10 Quick Tips

for Creating ADA Compliant InDesign Files

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TIP 1: Don't be redundant in alternative text

In a recent training course, we learned a best practice when writing alternative (alt) text for images we weren't aware of before.

1. **Don't** begin image alt text with "a photo of." Screen readers classify these items as images. For graphs use pie chart of, line graph of, etc.
2. **Don't** begin alt text for hyperlinks with "click here" or "follow this link to,". Screen readers classify these as links, so it is repetitive.
   a. We told you that only the text "click here to view reference" was sufficient for descriptive hyperlinks in a reference list. It is best practice to be more descriptive in the information you provide, even if it gets repetitive. The reader may skip from hyperlink to hyperlink to find the resource they are looking for after the initial read-through.
   b. **Example:**
      Paragraph text: Visit UF/IFAS Communications at **ics.ifas.ufl.edu** for more information.
      Corresponding hyperlink alt text: UF/IFAS Communications website.

TIP 2: Math Equations and Formulas

It is best practice to create images of mathematical formulas that contain letters, symbols, and lines and include alt text.

TIP 3: Keyboard Shortcut for Opening Tag Containers

You can use the up and down arrows on your keyboard to scroll through the tag tree and the right and left arrow keys to open and close the tag container to reveal its contents.

TIP 4: Add a Document Title to your InDesign File

Setting up the document title will allow the screen reader to read out more information about what the file is instead of just the file name. Do this by going to File > File Info > and then fill in the Document Title. To make sure the screen reader reads the document title, you will need to do one more thing while exporting to an interactive pdf. With the export panel open in Acrobat, click on Advanced in the left menu. Then open the drop-down menu for Display Title and change to Document Title.

TIP 5: Place Repeated Items on the Parent Pages to Artifact Them

Placing items on the parent pages, such as page numbers, will automatically artifact them. Even if you have a small document with only a few pages or less, placing repeated graphics on the parent pages will save you time by being automatically artifacted.

TIP 6: Paragraph and Character Styles

Every piece of text on an ADA-compliant file must have a style with no overrides. The styles must also be appropriately tagged so that screen readers will read the document correctly.

Here is a quick reminder for all the different tags for paragraph and character style:

- **Paragraph Styles**
  » H1 – H6 tags are used for heading and subheading styles. You can use H1 for the title and the top-level subheadings (like chapter titles), or you can use it just for the document's title only and H2 for section headers. Use H3 – H6 tags for lower-level subheadings.
  » Use the P tag for everything else, including table headers and body copy.
  » Tag ordered and unlordered lists as automatic.
- **Character Styles**
  » Strong – use this for bold text
  » Emphasis – use this for oblique or italic text
  » Automatic – use this for everything else

Note: Do not use the H-only tag (H without a number). Screen readers will not read it.

TIP 7: Color Contrast Applications

Here is a quick reference to the websites for the different color contrast checking applications:

- WebAIM Colour Contrast Analyzer app **https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/**
- WebAIM Colour Contrast Analyzer web version **https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/**
- Sim Daltonism for color-blind simulation **https://pcmacstore.com/en/app/693112260/sim-daltonism**

TIP 8: Reading Order

Be sure to review your document for proper reading order. Remember, in InDesign, the order is in the Layer Panel from the bottom (first read) to the top (last read). It doesn't matter where artifacted items are in the Layer Panel.

TIP 9: Run the Accessibility Checker

Don't forget to run the Accessibility Checker in Acrobat to be sure all items pass. And test with a screen reader, like NVDA, to be sure it reads the document as expected.

TIP 10: Don't Stress

There is a lot to learn about making ADA-compliant PDFs. Go step by step and know that the more you do it, the better you will become at it.