

Maine CITE welcomes you to today's webinar!

Creating Accessible Documents

Lani Carlson, Maine CITE Director

September 9, 2026

The webinar will begin soon.



Serving all ages, all abilities

Maine CITE provides:

- Information and assistance
- Assistive technology training
- Device demonstrations
- Device short-term loans
- Device reuse

Partners:

- Gallant Therapy Services
- John F Murphy Homes
- Spurwink ALLTECH
- Pine Tree Society
- University of Maine at Farmington
- Waypoint

Creating Accessible Content

- Understandability
- Color Contrast
- Content Structure
- Built-in Tools
- Hyperlinks
- Alternative Text
- Accessibility Checkers



Why is Accessibility Important?



<https://tinyurl.com/2k2n5bu5>

Broad Spectrum of Disabilities

Duration of disability

- Permanent, Temporary, Situational

Type of disability

- Motor
- Visual
- Auditory
- Cognitive

Understandability

- Plain language
- Know your audience
- Word choices
- Design for understanding

Plain Language Example

- Active voice
- Simple words
- Shorter sentences

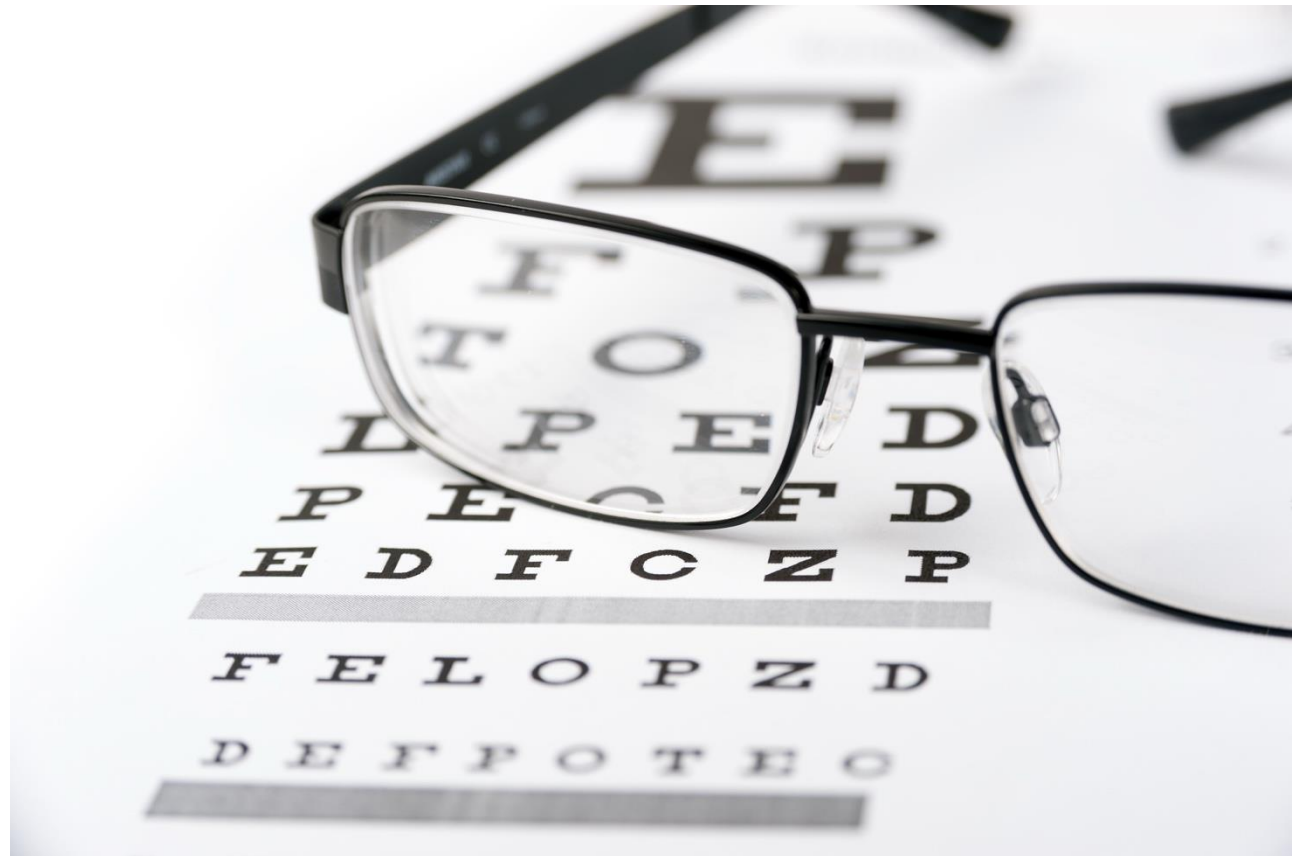


“We regret to inform you that your recent request for a refund has been declined due to non-compliance with the stipulated return policy.”

“We're sorry, but we can't give you a refund because it doesn't follow our return policy.”

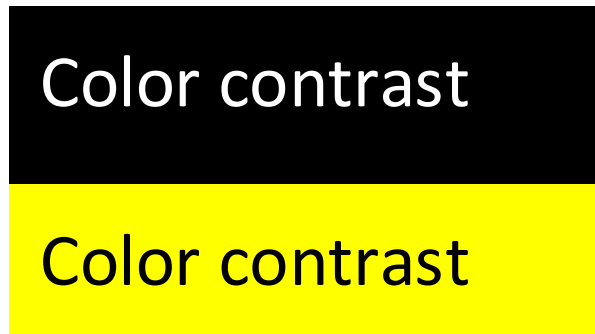
Font Style and Size

- Accessible fonts
- Font size
- Location

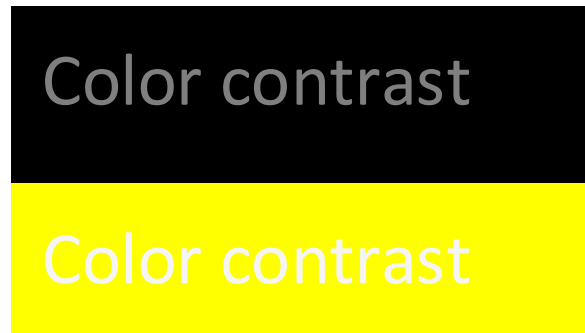


Color Contrast

Color contrast is the difference between two colors that makes it easy to see one thing from another.



Color contrast



Color contrast



Using Color to Convey Meaning

Approximately 1 in 12
men are color blind (8%).



Approximately 1 in 12
men are color blind (8%).



Color Conveying Meaning

Personal Info

Required

Full Name

ID Number

Email

Phone

Submit

Personal Info

Full Name

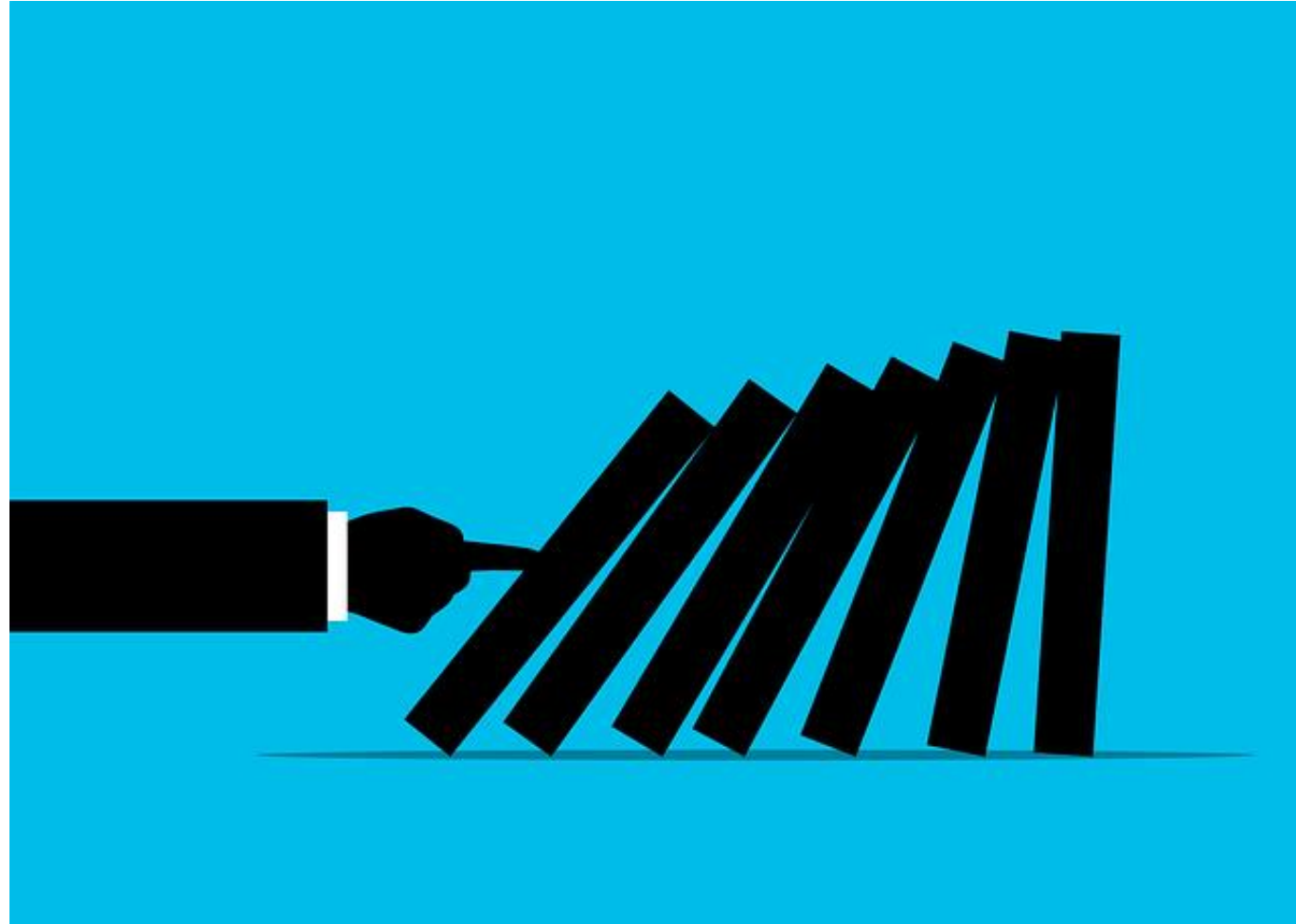
ID Number (required)

Email (required)

Phone

Submit

Content Structure



Heading Structure

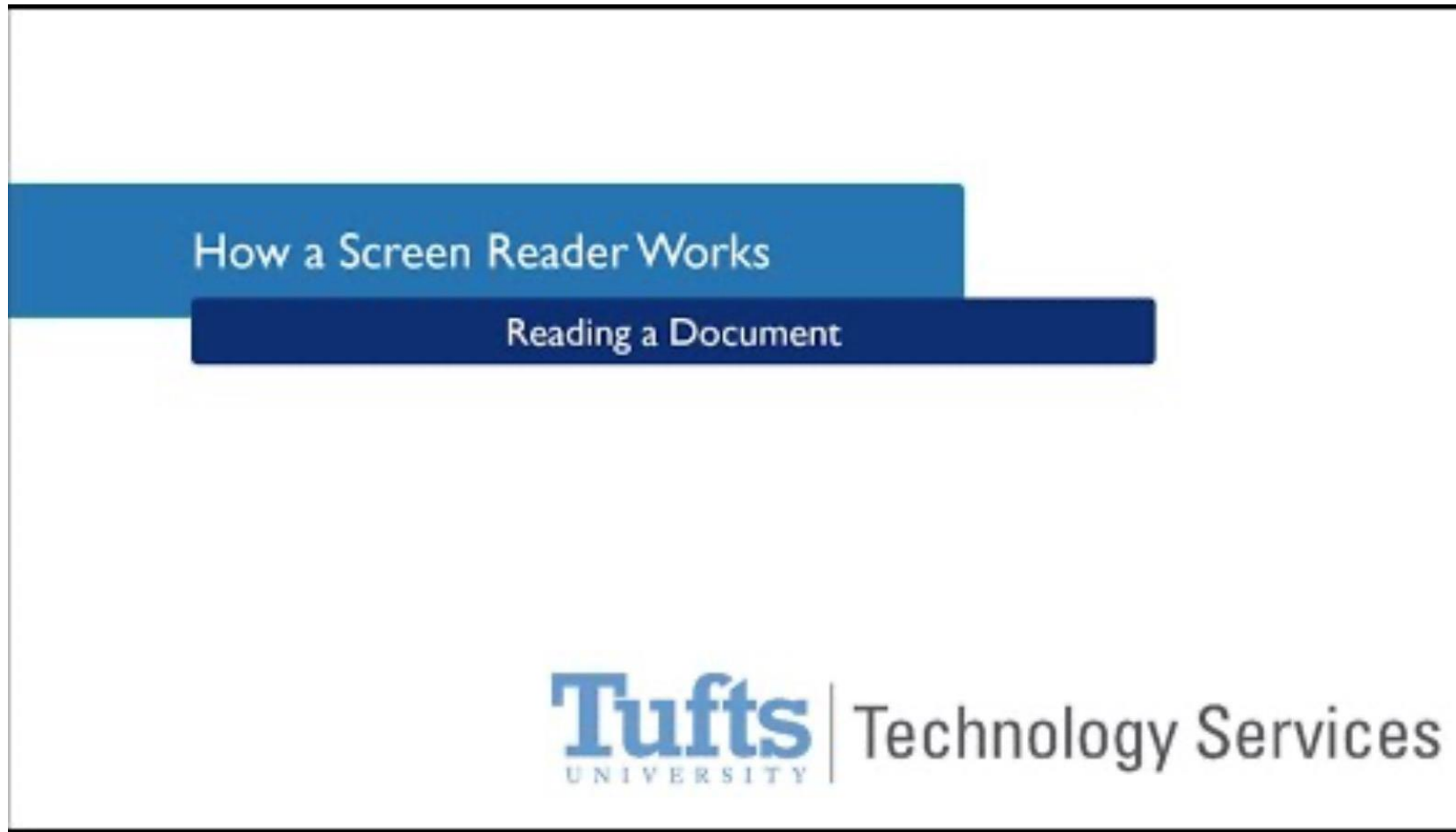
Heading 1: Title or main content

Heading 2: Major section

Heading 3: Sub-section of H2

Heading 4: Sub-section of H3

Screen Reader Example



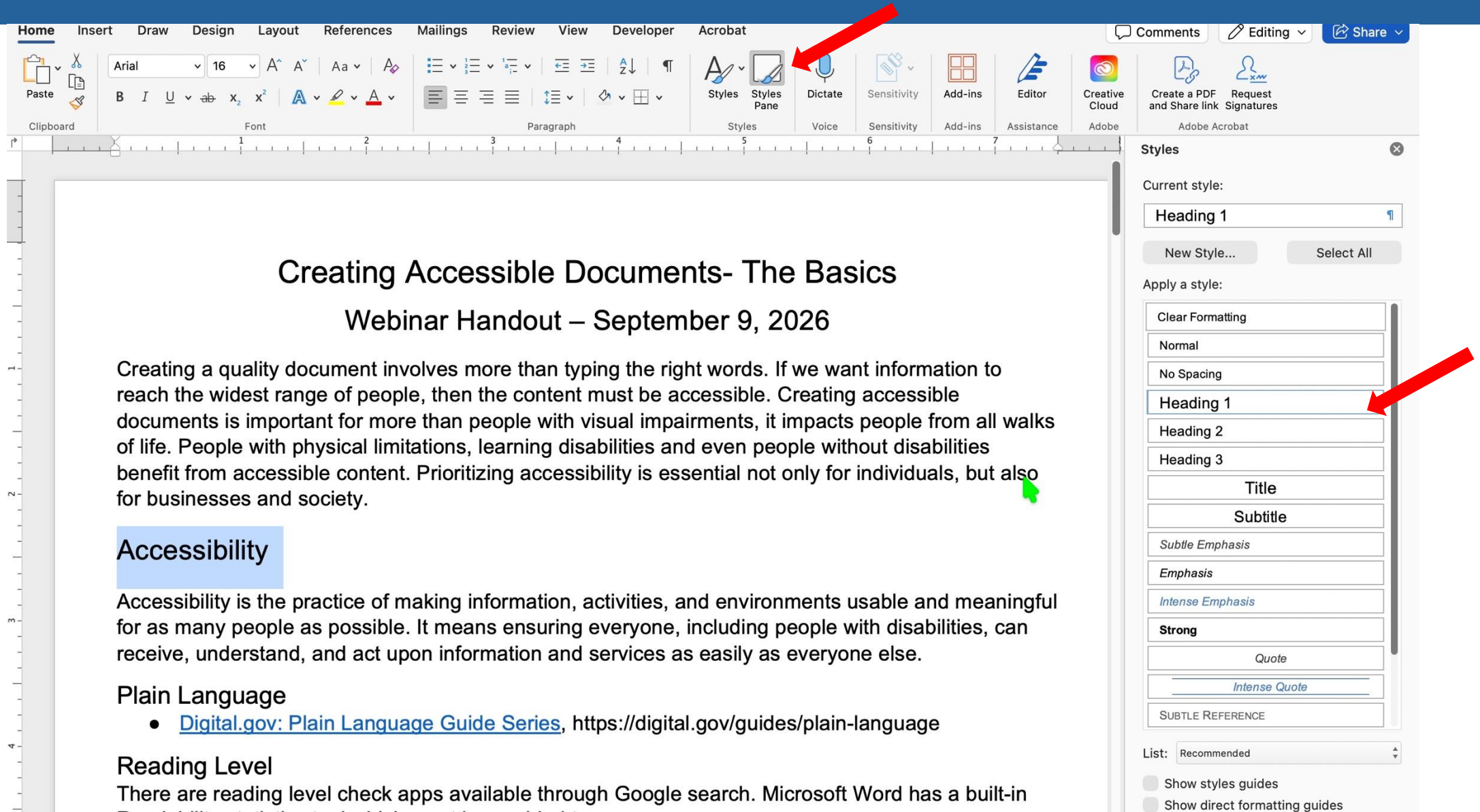
<https://tinyurl.com/53ahaazy>

Headings in Word

The image shows the Microsoft Word interface with the Home tab selected. The ribbon includes sections for Clipboard, Font, Paragraph, Styles, and Styles Pane. The Styles section is highlighted with a red box, and the Styles Pane is also highlighted with a red box. The Styles Pane shows the current style as 'Normal' and a list of styles to apply, including 'Heading 1', 'Heading 2', 'Heading 3', and 'Heading 4'. Red arrows point to the Home tab, the Styles section, and the Styles Pane.

- Main Menu, Select Home tab
- Look for the Styles section
- Select Styles Pane

Headings – Styles Pane



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word interface. The ribbon at the top includes tabs for Home, Insert, Draw, Design, Layout, References, Mailings, Review, View, Developer, and Acrobat. The 'Styles' button in the 'Home' tab is highlighted with a red arrow. The document content is as follows:

Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics

Webinar Handout – September 9, 2026

Creating a quality document involves more than typing the right words. If we want information to reach the widest range of people, then the content must be accessible. Creating accessible documents is important for more than people with visual impairments, it impacts people from all walks of life. People with physical limitations, learning disabilities and even people without disabilities benefit from accessible content. Prioritizing accessibility is essential not only for individuals, but also for businesses and society.

Accessibility

Accessibility is the practice of making information, activities, and environments usable and meaningful for as many people as possible. It means ensuring everyone, including people with disabilities, can receive, understand, and act upon information and services as easily as everyone else.

Plain Language

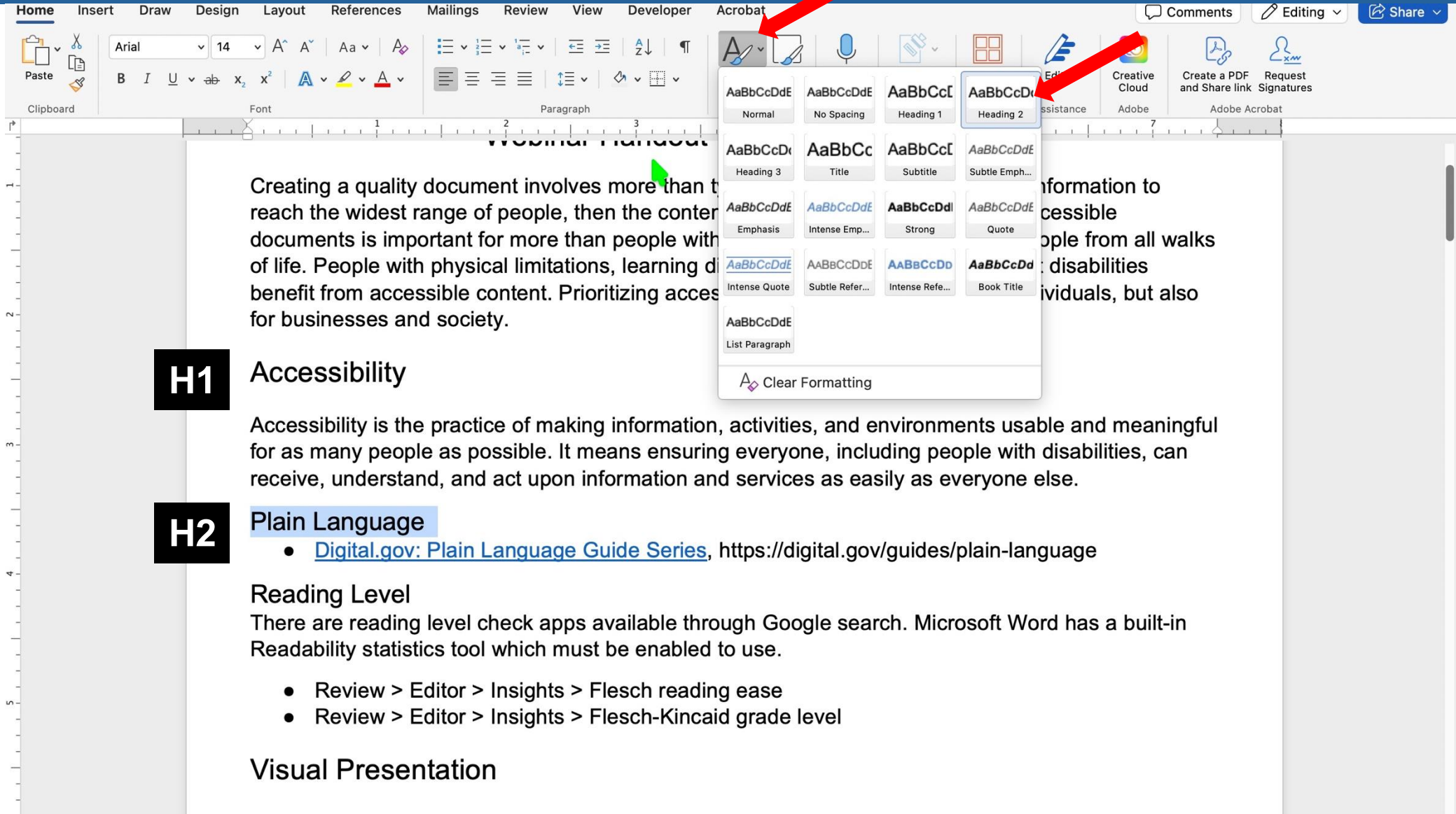
- [Digital.gov: Plain Language Guide Series](https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language), <https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language>

Reading Level

There are reading level check apps available through Google search. Microsoft Word has a built-in

The 'Styles' pane on the right side of the document is open, showing a list of styles. 'Heading 1' is selected, and a red arrow points to it. The list of styles includes: Clear Formatting, Normal, No Spacing, Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, Title, Subtitle, Subtle Emphasis, Emphasis, Intense Emphasis, Strong, Quote, Intense Quote, and SUBTLE REFERENCE. At the bottom of the pane, there are checkboxes for 'Show styles guides' and 'Show direct formatting guides'.

Headings – Styles



Creating a quality document involves more than t reach the widest range of people, then the conten documents is important for more than people with of life. People with physical limitations, learning d benefit from accessible content. Prioritizing acces for businesses and society.

H1 Accessibility

Accessibility is the practice of making information, activities, and environments usable and meaningful for as many people as possible. It means ensuring everyone, including people with disabilities, can receive, understand, and act upon information and services as easily as everyone else.

H2 Plain Language

- [Digital.gov: Plain Language Guide Series](https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language), <https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language>

Reading Level

There are reading level check apps available through Google search. Microsoft Word has a built-in Readability statistics tool which must be enabled to use.

- Review > Editor > Insights > Flesch reading ease
- Review > Editor > Insights > Flesch-Kincaid grade level

Visual Presentation

Modify Styles

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word interface with the 'Home' tab selected. The ribbon includes options for Font, Paragraph, Styles, Voice, Sensitivity, Add-ins, and Assistance. The document title is 'Level 1_CAD May _2026_Handout'. The main text area contains the following content:

Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics

Webinar Handout – September 9, 2026

Creating a quality document involves more than typing the right words. If we want information to reach the widest range of people, then the content must be accessible. Creating accessible documents is important for more than people with visual impairments, it impacts people from all walks of life. People with physical limitations, learning disabilities and even people without disabilities benefit from accessible content. Prioritizing accessibility is essential not only for individuals, but also for businesses and society.

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Reading Level

There are reading level check apps available through Google search. Microsoft Word has a built-in

The 'Styles' task pane on the right side of the window is open, showing the 'Current style' as 'Heading 1'. Below this, there are buttons for 'New Style...' and 'Select All'. Under 'Apply a style:', there is a list of styles including 'Clear Formatting', 'Normal', 'No Spacing', 'Heading 1', 'Select All', 'Modify Style...', 'Delete...', 'Update to Match Selection', 'Subtle Emphasis', 'Emphasis', 'Intense Emphasis', 'Strong', 'Quote', 'Intense Quote', and 'SUBTLE REFERENCE'. The 'Modify Style...' option is highlighted in blue, and two red arrows point to it from the right. At the bottom of the task pane, there is a 'List:' dropdown set to 'Recommended' and two checkboxes for 'Show styles guides' and 'Show direct formatting guides'.

Page 1 of 4 1 of 1040 words English (United States) Accessibility: Good to go Focus 178%

Modify Heading Style

Modify Styles

- Font
- Alignment
- Page formatting
- Preview
- Save & update

Font...
Paragraph...
Tabs...
Border...
Language...
Frame...
Numbering...
Shortcut key...

Modify Style

Properties

Name:

Style type:

Style based on:

Style for following paragraph:

Formatting

B *I* U

Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph

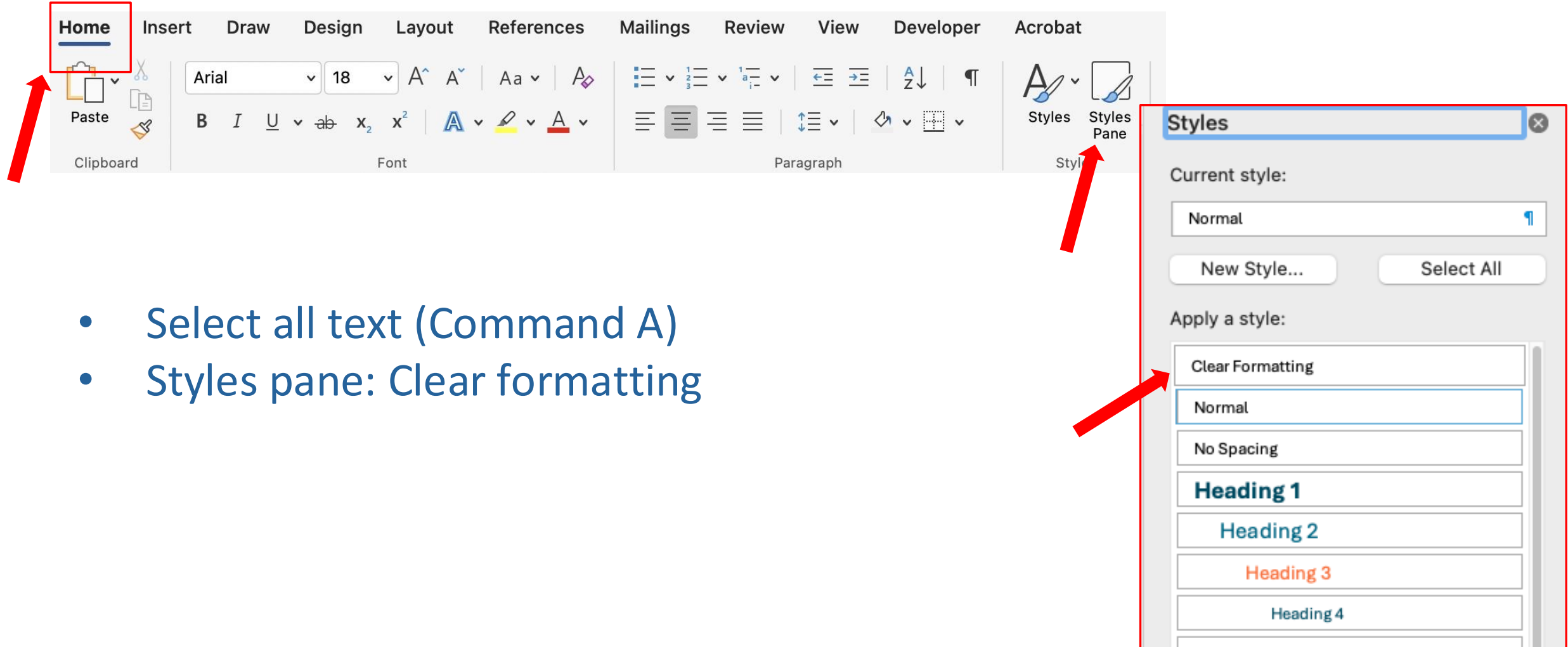
Accessibility

Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph Following Paragraph

Font: 24 pt, Font color: Red, Space
Before: 12 pt
After: 12 pt, Keep with next, Keep lines together, Level 1, Style: Show in the Styles gallery, Priority: 10

☐ Add to template
☒ Add to Quick Style list
☐ Automatically update

Fresh Start in Word



The image shows the Microsoft Word ribbon and the Styles pane. The ribbon is set to the 'Home' tab, which is highlighted with a red box and a red arrow. The 'Paste' button in the Clipboard group is also highlighted with a red box and a red arrow. The 'Styles' group on the right side of the ribbon is highlighted with a red box and a red arrow. The 'Styles' pane is open on the right side of the screen, and the 'Clear Formatting' option is highlighted with a red box and a red arrow. The 'Current style' is 'Normal'. The 'Apply a style' list includes 'Clear Formatting', 'Normal', 'No Spacing', 'Heading 1', 'Heading 2', 'Heading 3', and 'Heading 4'.

- Select all text (Command A)
- Styles pane: Clear formatting

Modify Headings in Google Docs

Level 1_CAD May_2026_Handout

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Gemini Extensions Help Accessibility

100%

Heading 1 Arial 16 B U A

Normal text

Title

Subtitle

✓ Heading 1 Apply 'Heading 1' ⌘+Option+1 Update 'Heading 1' to match

Heading 2

Heading 3

Options

g Accessible Documents- The Basics

binar Handout – September 9, 2026

involves more than typing the right words. If we want information to
ople, then the content must be accessible. Creating accessible
it impacts people from all walks
people without disabilities
not only for individuals, but also

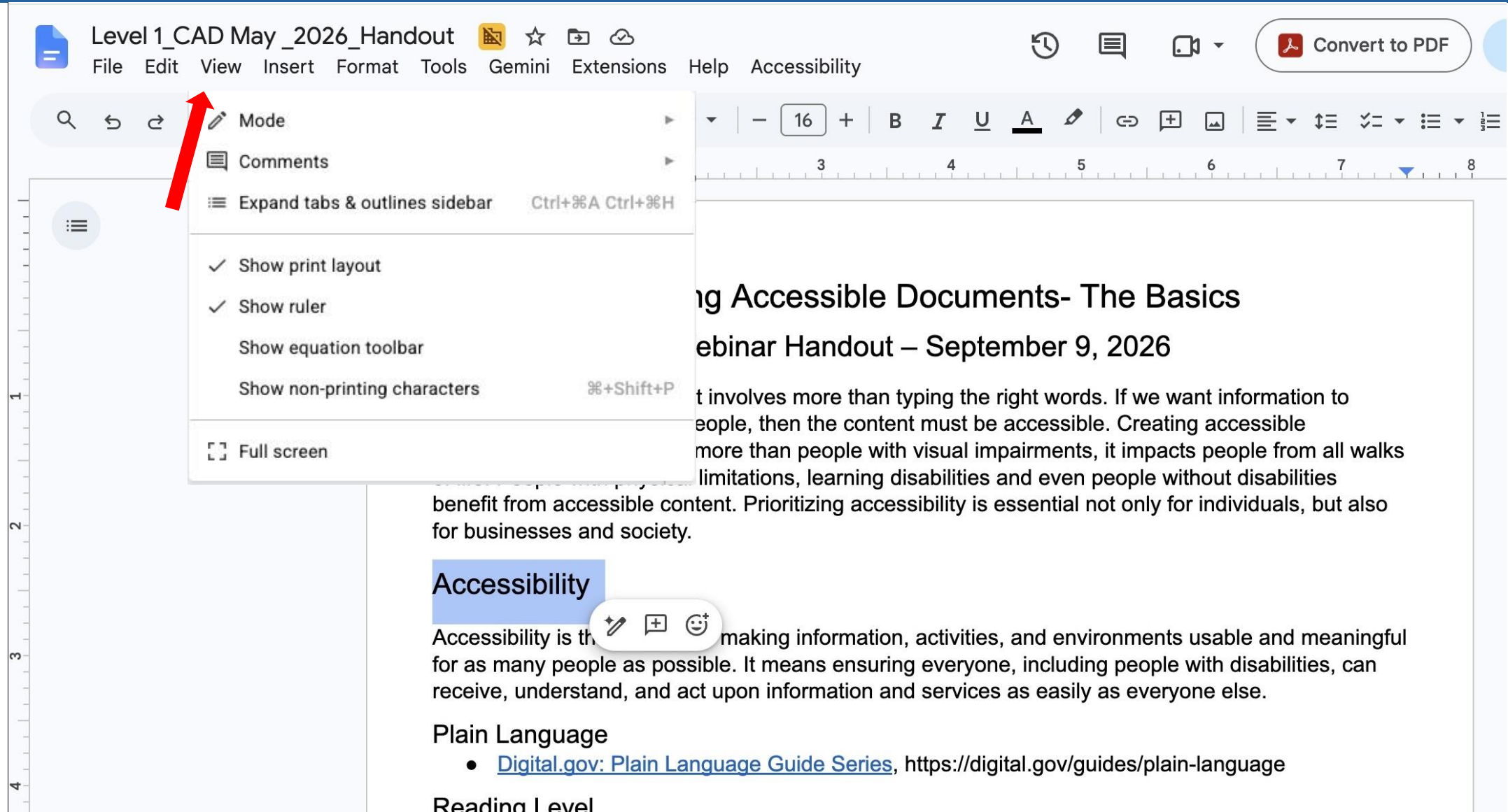
making information, activities, and environments usable and meaningful
le. It means ensuring everyone, including people with disabilities, can
upon information and services as easily as everyone else.

uage Guide Series, <https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language>

H1

H2

Outline View



The screenshot shows the Google Docs interface for a document titled "Level 1_CAD May _2026_Handout". The "View" menu is open, and a red arrow points to the "Expand tabs & outlines sidebar" option. The document content includes a title "Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics", a subtitle "Webinar Handout – September 9, 2026", and a paragraph about accessibility. A blue highlight is visible on the word "Accessibility" in the text.

Level 1_CAD May _2026_Handout

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Gemini Extensions Help Accessibility

Mode

Comments

Expand tabs & outlines sidebar Ctrl+⌘A Ctrl+⌘H

✓ Show print layout

✓ Show ruler

Show equation toolbar

Show non-printing characters ⌘+Shift+P

Full screen

Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics

Webinar Handout – September 9, 2026

It involves more than typing the right words. If we want information to be accessible to all people, then the content must be accessible. Creating accessible documents is more than people with visual impairments, it impacts people from all walks of life, including people with physical limitations, learning disabilities and even people without disabilities.

benefit from accessible content. Prioritizing accessibility is essential not only for individuals, but also for businesses and society.

Accessibility

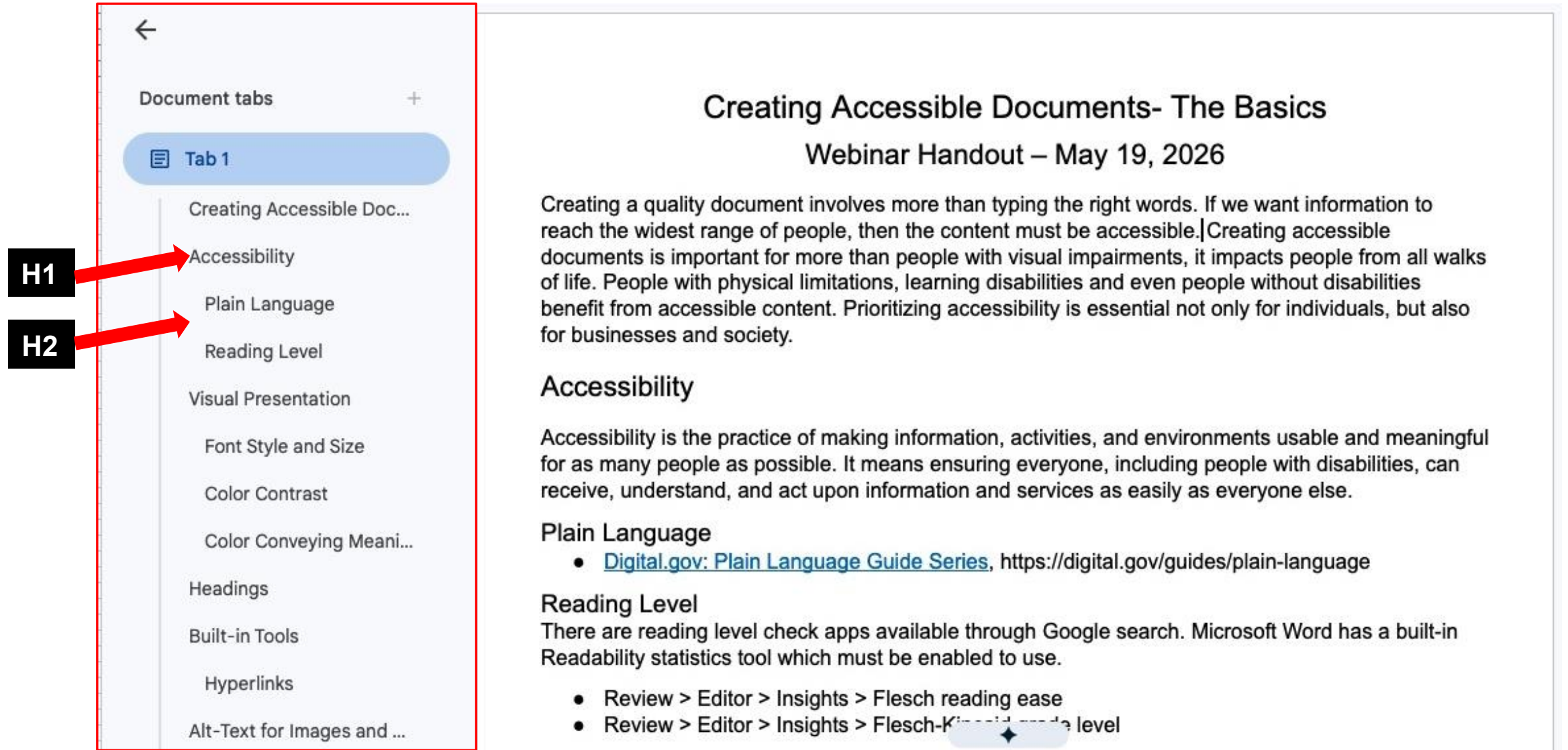
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Plain Language

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Reading Level

Outline View Google Docs



The image shows a screenshot of the Google Docs interface in Outline View. On the left, a sidebar menu is visible, containing a list of document sections. A red box highlights the 'Accessibility' section, which is the first item in the list. A red arrow points from a black box labeled 'H1' to the 'Accessibility' section. Another red arrow points from a black box labeled 'H2' to the 'Plain Language' section, which is the second item in the list. The main content area on the right displays the document text, which is a webinar handout titled 'Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics' dated May 19, 2026. The text discusses the importance of creating accessible documents for a wide range of people, including those with visual impairments, physical limitations, and learning disabilities. The document is structured with a main title, a subtitle, and several sections: 'Accessibility', 'Plain Language', and 'Reading Level'. The 'Accessibility' section is the first section of the document, and the 'Plain Language' section is the second section. The 'Reading Level' section is the third section. The document is a webinar handout titled 'Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics' dated May 19, 2026. The text discusses the importance of creating accessible documents for a wide range of people, including those with visual impairments, physical limitations, and learning disabilities. The document is structured with a main title, a subtitle, and several sections: 'Accessibility', 'Plain Language', and 'Reading Level'. The 'Accessibility' section is the first section of the document, and the 'Plain Language' section is the second section. The 'Reading Level' section is the third section.

H1 → Accessibility

H2 → Plain Language

Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics

Webinar Handout – May 19, 2026

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Reading Level

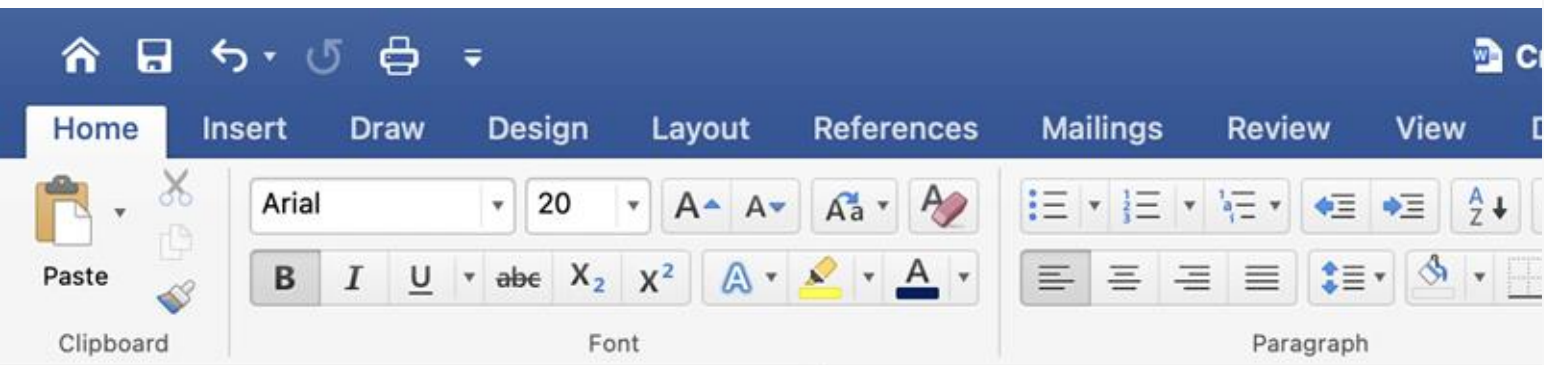
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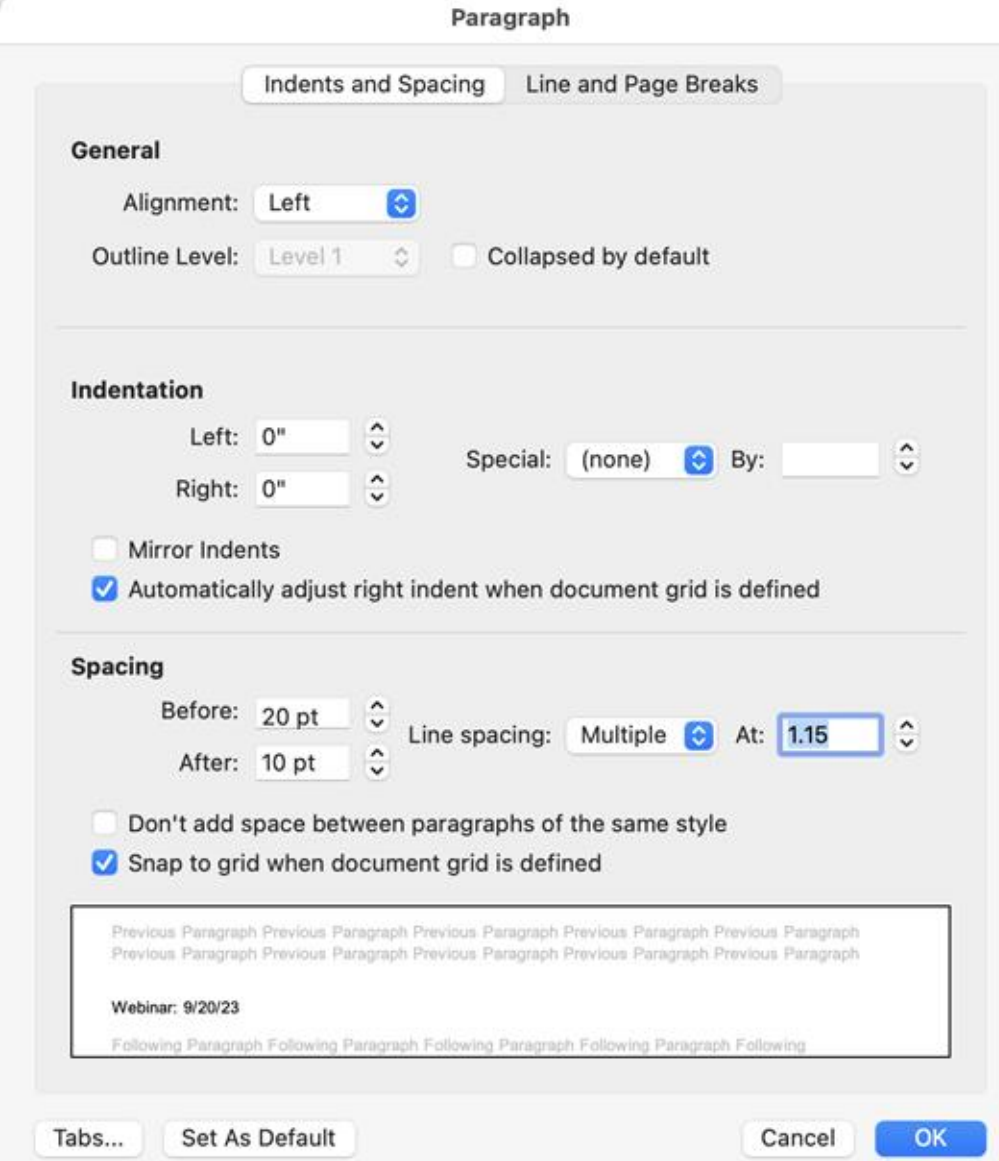
Built-in Tools



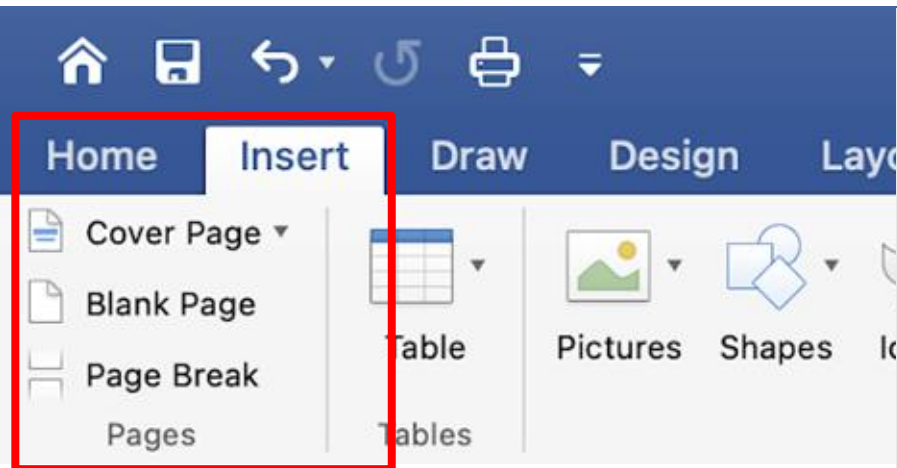
White Space



- 1.0
- ✓ 1.15
- 1.5
- 2.0
- 2.5
- 3.0
- Line Spacing Options...
- Remove Space Before Paragraph
- Remove Space After Paragraph



Page Breaks



and make the necessary adjustments. You can select that the modifications be applied to the entire document. This will change the text using that style throughout the document.

In Google Docs, you can add a Heading from the main toolbar, select the text and look for the styles dropdown menu.



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207-621-3195

Page 3

Built-in Tools

Use the built-in tools to format your document. Repeated use of tab or return creates dead air for screen readers and there is no indication the document continues.

- Increase the space between paragraphs by expanding the 'Paragraph' tools under the 'Home' menu and adding space before or after the paragraph.
- To start a new page, use the 'Page Break' option under the 'Insert' menu.

Hyperlinks

Be descriptive and concise; where will the link take you?

Avoid: More information can be found [here](#).

YES!

- More information can be found on [Maine CITE's website](#).
- More information can be found on [Maine CITE's website](#), www.mainecite.org.

Hyperlink Tools

Long URL addresses may be easily confused or forgotten.

- Watch this webinar: <https://mainecite.org/trainings/creating-accessible-content-level-1-november-20-2024/>

Shorten hyperlinks with Tiny URL (free), Bit.ly (free limited use), or Ow.ly (free trial)

- Watch the [Level 1 CAC training](https://tinyurl.com/yck6my83), (<https://tinyurl.com/yck6my83>)

Alternative Text (Alt text)

- Provides a description of any non-text elements.
- Describes the content or function of the image.
- Images, icons, charts, maps, and text images.

Alt text: The top of a dog's face looking upwards.



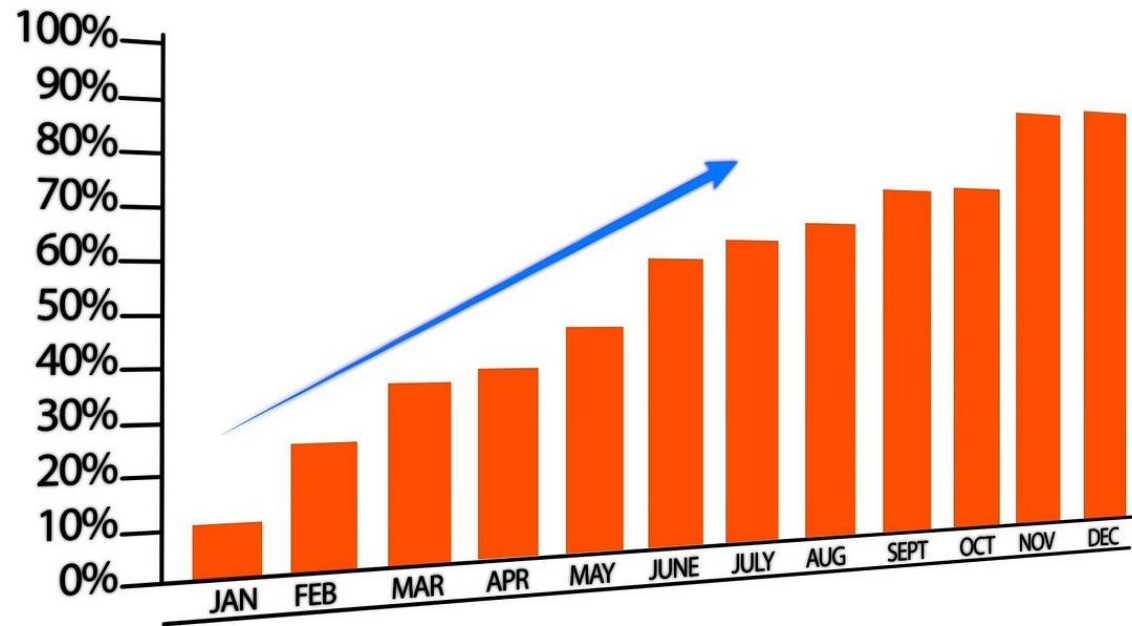
Screen Reader Reading Alt Text

Screen reader test
Images with and without
alt attribute

<https://tinyurl.com/evj68ft2>

Alt Text Best Practices

- Keep it short
- Accurate and equivalent
- But not redundant



Alt text: A bar chart showing increased percentages over 12-months.

Adding Alt Text



Save as Picture...
Change Picture >
Group >
Bring to Front >
Send to Back >
Hyperlink... ⌘ K
Insert Caption...
Wrap Text >
View Alt Text...
Crop
Auto Crop
Size and Position...
Format Picture... ⌘ 1

Alt Text

How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind or low vision?

- The subject(s) in detail
- The setting
- The actions or interactions
- Other relevant information

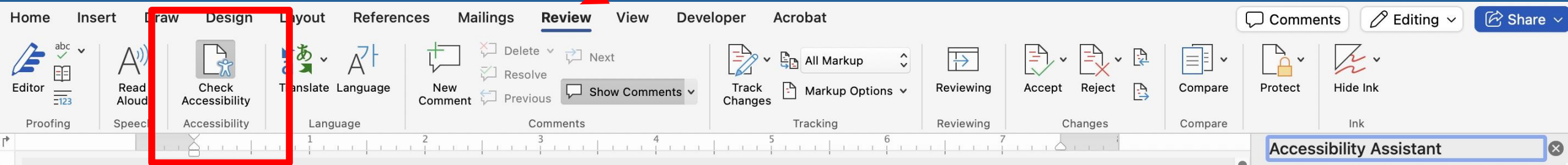
(1-2 detailed sentences recommended)

Black dog's face looking upwards.

☐ Mark as decorative

Generate alt text for me

Accessibility Checker - Word



Creating Accessible Documents- The Basics

Webinar Handout – May 19, 2026

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Plain Language

- [Digital.gov: Plain Language Guide Series](https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language), <https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language>

Reading Level

Accessibility Assistant

Keep going!

Fix the remaining issues in the document to make it accessible to everyone.

Color and Contrast

Hard-to-read text contrast ☒ >

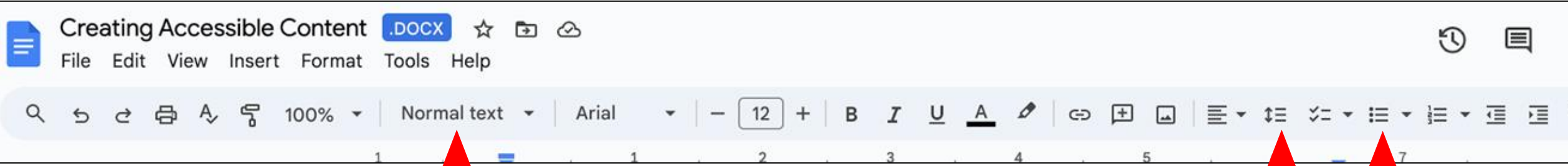
Media and Illustrations

Missing alt text 1 >

Tables

Missing table header ☒ >

Google Docs Accessibility



Accessibility features are built into Google applications too!

- Alt-Text
- Headings
- Lists
- Line spacing

Accessibility Checkers

Some items may require manual checking:

- Color contrast
- Information provided in color
- Bullet and numbered lists
- Font readability
- Abbreviations and terms
- Grammar and spelling
- Accuracy of alt text



It's Accessible, now what?



Reach out! We are here to help!



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207-621-3195