



April 8, 2026

Advanced Accessibility Training

Agenda

01

Overview
(5 mins)

02

**Advanced Accessibility
Training Presentation**
(45 mins)

03

**Q&A Closing
Evaluation**
(10 mins)

Announcements

1. All participants will be muted during the presentation. Participants will be able to ask questions or make comments during the Q&A portion of today's session.
2. This session will be recorded. Presentation materials and recording will be posted in the Public Health Communicator Peer Network Online Community next week.
3. If you need tech support, please send **Michael Milligan** a message via Zoom chat.



Speakers



Heidi Satter
Director, Web & Data Solutions
ASTHO



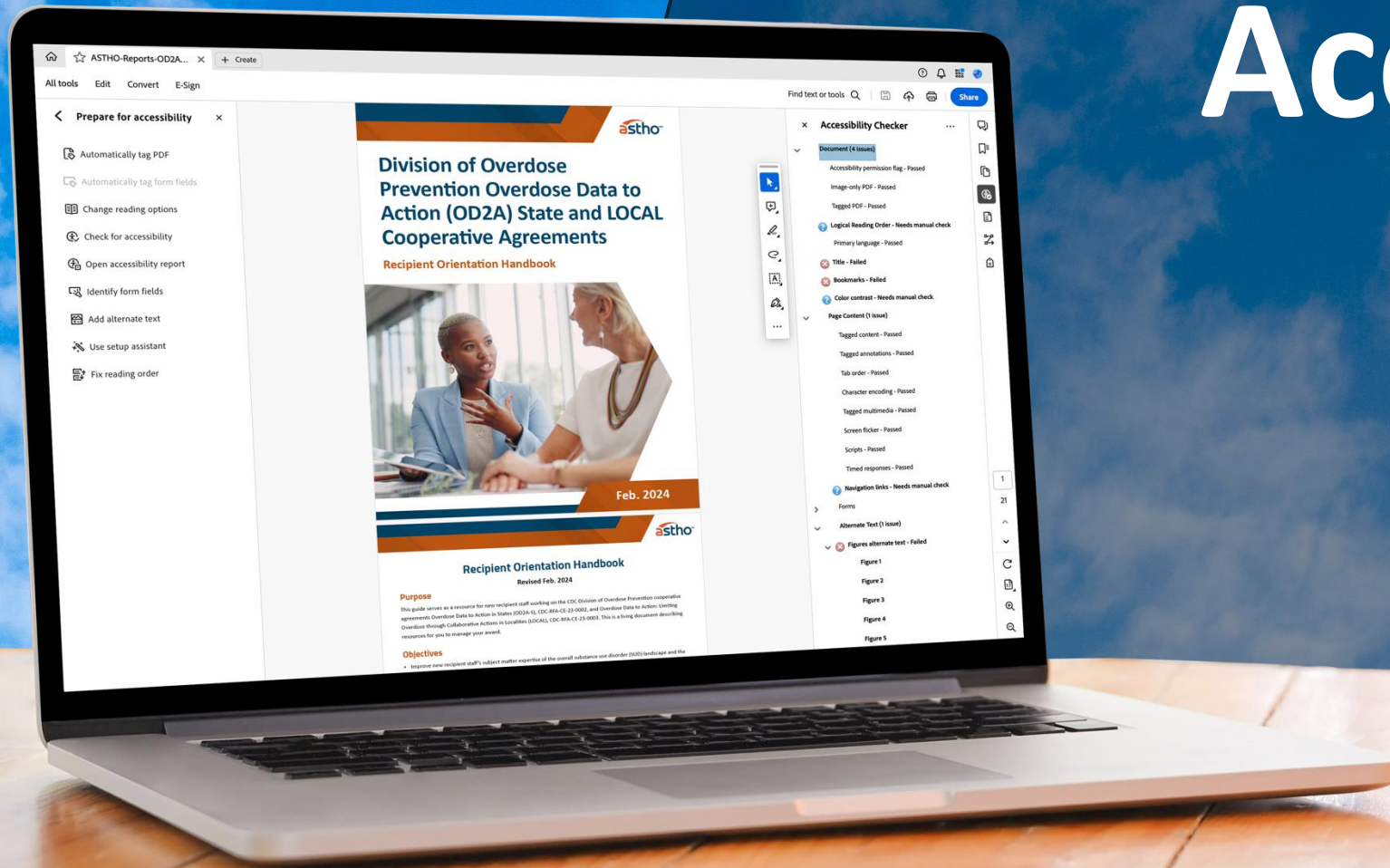
Emily Lapayowker
Assistant Director, Web Content
ASTHO



Christopher Preheim
Manager, Graphic Design
ASTHO



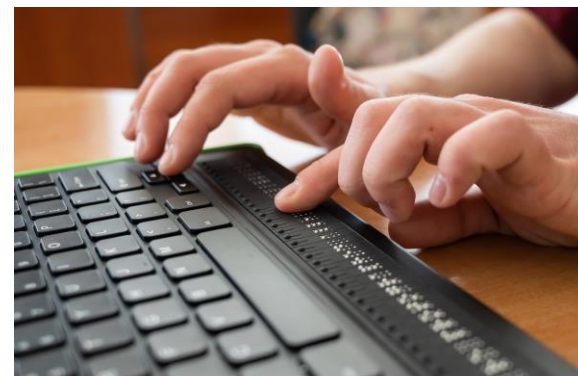
Advanced Accessibility Training



Learning Objectives

After this session, attendees should be able to:

- Understand the ADA Title II Web Rule requirements + Legal and Real World Impact.
- Be familiar with common document remediation strategies.
- Understand the commonalities between website and document accessibility.



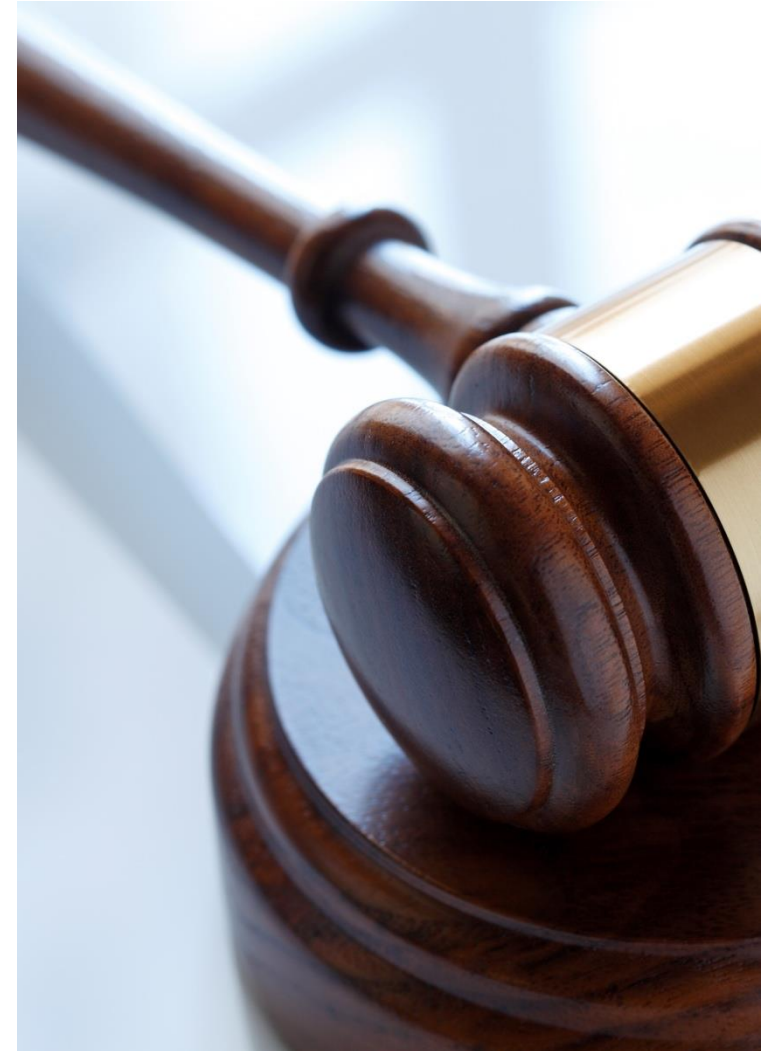
What makes the Title II Web Rule significant?

- It's the first time the government has explicitly named the standard they want everyone to meet: **WCAG 2.1 AA**.
- It includes a hard deadline.
 - For jurisdictions of 50,000 or more: **April 24, 2026**.
 - For special district governments: April 26, 2027.
 - For jurisdictions of 49,999 or less: April 26, 2027.
- It contains a summary of exceptions.
- It allows for the use of conforming alternate versions of content that cannot be made accessible.

Lawsuits and Enforcement

- Volume: Over 25,000 digital accessibility lawsuits filed since 2018; 5,000+ in 2025 alone.
- Industries: E-commerce, food service, entertainment, healthcare, and banking are most targeted.
- State Hotspots: New York, California, and Florida lead in filings.
- Penalties: ADA Title III allows only injunctive relief, but state laws (e.g., California Unruh Act) provide statutory damages (\$4,000 per violation).
- Don't Use Overlays: FTC \$1 million fine against overlay provider.
 - Accessibility overlays and widgets (JavaScript tools that claim to make websites accessible) have been widely marketed as quick fixes but they don't address underlying code-level accessibility barriers, they often create new barriers, and they tend to provide a "separate but equal" experience which is contrary to the spirit of accessibility laws.

Disclaimer: I am not a lawyer. Please consult a lawyer for legal advice.



WCAG standards are principle-based, which means that rather than requiring all web browsers to meet a specific technical standard, WCAG requires that digital content adheres to the POUR principles. All four principles focus on the user's experience:

- **Perceivable:** All information must be presented in a way that ensures users can perceive it using at least one of their senses.
- **Operable:** A website is considered operable if all users can effectively navigate it, even those who employ assistive technology, such as screen readers.
- **Understandable:** This is a two-pronged principle — users must be able to understand how to use a site and understand its content.
- **Robust:** Content must be robust enough that multiple technologies, including assistive devices like screen readers, can interpret it.

The Real-World Impact



This might all seem academic right now, with little real-world impact, but that's not the case.

- 27.8% of American adults have some type of disability. That means you risk leaving out a third of our audience when you skip best practices.
- Worldwide, the impact is substantial. Roughly 1.3 billion people experience a **significant** disability. That's about 16% of the world.
- An estimated 1 in 12 American males (8%) are affected by some form of colorblindness.
- The disability community is the largest minority group in the world. It's also the only one any of us could end up joining at any time.
- Disability can be temporary. For example: a broken leg, temporary hearing loss, a concussion.

The disability community is closer to home than you might think. It may not be you, but it definitely contains your family, friends, and coworkers.

Accessibility is necessary for some, but useful for all!

Accommodations developed to help people with disabilities almost always make life better for people who do not have a disability.

- Curb cuts, ramps, automatic doors.
- Captions and transcripts.
- Voice-to-text software, such as Dragon.
- Large font option on cell phones.

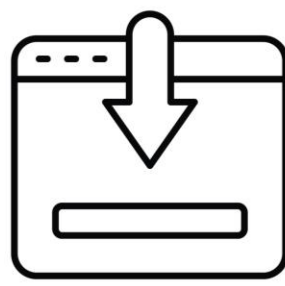
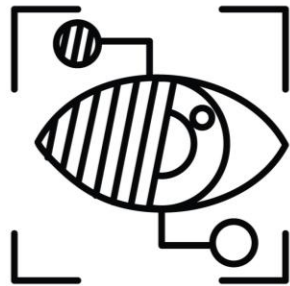
Employing best practices when you create content also has benefits for users who don't have a disability.

- It helps with SEO.
- Content is easy to scan when headings are used correctly.
- Too many links can overwhelm sighted users.
- A high color contrast ratio makes information easier to see.
- If an image doesn't load, your alt text will still be visible.

A Lot of Overlap

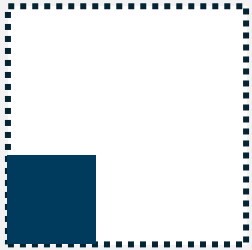
It's tempting to think of this work as siloed, but accessibility work across different areas is still based in the same principles.

- Accessible webpages and documents both use headers for structure.
- Correct color use and contrast are crucial to accessible visuals, documents, and webpages.
- Linking best practices are the same on websites and in documents.
- Alt text matters for all digital content, including social media.
- Plain language is considered a best practice across the board.



7 Key Design Principles

Scale



Draw attention to design elements by creating emphasis.

Hierarchy



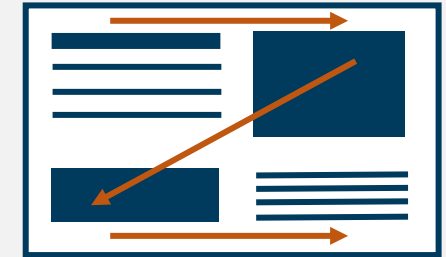
Signals importance based on what attracts the eye first.

Negative Space



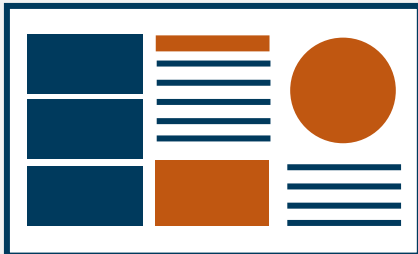
Breathing room between design elements.

Direction



Create a path that your eye reads in the letter of Z, L, or Y.

Repetition



Add consistency or accent through duplication of 3, 5, or 7.

Contrast



Light vs Dark or Thin vs Thick.

Balance



Proportions within that distributed equally through symmetry.

What About Remediation?



Remediation is the process of making something accessible that wasn't before.

Unfortunately, it's not always an option. And remediation is not always simple or easy. This is why it's always best to build in accessibility from the start.

- **Easy:** Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, most HTML pages.
- **Hard:** PDFs.
- **Impossible:** An embedded dashboard from a platform that does not support keyboard navigation.

If something cannot be remediated, you must have another way for people to access the content. Those are called Conforming Alternate Versions.

Conforming Alternate Versions

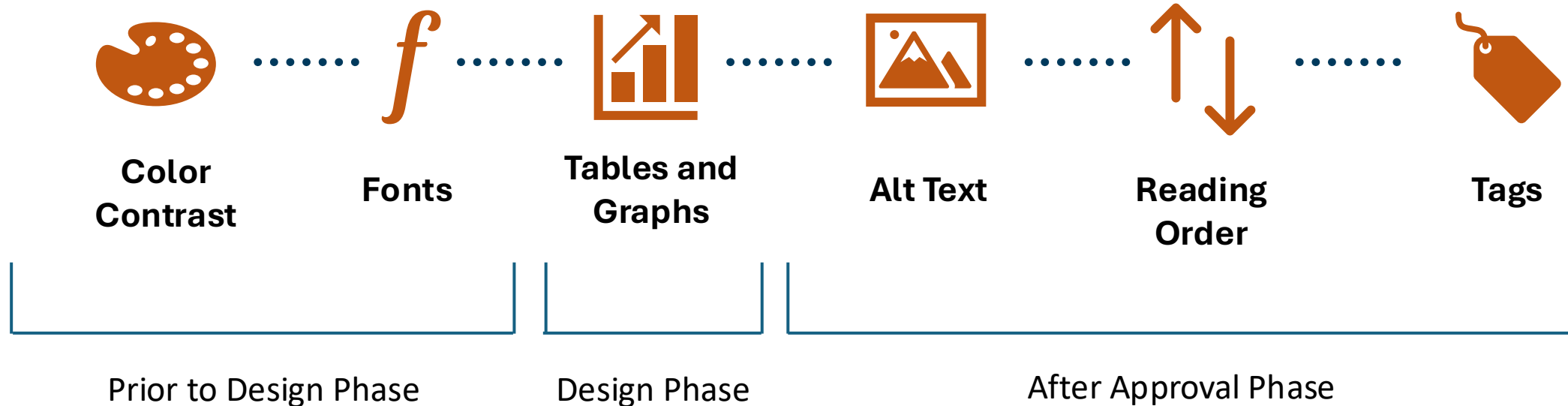
A Conforming Alternate Version provides the same information in a second, accessible format. Users should be able to access the alternate version easily. Usually via an obvious, accessible link or by email.

Conforming Alternate Versions must be kept up-to-date. If you update that inaccessible dashboard, then you need to update the alternate version, too.

Design's Approach

Working towards implementing accessibility best practices is a tedious and a detail-oriented process that has a lot of elements that need to work together to create a seamless result. This process is often the final touch we add to our products via Adobe Acrobat Pro. Elements like document length and quantity of charts, graphs, and images contribute to the time it takes to complete the final product.

The core pillars we focus on to achieve this are:













































Color Contrast

Color contrast often shouldn't be a "game-time" decision. Plan ahead by researching and determining what colors in your brand meet the WCAG AA requirements. There may be a need to adjust colors in order to achieve this

<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

<https://toolness.github.io/accessible-color-matrix/>

	White text #FFFFFF Aa	Main Blue text #003A5D Aa	Main Orange text #C05711 Aa	Accent 1 text #4679AE Aa	Accent 2 text #6EC4E9 Aa	Accent 3 text #E6E1E7 Aa
 Accent 3 background #E6E1E7						
 Accent 2 background #6EC4E9						
 Accent 1 background #4679AE						
 Main Orange background #C05711						
 Main Blue background #003A5D						
 White background #FFFFFF						

Similar to Color Contrast, your fonts should be well established and researched ahead of time. While there are no exact defining points dictating what makes a font 508 Compliant, there are a few pointers to help:

- **Simple Shapes:** Clean lines without unnecessary decoration (sans-serif is usually preferred for screens).
- **Clear Distinctions:** Easily distinguishable characters (e.g., distinguishing "1", "l", and "I").
- **High Legibility:** Good spacing between letters and characters, with a high "x-height" (tall lowercase letters).
- **Font Weights:** Medium or bold weights are preferred, as thin fonts can disappear on screens. Having the various font family weights available are a great asset to have when the design needs something to differentiate a text heavy product.

Figure 1: Ligature examples

Ligatures		Fixed	
fi	fish	fi	fish
fl	flow	fl	flow
ff	off	ff	off
ffi	office	ffi	office
ffl	baffled	ffl	baffled
Th	This	Th	This

Tables and Graphs

Tables:

There should be visual distinctions between the individual cells for designed products. The header cells will be in a darker, solid color while subsequent boxes alternate rows with tinted colors (usually 15% tint). Avoid combining cells if it can be helped (screen readers trip up) and ensure they're evenly spaced and have padding around the text when applicable. A title should be included as well.

Table 1: Title Example

Title 1	Title 2	Title 3	Title 4
Text Here	Text Here	Text Here	Text Here
Text Here	Text Here	Text Here	Text Here
Text Here	Text Here	Text Here	Text Here
Text Here	Text Here	Text Here	Text Here

Graphs:

The values should be color coded. Texture can be used to help distinguish further. A divider between the values is needed with an added redundancy of labeling in or near their respective amount. In addition, a key denoting the data should be nearby. A title should also be included.

Chart 1: Title Example

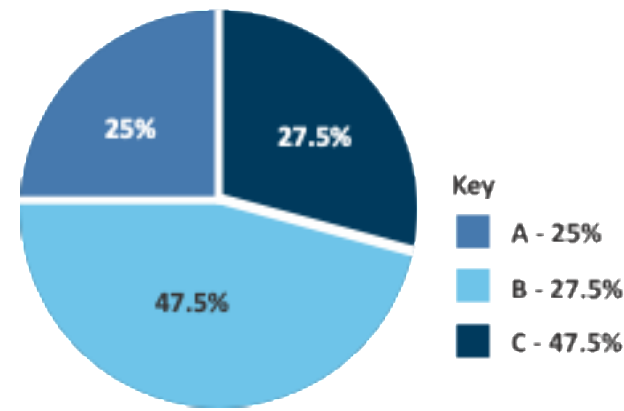
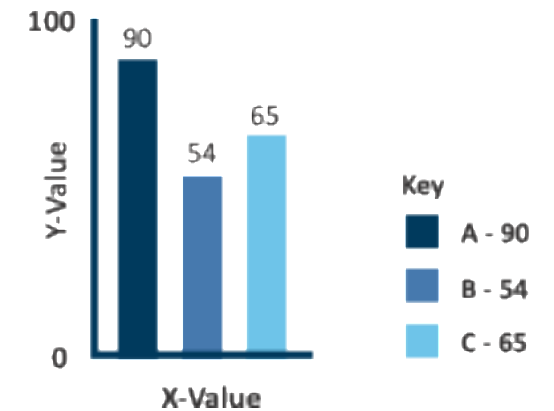
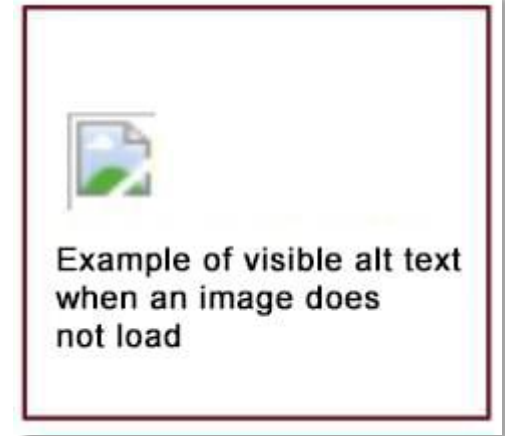


Chart 2: Title Example



Best Practices for Alt Text

- Be succinct. The ideal length is between a few words and a couple short sentences, target 150 characters. The goal is to be brief but still let users know what important information the image conveys.
- Avoid phrases like “image of,” because screen readers will identify all images as a “graphic.”
- For complex images such as charts or graphs, make sure you communicate what the graph is telling users, rather than just telling them what it looks like.
- Not all images convey information. In those cases, add “decorative.” as the alt text — this will let the screen reader know that the image is considered decorative.
- Alt text makes content accessible to people have difficulty understanding the meaning of the visual content, or users without access to high-speed internet who can’t access images on the web.
- **Bonus:** It also makes the visual content available for technical applications, such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO), digital assistance, and artificial intelligence.



Structure and Style

Webpages and Word documents have built-in styles that help keep your document consistent and make them more accessible. For example, screen readers use headers and lists to navigate pages and documents, making it easier for users to understand.

Headers should always be used and should be deployed in order. Use H1 for the title, H2 for section headers, H3 for subsections, and so on, down to H6.

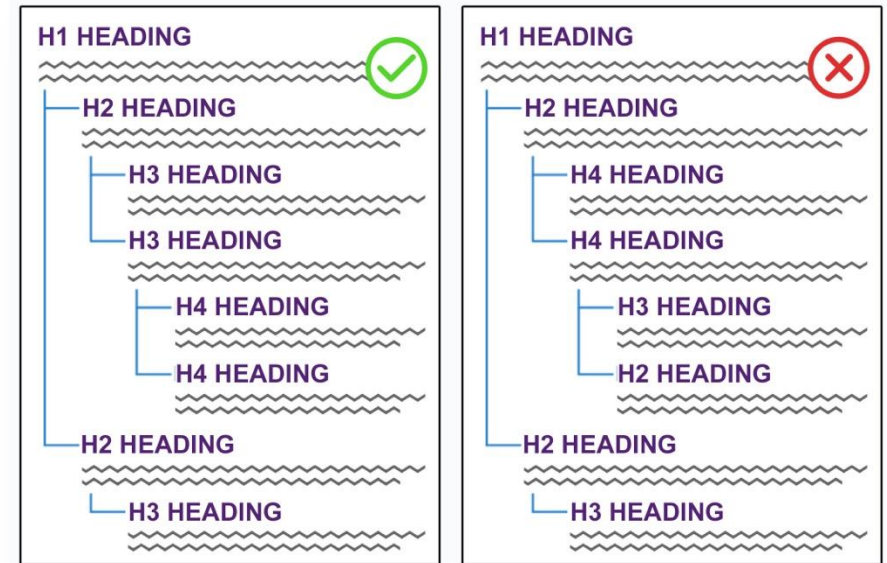
Lists should be deployed thoughtfully. Use an ordered list if you are outlining steps in a process. Use an unordered list for things that are not sequential (e.g., ingredients in a recipe).

Bonus: Using structures and styles in Word may give you a head start on turning that document into an accessible PDF.

Figure 1: Microsoft Word Style Ribbon



Figure 2: Header Hierarchy



PDF tagging is the process of creating a hidden structural map (<Tags>) within a PDF file, allowing screen readers to interpret content, such as headings, paragraphs, tables, and images.

The map consists of “nesting” that looks like a step-tier system. All tags require a certain location within their tag nest to be considered compliant, but some contain more detailed and stringent attention - e.g. Tables, Bullets, and Numbering.

This is often the hardest element to learn out of the entire 508 process and requires the most time to fix. There aren't always shortcuts that be done and sometimes you won't be able to undo changes.

Root Tags – Main tag where everything is nested under it.

Container/Group Tags – Large and small sections (chapters).

Text Tags – Headers, Paragraph, Lists, Quotes, Captions, TOC, Link, Reference, Note, Span, etc...

Figure and Formula Tags – Graphics/Images and Formulas (mathematical).

Table Tags – The physical nested structure for tables with the same cells per column.

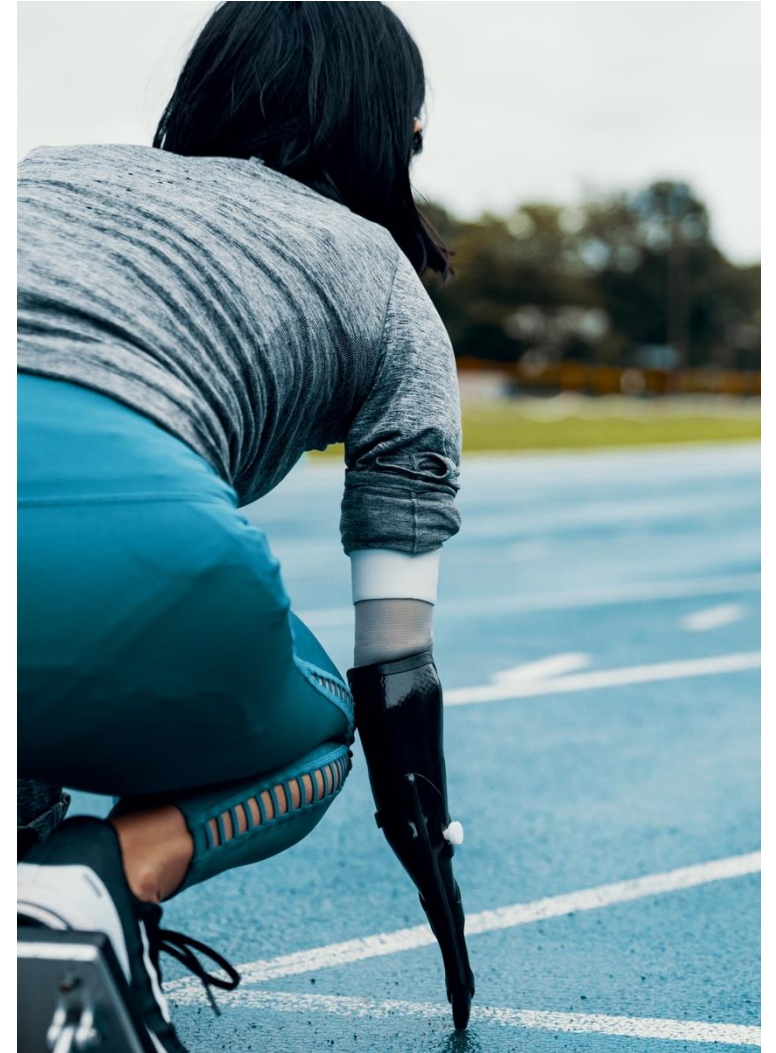
Other Tags – Decorative and non essential images.

For a complete list of tags and their meanings: Section508.gov

The Starting Line

So, what's something that you can do today, starting the second you sign out of this webinar? Here are some quick reminders of the best practices we covered today.

- Start using the built-in heading and list styles in your Word documents and your emails.
 - **Bonus:** Using headers correctly in Word will make it easy for the program to create a correct table of contents for you.
- Label tables, charts, and graphs. Always use a consistent naming convention.
 - **Bonus:** Using the Caption feature in Word will allow you to automatically create an index of tables and figures.
- Use accessible color contrast ratios and never rely on color alone to indicate meaning.
- Use best linking practices (sparingly and on descriptive text).
- Use plain language whenever possible.
- Include alt text for all images. Even the decorative ones.
- Always have captions and transcripts for recorded video.
- Always have transcripts for recorded audio.



Q & A Discussion

If you would like to submit a question to our speaker, please raise your hand or type your question into the chat box located at the bottom of your Zoom window.

Tell Us What You Think

Help us evaluate this training by visiting completing the evaluation form.
You can access the [link](#) in the chat or by scanning the QR code below:



Thank You!

*See you at our next PHCPN Office Hours
April 30, 2026 at 3 p.m. ET*

If you have follow-up questions or comments, email ocooper@astho.org