Accessibility checklist for Outlook Emails

The following list includes best practices for creating an email in Outlook that is accessible to people with disabilities:

While there is no definitive correct font choice for accessibility, it is generally recommended that a sans serif font, such as the default Calibri, is used for document text.

Use a font size of 18 point or larger with white space between points.

Avoid using all capital letters and excessive italics or underlines, as these can make information more difficult to read for some people.

If your email has a high level of contrast between text and background, people with visual impairments will find it easier to read.

To change the page colour of an email:

1. Click New Email.
2. Click in the main body of the email
3. Go to Options.
4. Click Page Color.
5. Select a colour from the drop down.

People who have visual impairments might miss out on the meaning of text if different colours are used to organise the text.

For example, using an underline in your text so that people who are colour-blind know that the text is important as they will see that it is underlined even if they can’t see the colour.

Using heading styles will provide structure to your document that can improve accessibility. As well as providing consistent formatting throughout your document, screen reading software will announce the heading level information to the reader, enabling them to understand the format of the document better. Screen reading software can also use heading styles for navigation by presenting the reader with a list of headings and enabling them to skip directly to a specific section in the document.

You can modify the heading styles (as well as any other styles you use) to suit your preferred fonts, sizes, spacing, etc.

To add headings to an email:

1. Click New Email.
2. Compose your email as normal.
3. Select the heading text.
4. On the **Format Text** tab, in the **Styles** group, select a heading style.

Alt text provides a description that will be read out by assistive technology to help people with visual impairments understand what’s important in images and other visuals.

If your image is purely decorative, you can mark it as such by typing two quotation marks “” as the alt text. Examples of objects that should be marked as decorative are stylistic borders.

**To add alt text to an image in an email:**

1. Right-click an image and select **Format Picture**.
2. In the **Format Picture** pane, select **Size and Properties**.
3. Type a description and a title.

![Info: You must insert a picture into the main body of your email rather than as an attachment to add alt text.]

Longer hyperlinks are difficult to understand and remember, especially when using assistive technology such as a screen reader. Screen reading software can extract a list of links from a spreadsheet. Links such as "click here" do not provide any information about their destination when taken out of the sheet content. Use descriptive hyperlink text, such as "More information can be found on the Information Systems Services website" to convey clear and accurate information about the destination.

**To embed a hyperlink into your email:**

1. Add hyperlink text
2. Select the text to which you want to add the hyperlink, and then right-click.
3. Select **Hyperlink** from the menu.
4. The Insert Hyperlink dialogue box will appear.
5. The text you selected displays in the **Text to display** field.
6. In the **Address field**, enter the destination address for the hyperlink.

![Info: You must insert a picture into the main body of your email rather than as an attachment to add alt text.]

Screen reader applications keep track of their location in a table by counting table cells. If a table is nested within another table or if a cell is merged or split, the screen reader becomes confused and can’t provide useful information about the table. Blank cells should be avoided as they can confuse screen readers.

Tables should only be used for data and tabular information; not for page formatting.

**To insert a table into your email:**

1. Click **New Email**.
2. Click where you want your table to go.
3. Go to the **Insert** tab.
4. Select **Table** and use the built-in tool to draw the desired table.
5. In the **Design** tab, in the **Table Styles** group, select a style.
6. Compose your email as normal.