
After committee revisions are made, and you’ve reviewed Word’s version of accessibility checker, you are ready for the FINAL STEP of converting your source document to a PDF, the format required for uploading to OhioLink.

### B. EXPORT FROM WORD AS A PDF

1. Select **File > Save As** or **File > Save a Copy**
2. In the **Save As** dialog box, choose the **File Format > PDF**, then select **Options\***
3. **SELECT THE “DOCUMENT STRUCTURE TAGS FOR ACCESSIBILITY”** checkbox, and then select “OK” or “EXPORT” or “SAVE” (\**Mac Users*: check the option “BEST FOR ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESSIBILITY” under the file format box).

### C. REVIEW THE ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR PDF

1. Open your exported PDF in Adobe Acrobat **PRO**. Click the **Tools** tab in the upper left of the document. Scroll down to the section **Protect & Standardize** and open **Accessibility**.
2. Choose **Set Alternate Text** on the **Accessibility** toolbar (if you followed the suggestion in Step A1, you shouldn’t have much work to do here). If no alt-text is required, check the **Mark as Decorative** box. **Save and Close** when complete.
3. On the right-hand **Accessibility** toolbar, click **Accessibility Check**. Click the **Choose** button to select the folder where your accessibility report will save.
4. Choose the options on the dialog box related to the MDAS requirement **BEFORE** you click the **Start Checking** button. After making your selections, click **Start Checking**.



5. Review your results on the left sidebar. Expand the **Document** section.
  - a. If you see “**Title – Failed**,” right click that line and choose “**Fix**.” **UNCHECK** the “**Leave As Is**” box immediately below the “**Title**” field. Name the document in the dialog box and close (you may skip the other three options in the box).
  - b. Looking again at the left sidebar containing the results of your Accessibility Checker, confirm that “**Accessibility permission flag**,” “**Image-only PDF**,” “**Primary language**,” and “**Title**” all read as “**Passed**”.  
**NOTE:** You may see errors in the above areas if not saved following the steps in the Word section above (item B).
6. **FINAL STEPS:** Save and close the file. Confirm that the accessibility report saved in your chosen folder and [follow directions for uploading to OhioLink](#).