



# Static Maps

## Accessibility Quick Card

Static digital maps are images inserted into a document – such as Word, InDesign, or PDF – with surrounding content. Follow these best practices to help create static maps that are well-designed and accessible.

For full guidance and tools, including standards and the complete Map Design Guide, visit the [MNIT Office of Accessibility website](#).

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### Map tips

#### Start with a clear goal

Design the map to support the document's purpose. If the information is better shared as a table or list, use that instead.

#### Design the map for accessibility

Use best practices outlined in the Map Design Guide.

Make sure the map is readable and understandable. Use high contrast colors, clear labels, and patterns or shapes to distinguish features. Don't rely on color alone to convey meaning.

Color must also meet contrast standards. 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. Validate design colors with color vision checkers.

#### Convert the map to a usable format

Export the map as a flat image file. Use a JPG for photo-based maps and a PNG for maps with flat colors or text. Try both formats to find the best quality and smallest file size.

#### Add the map image to the document

Insert the map into an application that supports accessibility, such as Microsoft Word or Adobe InDesign.



## Final document tips

### Describe the map with surrounding content

The content surrounding the map should contain the essential descriptive text which conveys the map's message. Include a title, caption, paragraph text, data table, or link to explain the map's message.

### Apply accessibility to the map and document

**Maps:** In the document, tag the map as a single image (Figure) and add brief alt text. Tag graphical elements as decorative if they are not informative or don't support the meaning of the document's text. This ensures the map and its relevant content can be read by users of assistive technologies, like a screen reader.

**Document:** Reference the applicable [document program quick reference card](#). If the program isn't listed, use the Microsoft Word card. Ensure styles, reading order, links, informative images, color contrast, and properties meet standards.

### Read the final flow

Does the document make sense? Is the map understandable using only alt text and surrounding document text? If you need more information, could you easily find it?

### Test the final file for accessibility

Follow best practices for digital accessibility testing by using a combination of automated and manual tools. Check that alt text reads clearly with a screen reader. Use the built-in accessibility checker tool in the document software, if available.

If exporting to a PDF, flatten the file (removing layers) with as few attributes as possible or map elements may disappear when applying accessibility features.

### Include contact information

Add an email or phone number so users can request the map in another format.



[MNIT Office of Accessibility training web page](#)