

Teaching English to Visually Impaired Learners

Session 2. Tools and Resources

Creating Accessible Word and PDF Documents

There are some considerations to make accessible documents for blind and visually impaired learners. Word is a good example for that.

There are a few main issues when preparing accessible Word documents to be read with a screen reader like JAWS. Whenever Word meets the accessibility criteria described below, it can be converted to PDF and will also be accessible.

Some of the guidelines in this document are also relevant for **low-vision learners** and should be followed to create accessible resources in general. You will need to consider:

- Line spacing – 1.15 minimum and font – 12 minimum
- Plain text - sans serif – not cursive font
- Colour or contrast – clear font colour, clear contrast
- Links
- Images and ALT text

1. Line spacing and font

When reading a Word document with a screen reader take out any blank lines.

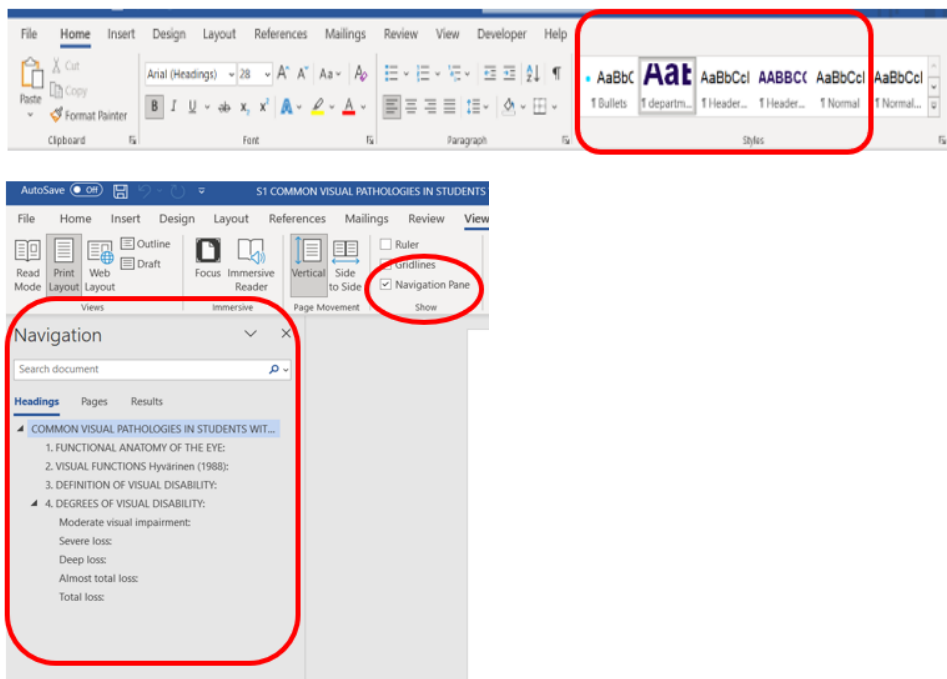
When creating accessible Word documents in general or for **low-vision learners**, the recommended minimum line spacing is 1.15 and minimum font size is 12. Non-cursive, plain fonts like Arial or Sans fonts are more accessible.

Gaps are identified by the JAWS screen reader by 5 dots, not 3. **Bold**, *italics* or underlining might not be picked up by the screen reader.

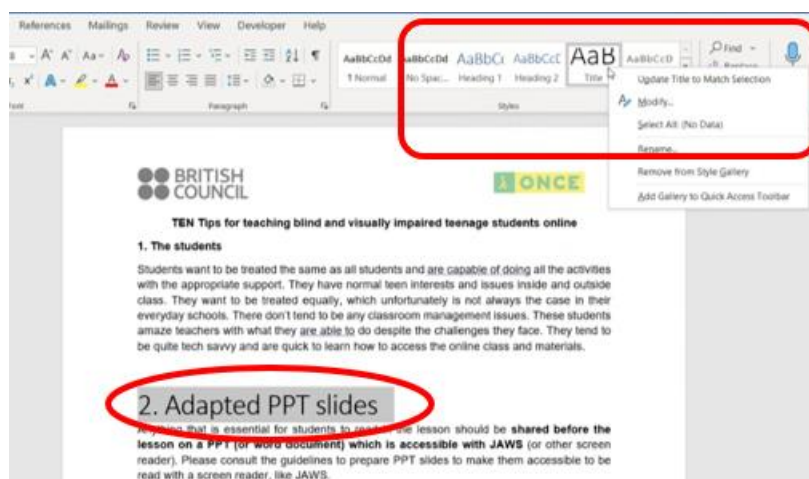
2. Navigation styles

It's important to use Styles (headings and subheadings) to facilitate navigation within the document. This way, when reading the document from the tab View, the student will be able to access the Navigation panel and easily get to the document they're looking for.

It's possible to use the default Styles or to edit them.



If we want to generate a new style from a paragraph that has our own style, we need to select it. Then from the tab Styles, click with the right-hand button of the mouse on the name of the title that we'd like it to have, and then click on the option 'Update to match selection'.



3. Colour Contrast (font and background)

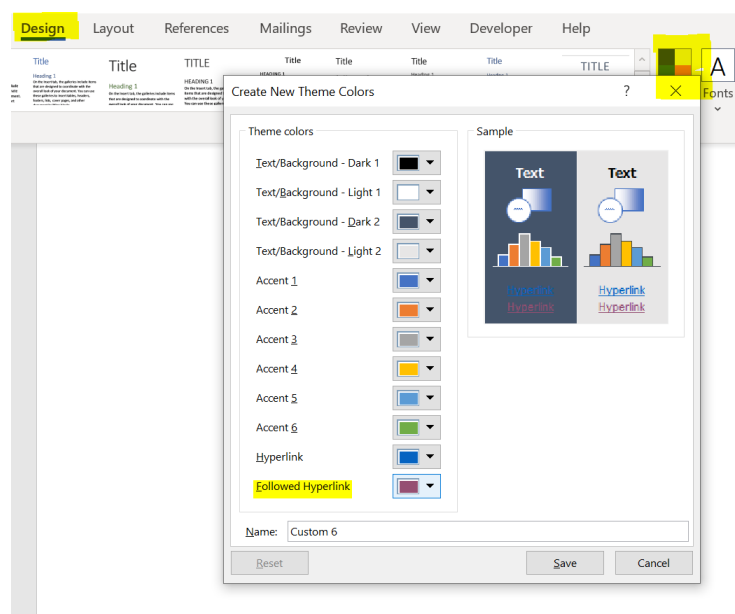
For **low-vision learners** ensure that there is a **high-colour contrast between the background and text**. To test the contrast between font and background:

Contrast analyser: <https://color.adobe.com/es/create/color-contrast-analyzer>

Visited links can grey out which means the colour contrast might be low. You can change the colour of visited links or hyperlinks as follows:

Enter the design tab and, within it, select the colours drop down menu and select 'customise colours.' All types of text that we use, including the 'hyperlink' and "followed hyperlink" will appear.

Click on DESIGN – COLOURS – CUSTOMISE COLOURS – FOLLOWED HYPERLINK and select the colour that gives a high colour contrast.



4. Links

All links should be placed at the end of the sentences or paragraphs that introduce them. If they are in the middle of the sentence, JAWS reads the word 'link' when it meets it, which interrupts normal reading and can also cause the student to open the link without having finished reading the whole sentence and knowing what is going to be found in the link.

Additionally, by creating a hyperlink the student won't have to listen to the screen reader reading the whole link. We can create a hyperlink by including a description of what students will find

when they follow the link in the link text to display and include any instructions at the end of the link, so students know exactly what to do.

e.g. Edit <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zxy987h> to [Video about the 5 senses. Press play button](#)

How to edit: Hover above the link – click on the right mouse button – select ‘Edit Hyperlink’

Original:

Text to display: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zxy987h>

Edit to:

Text to display: [Video about the 5 senses. Press play button](#)

When a student clicks on a link, they are taken to a web page. In some cases, the video starts automatically when they click on the link. But this is not always the case and sometimes students have to click on a “play” button to start the video when they get to the webpage. Therefore, in the instructions you should tell students exactly what they need to do to start the video e.g. “Press play button”.

Sometimes you have to change the hyperlink to link directly to the video rather than linking to the webpage.

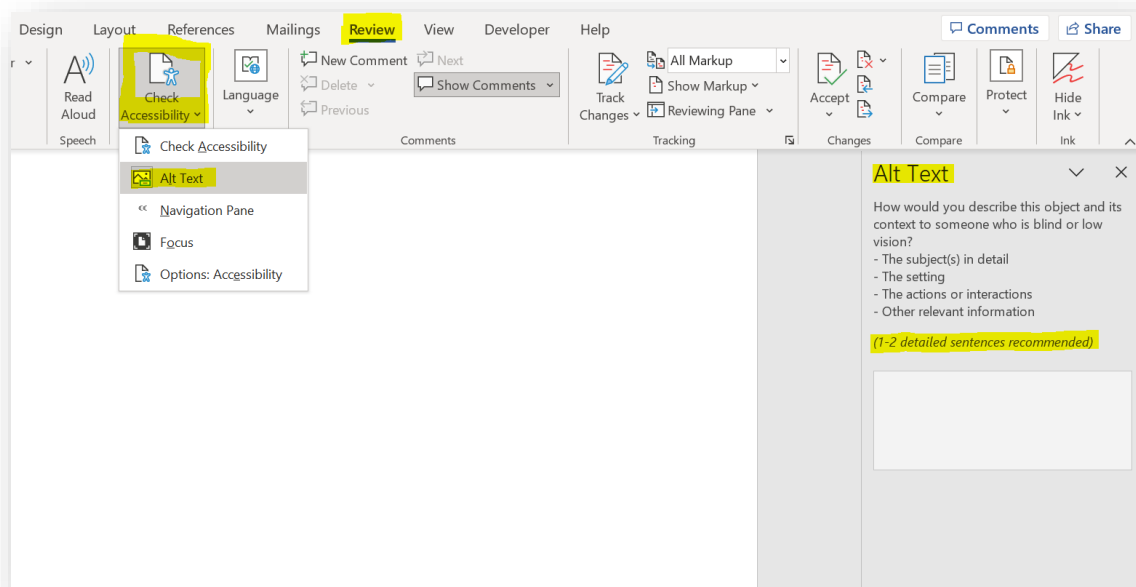
For **low-vision learners** it is also preferable to edit a link ‘text to display’ to reduce the amount of text on a slide to a minimum.

5. Images and Alt text to describe images

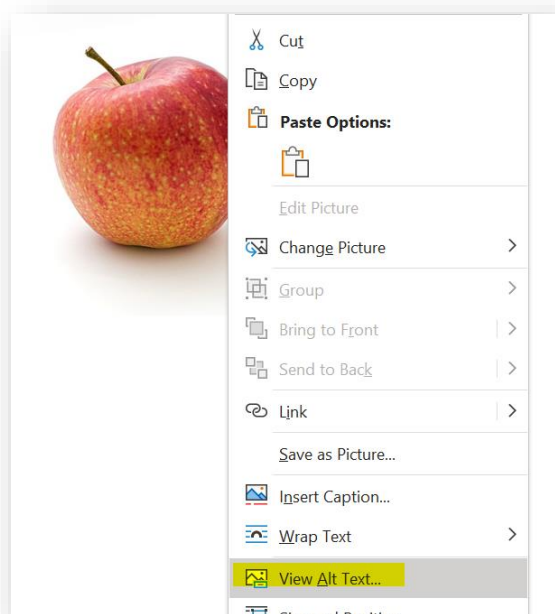
A screen reader cannot read images i.e. screen shots or snips of texts can’t be read. If there is a Word version of the content available e.g. snipped text, you can copy and paste the text into the Word document so that it can be read by the screen reader.

Use the ALT text function to include a description of all essential images. To include ALT Text on a Word document, select:

REVIEW – CHECK ACCESSIBILITY – ALT TEXT and write one or two detailed sentences to explain what the learners need to know about the image.



Alternatively, you can click on the right-hand button of the mouse while hovering over an image and select the ALT text option from the drop-down menu.



If possible, make sure the language you use to write ALT text is **the student's own language**.

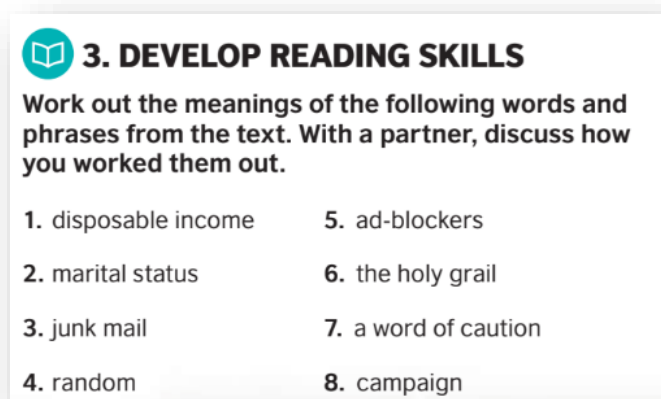
If you're using the images for a matching activity, **make sure you don't use the target language in the description.**

6. Using Google lens to:

6.1. Acquire text from snips and images from digital books or British Council magazines

If there is some content you are unable to copy and paste, you can use the following procedure to acquire text.

1. Use the snipping tool to select the text from the source

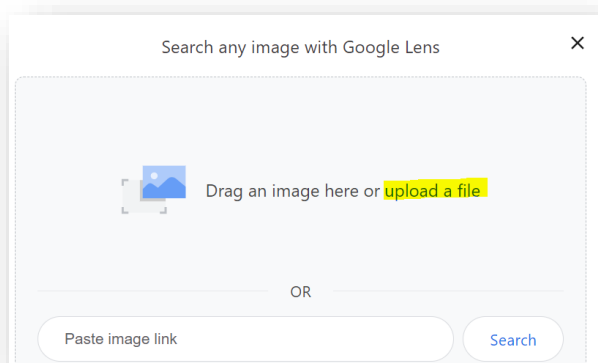


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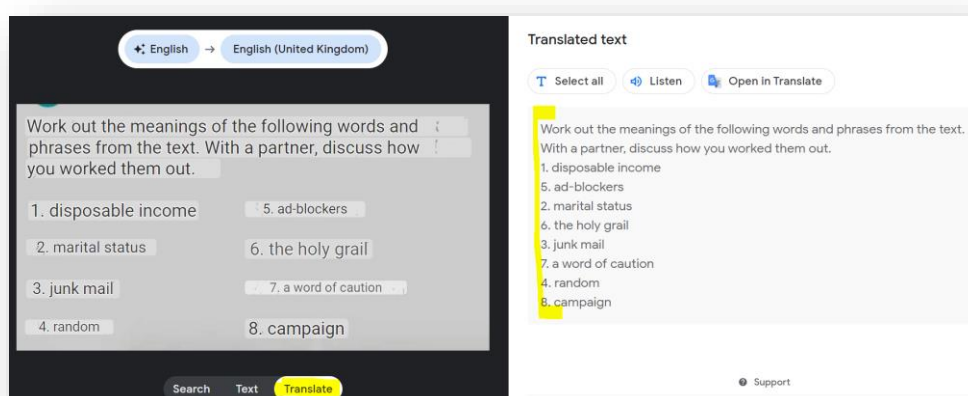
2. Save as an image
3. Open Google lens



4. Upload the saved image



5. Select 'translate'. This will translate the text into text you can copy. Note that because of the original formatting, the items are not in chronological order in the activity.



6. Copy and paste the text into the Word document and **order the items correctly**:

Work out the meanings of the following words and phrases from the text. With a partner, discuss how you worked them out.

1. disposable income
5. ad-blockers
2. marital status
6. the holy grail
3. junk mail
7. a word of caution
4. random
8. campaign

Items in **correct order**:

Work out the meanings of the following words and phrases from the text. With a partner, discuss how you worked them out.

1. disposable income
2. marital status
3. junk mail
4. random
5. ad-blockers
6. the holy grail
7. a word of caution
8. campaign

6.2. Acquire text from snips and images from physical books

If we only have access to the physical book the same process can be carried out with a mobile phone's camera using the Google Lens function.

Some phones have **Google Lens integrated into their cameras**:



In other cases, **the app will need to be downloaded:**



Google Lens

1. Open Google lens on your phone.
2. Point at the text and click on Search → Select text → Copy text.
3. Paste the text onto an email or Word doc and send it to your email address.
4. Open email on your PC and tweak format as explained above.