
Accessible Excel Documents: Guidelines

Guidance from UKAAF

Why format quality matters

"When organisations send me information in formats that I can read myself it allows me to be independent, feel informed and appreciated - just like every other customer."

End-user

"Producing consistently high quality accessible formats helps us to maintain our reputation, to gain new customers and to retain existing ones."

Transcription agency

"We are committed to ensuring that our customers with print disabilities receive the same information, of the same quality, as everyone else."

Service provider

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Who is this guidance for?

This guidance from the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is primarily aimed at anyone that creates documents using Google Docs to ensure they are made accessible for candidates with print impairments. This document is guidance, for experienced desktop publishers: it is not a detailed training manual.

Disclaimer

This guidance may include references to external websites, services or products for which UKAAF accepts no responsibility. This information is given without any representation or endorsement of those websites, services or products.

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1 Introduction

By obtaining these guidelines you are demonstrating your commitment to helping people with a print disability to read your materials if they find reading standard print materials difficult or impossible.

UKAAF guidance concentrates specifically on materials suitable for blind and partially sighted people - such as large print, audio, braille and electronic file formats. However, this guidance is intended to support the provision of material for individuals with other print disabilities, such as dyslexia.

The provision of accessible information is a key requirement of the Equality Act which service providers must follow, but good customer service and business practice includes communicating with your customers and staff in ways which meet their reading needs. By providing accessible format materials, you not only demonstrate your commitment to equality and inclusion, but also increase your reach and customer base. It therefore makes good business sense.

This guidance will help you and your organisation to incorporate good practice into your business and provide good quality accessible format materials in a timely and appropriate way.

2 About UKAAF

The UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is the industry association whose mission is to set standards for accessible formats that meet end-user needs through:

- development, delivery and promotion of codes, standards, and best practice for the production and provision of accessible formats

- consultation and collaboration with transcribers, service providers and users of accessible formats.

Members of UKAAF include organisations and individuals with an interest in the provision of quality accessible formats, such as service providers, transcribers, educators, researchers, print services, publishers, and end-users.

Through its leadership and representation, standards-setting, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation between members, UKAAF ensures that the needs and requirements of end-users are understood by service providers and transcribers to help improve the quality of accessible formats.

Please see the section on "Where to get further help" (Page 33) at the end of this document for more information about the benefits of being a member of UKAAF.

3 Definition of print disability

A print-disabled person is anyone for whom a visual, cognitive, or physical disability hinders the ability to read print. This includes all visual impairments, dyslexia, and any physical disabilities that prevent the handling of a physical copy of a print publication.

Source: Copyright Licensing Agency Print Disability Licensing Scheme, Guidelines for Licensees 2010.

4 Document Accessibility Guidelines

4.1 Tables

The most important practice to ensure accessibility is to use a simple table structure with specific column header information. Screen readers keep track of their location in a table through the counting of table cells and will run into problems if there are split or merged cells, or if a table is nested within another table. Blank cells are also problematic because they may cause a screen

reader to think a table is empty beyond that point. Header information is used to identify rows and columns for the user and gives a clear way to understand the relationship of the information in the table.

4.2 Headers

Using headers allows those using screen readers to navigate content more easily and to discern the significance of that content.

4.2.1 Add headers to an existing table

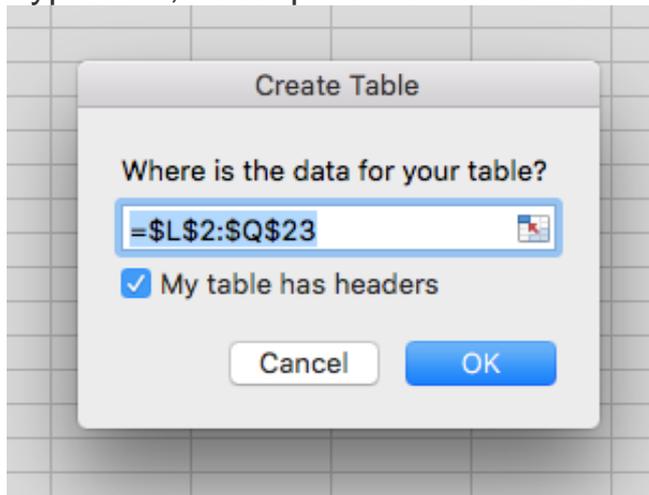
1. Position the cursor where you would like the header row to be in the table
2. On the **Table** tab in the ribbon, select the **Header Row** check box
3. Type in the desired column headings



4.2.2 Add headers to a new table

1. Select the cells you want to include in the table
2. On the **Insert** tab in the ribbon, select **Table**
3. Select the **My table has headers** check box and select **[OK]**

4. Type new, descriptive names for each column in the table



4.3 Sheet Tabs

Screen readers use sheet names to give the user information about what is found on each worksheet as a way to provide navigation and understanding of the content of the sheet. To assist in this navigation, give all sheet tabs unique names and remove blank sheets.

4.3.1 To rename a sheet tab

1. Right-click the desired sheet tab and select **Rename**
2. Type a brief, unique name for the sheet

4.4 SPREADSHEET CONTENT

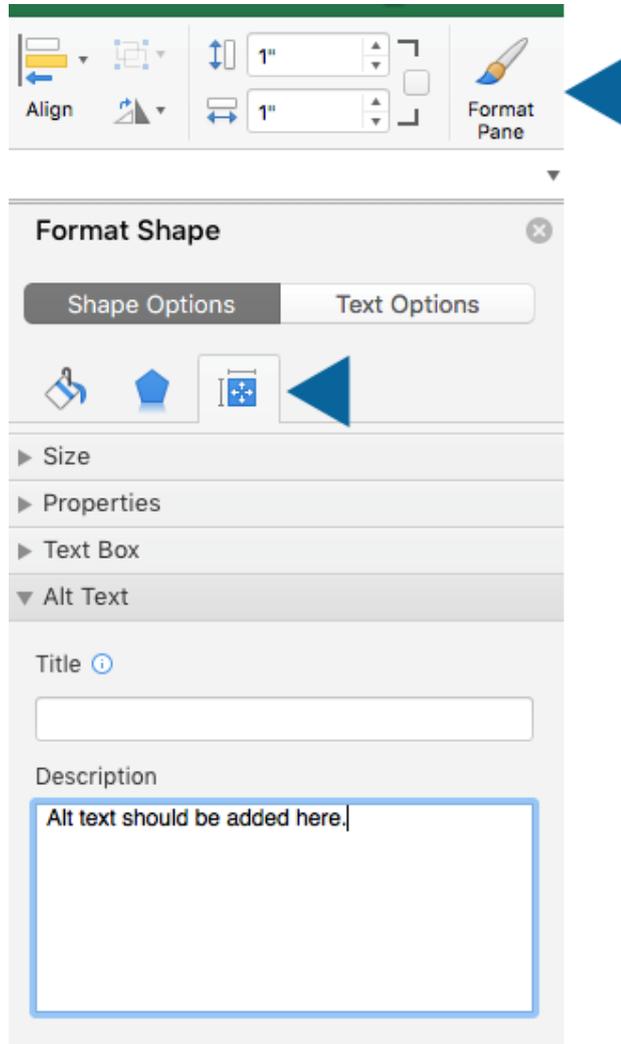
4.4.1 Visuals and Tables

Alt text is a way to provide those using screen readers information about visuals, tables, etc. that they may not be able to access visually. Alt text is a brief description of the content of the visual, table, etc. that is read to the user.

4.4.2 Add alt text to visuals

The following steps provide instruction for adding alt text to images, graphs, SmartArt and PivotCharts:

1. Right-click the visual, SmartArt, etc.
2. Select the **Format** tab from the ribbon, and then select **Format Pane**.



3. In the right pane, select **Size & Properties** from the “Shape Options” tab, then **Alt Text**.
4. Type the alt text in the **Description** field along with a title.
5. It is recommended to keep alt text to 125 characters or fewer as most screen readers break text up into blocks of 125 characters. For especially complex charts or equations, a link to an extended text description should be used.

4.4.3 Add alt text to tables

The following steps provide instruction for adding alt text to tables:

1. Right click the table
2. Select **Table > Alternative Text**
3. Type the alt text in the **Description** field as well as a title.

5 Where to get further help

UKAAF assists businesses and organisations by advising how to meet the needs of customers and clients with print disabilities; providing guidance on how to source and provide quality accessible formats like large print, audio, braille, electronic file formats and Easy Read; and helping you to understand your responsibilities as a service provider.

Through our website and magazine, members will also gain access to:

- findings from public consultations and end-user research
- research and innovation in accessible formats
- information on suppliers of transcription services
- guidance and advice on standards for accessible formats
- opportunities to review and help to develop standards and guidance.

In addition to supporting service providers and transcribers, UKAAF also represents people with print disabilities. We believe that because format quality matters, end-users should have genuine input into the development of standards for accessible information. By collecting and sharing users' views with service providers and transcribers we can help them to deliver a quality service which meets users' needs.

There are many benefits of being a member of UKAAF, not least to demonstrate your commitment to quality accessible formats. For more information visit us at www.ukaaf.org.

6 Your feedback is welcome

We would welcome your views on this guidance, any suggestions for additions, or case studies of how this guidance has helped you. You might like to share your experience in an article in our magazine 'Format Matters'.

You can phone, email or write to us - our details are at the back, or use the feedback form on our website www.ukaaf.org.

If you find UKAAF's guidance valuable, please encourage others to join by visiting our website.

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