# Tom’s Top 10 Tips for Accessible Documents

## Introduction

For the presentation at the Round table Conference in 2014 in Brisbane I decided to provide a practical top 10 list of tips that people could pass on.

## 10 Accessible InDesign

**New accessibility features in Adobe InDesign**

Adobe InDesign is the industry standard software for page layout for print documents. Since version 5.5 the accessibility features have improved a lot. You can now incorporate accessibility features within InDesign, without relying so much on ‘fixing it up’ afterwards.

Adobe has some great resources to help show best practice methods for creating accessible content.

<http://www.adobe.com/nz/accessibility/products/indesign.html>

## 9 Flesch Reading Ease

**Use Flesch Reading Ease score in Word**

The Flesch Reading Ease measures textual difficulty, which indicates how easy a text is to read. This measure does not measure the complexity of the subject; it measures how difficult a piece of text is to read. By factoring aspects such as word length and syllables, a numerical value is given. The higher the score the easier it is to read.

There is a built in tool to measure Flesch reading ease in Microsoft Word. However, it is not set by default. Follow these instructions below to set it to check your document by default.

1. Select File tab
2. Select Options
3. Select Proofing
4. Check Show readability statistics checkbox

The results will be displayed after you spell check your document.

## 8 Choosing a Font

**Avoid using ornate fonts**

Straight from the Guidelines for Producing Clear Print from <http://printdisability.org/guidelines/>

The word "font" refers to the appearance of a "family" of characters used for printing. In addition to the upper and lower case version of each letter, it includes italics, numbers, punctuation marks and symbols.

A clear print document should use fonts which are clear and easy to read. Qualities to look for in a font are:

* Plain rather than stylised.
* Easily distinguishable characters.
* Open counterforms (that is, the blank spaces inside open letterforms like e and o).
* A large "x-height" proportional to point size (that is, the height of a lower case x compared with the overall size of the letters).
* Prominent ascenders and descenders (that is, the parts of the letter that appear above or below the main body of the letter, for example the tail of a lower-case g, or the vertical bar in a lower-case h).
* Uniform stroke thickness.
* Even spacing between letters.

Avoid fonts that are highly stylised, ornate, decorative or handwriting-style.

## 7 Tables

**Avoid using merged cells**

Merged cells within tables can make navigation using a screen reader very confusing. While technically accessible, a table used for layout is can be difficult to comprehend using a screen reader. For example, the table below is read out as...

“Non-uniform table, “Title” row 1 of 3 column 1 of 2, “Date” Column 2 of 2, “Name” row 2 of 3, number of columns changed from 2 to 3, “Code” column 2 of 3, “Currency” column 3 of 3, “Address” row 3 of 3 column 1 of 3, “Country” column 2 of 3, “Reference” column 3 of 3”

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Title** | | | Date |
| Name | Code | | Currency |
| Address | | Country | Reference |

## 6 Alternative Text

**Images must be ‘In Line with Text’ in Microsoft Word**

The Wrap Text properties of an image change the relationship between the text and the image. For the alt text to work, the image needs to set to ‘in line with text’). This does limit the placement features of word, but a screen reader is unable to pick up the alt text details if this option is not used.

Alternate text (or alt text) is required for screen reader users to access text equivalents in place of the image. A text equivalent does not require a full description of every detail. A good way to think of alt text is to imagine you are describing the image to someone over the phone.

## 5 Colour Contrast

**Use colour contrast tools**

Preferences for colour contrast are varied for different eye conditions. As a result, there is no one colour combination that gives the best result for everyone. If it is known, use the preferred options of the person you are communicating with.

For a general audience, we can effectively measure colour contrast with a tools such as the Colour Contrast Analyser (This provides a pass/fail assessment against international standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). Although the tool is primarily for assessing screen accessibility, it is an effective tool for documents intended for print.

This can be downloaded from <http://www.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/>

## 4 Other Formats

**Consider other eBook formats**

Consider using other file formats for documents. Increasing eBook formats are becoming more and more accessible. DAISY, ePub and Apple iBooks and Amazon Kindle formats have the capability of being accessible.

## 3 Headings

**Styles is not an accessibility tool**

Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign, OpenOffice, Google Docs, Pages and many other documentation software use a styles for formatting and structure. Using styles is not an accessibility tool. It is how you meant to format documents. Formatting documents becomes a lot easier when you grasp using styles.

## 2 Accessibility Checkers

Use built in Accessibility Checkers

Adobe Acrobat and Microsoft Word both have built in accessibility checkers. The Word checker will not only tell what is wrong, it will tell you why you should fix it and how to fix it. It doesn’t find everything (like colour contrast issues) but it does pick up major roadblocks that prevent people from accessing content in a word document

To use the checker in word go to **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**

## 1 Share your Knowledge

One of the most important things we can do is pass information on and share things we have learned. The more people we can get use these techniques will not only create content that is more accessible for people with disabilities, it will benefit everyone.