NOAA Central Library Accessibility Checklist: PDF Documents

This document is intended to serve as a guide for creating accessible PDF documents. The checklist is divided by element type (headings, lists and tables, images, etc.). At the end of this document is a list of references and additional resources.

Note: If your document was created in MS Word using the accessibility guidelines and then was converted to PDF, a large portion of the following requirements are already met. The primary focus then should be on PDF tagging, bookmarks and links.

General Document Requirements

Element	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
File name is concise and free of spaces or special characters.			
Document properties for Title and Language are added.			
Track changes have been accepted and/or turned off. All comments have been removed/resolved.			
If there is a Table of Contents (TOC), it was created using the TOC Command.			
Page numbering codes are used (as opposed to manually entering page numbers).			
Footnotes have been created via the Insert Footnote tool.			
Links contain descriptive text informing the user of the context and content of the linked page. Avoid linking terms such as "Click Here" or "Website."			
All hyperlinks are working and linking to their intended destination.			
All information that is conveyed through the use of color is also available without color.			
All color for images, text, etc. avoids red-green contrast when possible. (For colorblind viewers).			

Headings & Fonts

Element	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
The document uses recommended font styles (Arial, Veranda, Times New Roman, Georgia, Calibri).			
Text is easy to read against the background of the document (Recommended color contrast ratio of 4.5:1).			
The document has been formatted using the style elements for Headings and is presented hierarchically (i.e., Heading 1 to Heading 2 leading into body text).			

Image Requirements

Element	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
The document should be free of background images, watermarks, and scanned images of text.			
All images and graphics should appear crisp and clear.			
All images and non-text elements have alternative text.			
Multiple associated images on the same page are grouped together and alternative text for the images has been added.			
Multilayered objects (such as charts or graphs) have been flattened into a single image and alternative text for the image has been added.			
Complex images include descriptive text like captions.			

Lists & Tables

Element	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
All tables were made using the Insert Table option.			
No blank or merged cells are present in the table(s).			
Data tables should have the first row designated as "Header Row" within the Table Properties.			
Under Table Properties, "Allow row to break across pages" should not be checked. (This impacts reading order.)			
Tables are labeled and/or described as necessary.			
No layout tables are present in the document.			
All lists have been appropriately tagged using all four tags: L, LI, Lbl, and LBody. (For more detailed information on using list tags, visit W3C's PDF Guidelines)			

Bookmarks, Tagging & Table of Contents

Element	Pass	Fail	Not Applicable
All documents more than 20 pages have logical bookmarks. These should reflect the structure of the document and often time may mirror the Table of Contents (TOC).			
Items in the TOC are linked appropriately, and page numbers are correct.			
PDF tags have been added to the document (auto-tagging is acceptable, but may require touch-up work).			
Reading order is logical and correct based on the PDF tags.			

References

W3C Working Group. (2012). *PDF Techniques.* Retrieved February 07, 2018, from
https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG-TECHS/pdf.html

U.S. Dept. Of Health and Human Services. (2015, 08 17). *PDF File 508 Checklist.* Retrieved February 07, 2018, from https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/making-files-accessible/checklist/pdf/index.html

Additional Resources

Below are a number of resources that cover the general requirements and foundations of Section 508 as well as resources for checking document accessibility.

Section508.gov: This page provides a wealth of information on what Section 508 is, why it is important, implementation plans, authoring tools, checklists and testing information.

Department of Commerce Learning Center 508 Training: Available to DOC staff and requires login. This session provides and overview of Section 508.

W3C Accessibility Turtorial-Complex Images: This webpage discusses the best practices for handling complex images within documents, such as graphs, diagrams, or maps.

Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Checker Documentation: Offers a how-to for using the Adobe Acrobat XI Pro accessibility checker.

Vischeck: Online tool that checks images and webpages for colorblind viewers (red/green, blue/yellow). Also provides simulations and offers color correction.