Microsoft Outlook

Accessibility Quick Card

Follow these best practices to help make emails accessible in Classic Outlook. For more information and training on Outlook email accessibility, especially signatures, visit the [MNIT Office of Accessibility website](#).

Use HTML format when possible

HTML works with most email programs and supports text formatting. To check your settings, go to File > Options > Mail (Alt, F, O, then tab to Mail).

Choose appropriate fonts and font sizes

Outlook's default font is Aptos, size 11pt. Keep this recommended font or choose another sans serif font of at least 11pt for greater readability.

Check color contrast in fonts and backgrounds

Color contrast must meet standards throughout the email. Normal text to background ratio is 4.5:1. Non-text elements and large text (a minimum of 14pt bold or 18pt) ratios are 3:1. Use the default background. Patterned and colored backgrounds can impact security, readability and contrast, or bandwidth and downloading.

Use email styles

In Outlook's Format Text tab, use heading and paragraph styles with logical hierarchy to structure the email content. Also set up these formatting preferences from this tab for future emails: select "Change Styles" then "Set as Default" (Alt, O, G, D). Extra spaces, tabs, and empty paragraphs cause confusion for assistive technology users.

Use plain language

Put key information up front. Use bulleted lists to segment supporting points. Write in active voice: subject of the sentence performs the action.

Name hyperlinks appropriately

Links should contain meaningful text that describes the link's destination or subject. Do not use generic language, such as "click here."

Add alt text to images and objects

Use informative and concise alt text descriptions for important graphics or embedded objects. For example, "Person in wheelchair on ramp" rather than "Smiling woman sitting in a green wheelchair posing on ramp." Outlook doesn't have the "Mark as decorative" checkbox, rather add "Decorative" as the alt text if appropriate.

Create accessible signatures

Contact information should be in text, not a graphic. Logos must have alt text. Do not use tables to format signatures.

Use "Attach File" to add attachments

For emails, use "Attach File" in the ribbon (Alt, H, AF). For appointments, send a separate email with attachments. Note: The action to drag a file and drop it into the body of an email or appointment invitation using assistive technology is not available in all versions of Outlook.

Use the Accessibility Checker tool

This built-in tool found under the Review tab gives details on potential issues and suggestions to correct them. However, it can't find everything. Perform manual checks in addition to the automated accessibility checker.

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