



Facilitator Script: Making the Assignment Document Accessible

Welcome to this tutorial on making Word documents accessible. We'll start with a sample assignment document that has several common accessibility issues. Together, we'll fix each one step-by-step so the final version meets accessibility best practices.

Section 1: Review the Inaccessible Document (1–2 minutes)

The assignment document below has a few main sections: Title, Purpose, Steps to Complete, Submission and Rubric. But notice—they're just bold text, not real headings. There are also a few formatting and accessibility problems:

- Words have been underlined for emphasis
- There's a non-descriptive link in the Purpose section
- An image has no alt text
- The rubric table has no header row or description

These are the issues we'll fix today.

Sample Assignment:

Analysis Paper



Purpose

This assignment is designed to help students develop critical thinking skills by analyzing a current event and connecting it to course concepts. You are required to utilize APA 7th edition format for your paper. Visit the <https://literatureandwriting.howard.edu/writingcenter> for assistance with writing in APA format.

Steps to Complete

1. Select a current event related to the course topic.
2. Write a 3–4 page analysis paper explaining the event’s significance and how it aligns with theories discussed in class.
3. Include at least three academic sources in APA format.

Submission

Select the “Start Assignment” button to upload your completed paper to the Canvas by the due date.

Rubric Table

Criteria	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Thesis & Concepts	Clear thesis statement with strong connection to course concepts	Adequate thesis statement with some connection to course concepts	Weak or missing thesis statement with little to no connection
Research & Sources	Uses at least three scholarly sources in correct APA format	Uses two scholarly sources, some APA formatting errors	Fewer than two sources or significant APA formatting errors
Organization	Well-organized structure with clear introduction, body, and conclusion	Organization is adequate but lacks flow in some sections	Organization is unclear or missing key sections

Section 2: Fix Heading Structure (2–3 minutes)

Headings provide structure and help screen readers navigate a document quickly. Right now, these are just bolded text.

To fix this:

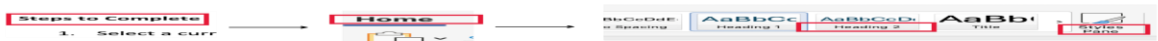
- Highlight **'Analysis Paper'** → go to **Home** → **Styles** → **Heading 1**.



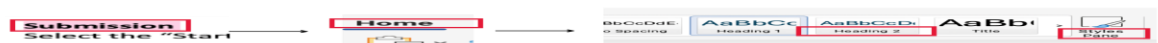
- Highlight **'Purpose'** → go to **Home** → **Styles** → **Heading 2**.



- Highlight **'Steps to Complete'** → set as **Heading 2**.



- Highlight **'Submission'** → set as **Heading 2**.



- Highlight **'Rubric'** → set as **Heading 3**.



This creates a logical reading order for everyone.

Section 3: Avoid Underlines for Emphasis (1–2 minutes)

Another important formatting practice is avoiding underlines for emphasis. Underlined text should be reserved for hyperlinks.

Instead, when you need to emphasize words or phrases, use **bold text with an asterisk (*)**. This ensures the meaning is clear and consistent for all users.

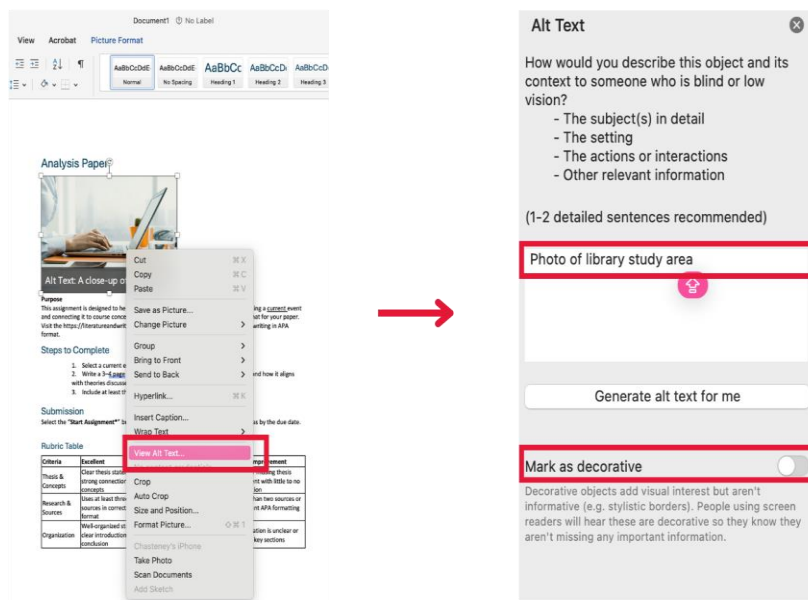
→ SUCCESSFUL EVENT → **SUCCESSFUL EVENT**

Section 4: Add Alt Text to Images (2–3 minutes)

Images in Word also need alt text so users with screen readers know what the image shows.

To add alt text:

- **Right-click the image → View Alt Text.**



- In the description box, type a brief explanation if the image adds meaning, such as ‘Photo of library study area’.
- If the image is purely decorative—meaning it adds no instructional or informational value—select *Mark as decorative*.

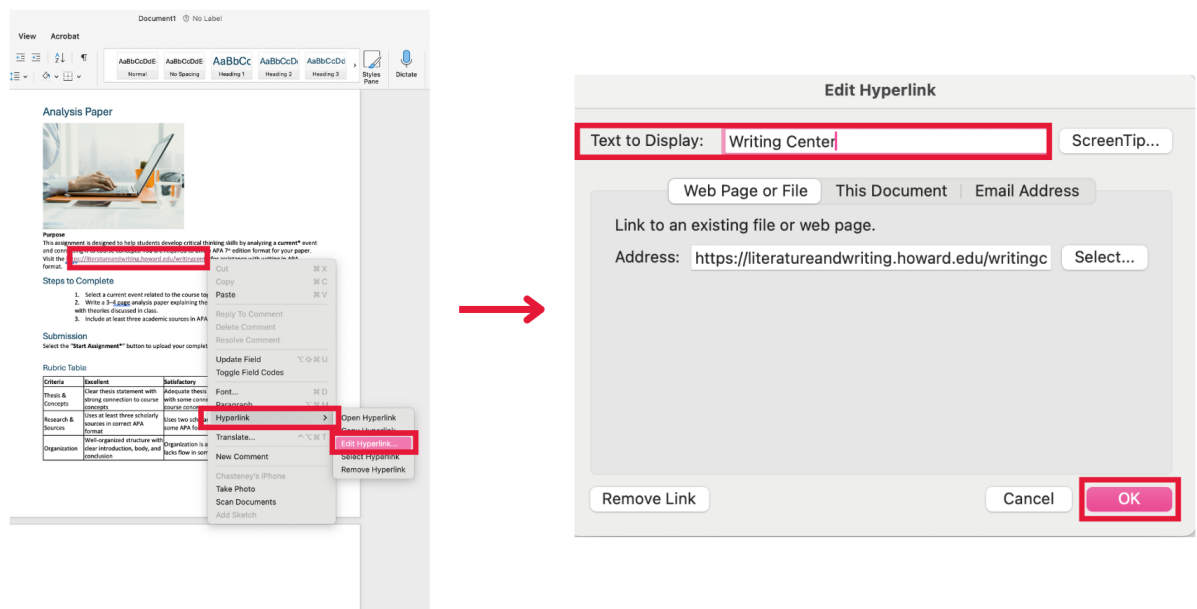
A good rule of thumb: If removing the image changes the understanding of the document, add a description. If not, mark it as decorative.

Section 5: Fix the Hyperlink (2–3 minutes)

Click here' doesn't tell users where the link leads. Screen readers may read the URL one character at a time.

To fix it:

- **Right-click the link → Hyperlink → Edit Hyperlink.**



- Change the text to something descriptive, like: Writing Center.

Now users know exactly where the link goes before they click.

Section 6: Fix the Rubric Table (4–5 minutes)

Rubric Table

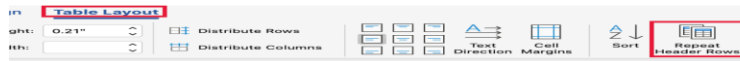
Tables must have header rows so screen readers know the column titles. This rubric also needs alt text for context.

To fix it:

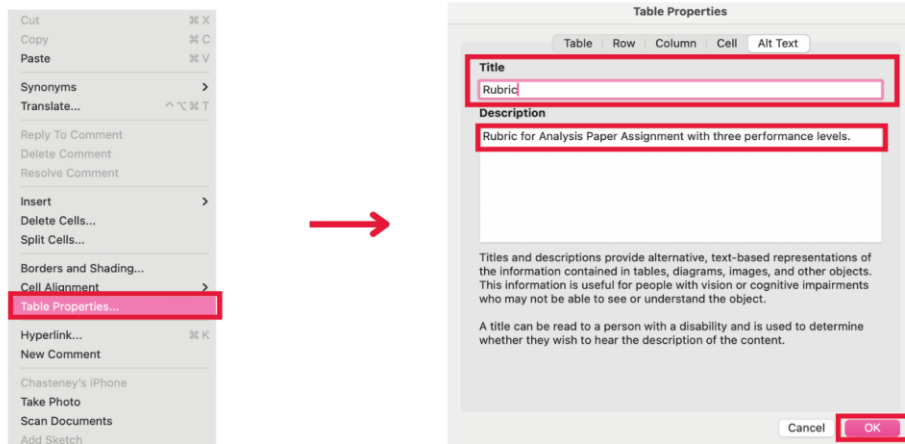
- Click inside the table → highlight the top row.

Criteria	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Thesis &	Clear thesis statement with	Appropriate thesis statement	Weak or missing thesis

- Go to **Table Layout** → **Repeat Header Rows**.



- Right-click the table → **Table Properties** → **Alt Text** → Add a description like 'Rubric for Analysis Paper Assignment with three performance levels.'



This ensures column headings like 'Criteria' and 'Excellent' are announced properly.

Section 7: Use the Accessibility Checker (2–3 minutes)

Microsoft Word has a built-in Accessibility Checker that flags issues automatically:

- Go to **Review** → **Check Accessibility**.



- The results panel opens on the right with errors and tips.
- If there is an issue, click each issue to jump directly to the problem area.

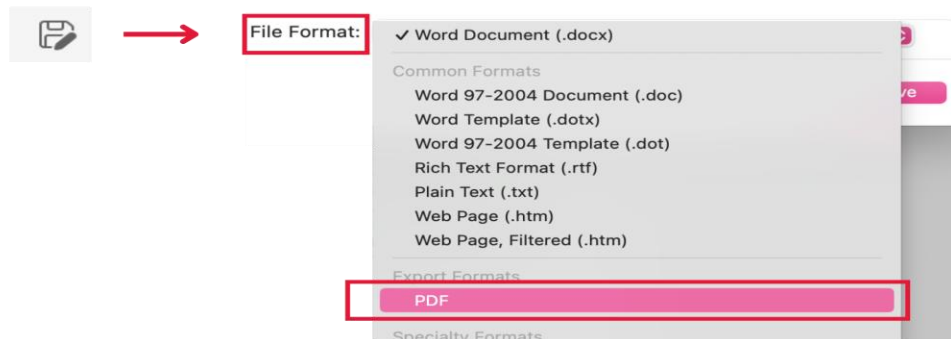
No issues here, our document is in good condition.

Remember creating accessible content is more than running the Accessibility Checker—it's about creating documents everyone can use. Always review headings, underline usage, alt text, links, and tables yourself. The checker may miss things, but your attention to detail helps the document meet accessibility standards."

Section 8: Save as an Accessible PDF (2–3 minutes)

Finally, if you need to share this as a PDF, make sure accessibility features carry over:

- Select **Save As** → **PDF**.



- Choose '**Best for electronic distribution and accessibility.**



- **Export** the file.

Export

Now your PDF retains headings, alt text, and link descriptions.

Section 9: Review Checklist (2–3 minutes)

Before wrapping up, here's a quick checklist:

- Use heading styles, not manual formatting
- Avoid underlines for emphasis → use **bold text with an asterisk** instead
- Add alt text to images (or mark decorative)
- Fix descriptive hyperlinks
- Add header rows & alt text for tables
- Run Accessibility Checker
- Save as Accessible PDF

Following this checklist ensures your documents meet accessibility standards.

Closing

That's it! We took a problematic document and transformed it into an accessible one step-by-step. These changes make learning materials more inclusive for everyone. Thank you!