

In Windows: Make Accessible Excel Spreadsheets

It is essential to embed certain formatting and structure within an Excel spreadsheet so that assistive technology can follow the structure clearly and provide the information in a logical order to the disabled user. Proper structure also ensures that if the Excel file is converted to a PDF, it will continue to be accessible. The basic steps are provided below for Excel 2010 and above for PCs. See the [UC Electronic Accessibility website](#) for more detailed information.

1. *Images and Visuals*

Alt text, or a short description, helps people who can't see the screen to understand what's important in images and other visuals. Provide alt text for each image, PivotChart, shape, SmartArt graphic, and table.

2. *Links*

Use link text that has meaning, such as "instructions for making an accessible Excel spreadsheet," instead of "click here" or "learn more." People who use screen readers sometimes scan a list of links, so links should convey clear and accurate information about the destination.

3. *Tables*

Use a simple table structure, and add column header information. Screen readers use header information to identify rows and columns.

Ensure that tables don't contain split cells, merged cells, nested tables, or completely blank rows or columns. Screen readers keep track of their location in a table by counting table cells, so split cells, merged cells, and nested tables make the screen reader software lose its place.

4. *Tabs*

Give all sheet tabs unique names, and remove blank sheets.

5. *Sections*

Cell sections are essentially shortcuts that a screen reader user can use. Providing the sections with an appropriate title allows screen reader users to quickly identify the purpose of the section.

Select a range of cells, click "Formulas" and select "Define Name." Enter an appropriate title for the section and define the scope. The name field does not allow spaces.

6. *Document Language*

Set a language for your document so assistive technology can correctly interpret and read the document. Click File, select Options, select Language, and Choose Editing Language.

7. *Check*

Test your Excel spreadsheet for accessibility. Go to File, Info, Check for Issues, and Check Accessibility.

8. Convert

Convert your accessible Excel spreadsheet into an accessible PDF: Go to File, and Save as Adobe PDF.