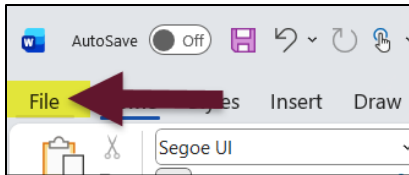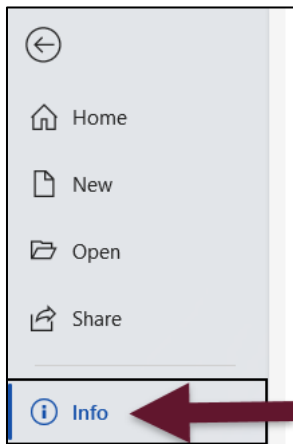# Making Word Files Accessible

TAMIU eLearning

Update the Title Property

Adding a title helps screen readers identify the document and provides useful metadata when it's shared online.
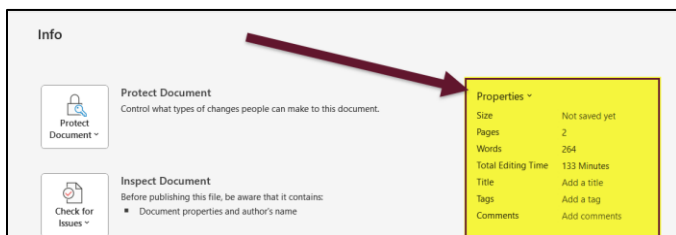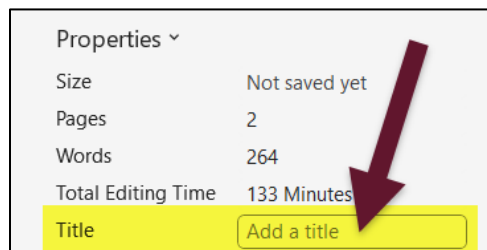
1. Select the **File** tab.

2. Choose **Info** from the left-hand menu.

3. On the right, locate the **Properties** section.


4. Click the **Title** field.

5. Type a **short, descriptive title** for the document (for example, *Introduction to Sociology Syllabus*).

6. **Save the document** to apply the changes.

Add Alt Text to Images

Adding alt text ensures that images are described for users who rely on screen readers; keep descriptions brief but meaningful, focusing on what the image communicates rather than its appearance.

1. **Right-click the image** in your document.
2. **Select Edit Alt Text** (**or View Alt Text**, depending on your version of Word).
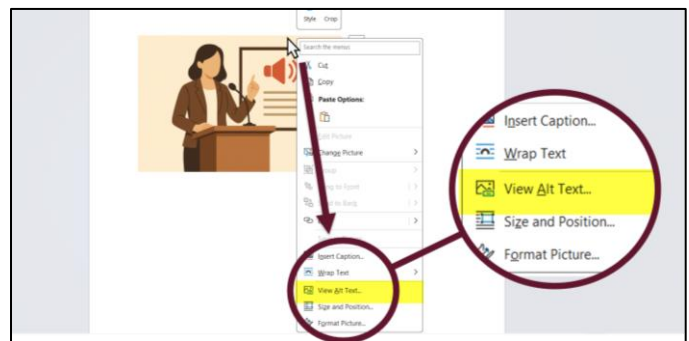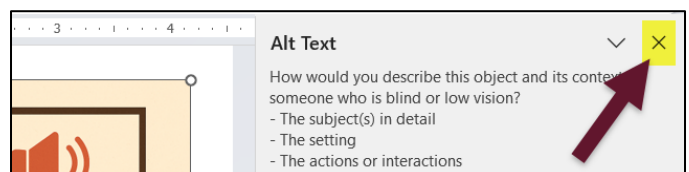

3. In the Alt Text pane, **type a short description** that explains the image's purpose or content.
   Example: "Image of professor presenting in front of her presentation slides."
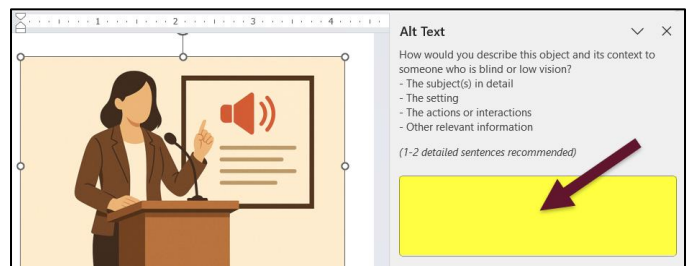
4. If the image is decorative and doesn't add meaning, check Mark as decorative instead of adding text.
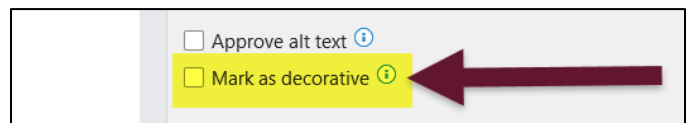
5. **Close** the Alt Text pane. Your description is automatically saved.

Use Proper Headings in Word Files

Headings create a clear structure that helps both readers and screen readers navigate your document easily. Avoid using bold or changing font size solely for structural purposes.
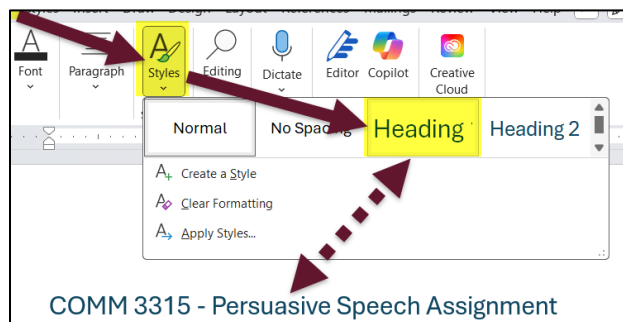
Option 1: Use Word's Built-in Heading Styles

This option utilizes Word's built-in heading styles when no formatting is present in the document.
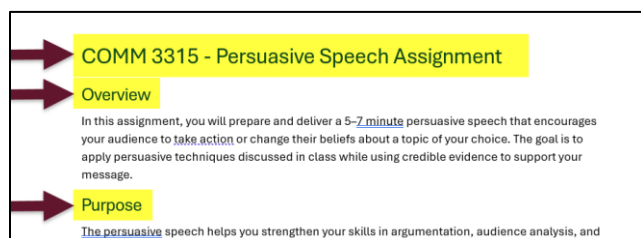
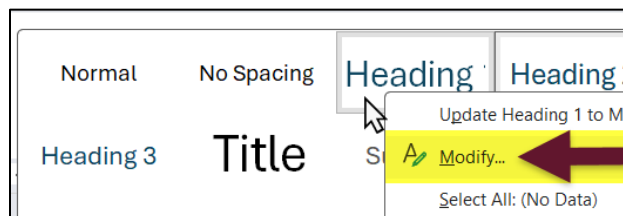1. **Highlight the text** you want to make a heading.
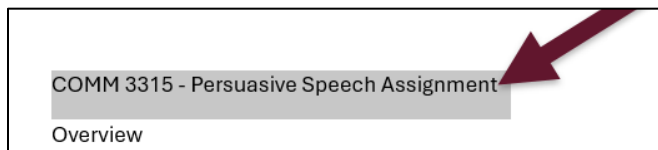
2. Under the **Home** tab, locate the **Styles** section, and **click the appropriate heading style** (*Heading 1*, *Heading 2*, etc.) for your text.

3. Apply heading styles throughout the document.

4. You can change the heading's formatting by right-clicking the style and selecting **Modify,** which lets you update the look for that heading level.
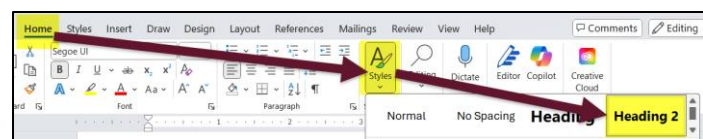

Option 2: Update Styles to Match your Text

This option updates Word's built-in heading styles to match the formatting already used in your document.
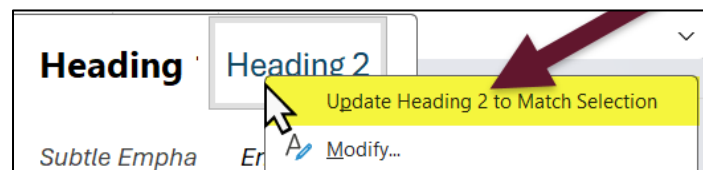
1. Highlight the text (with formatting) that you wish to update as a header.
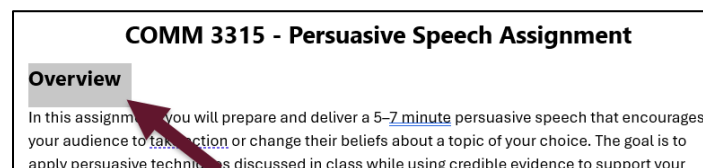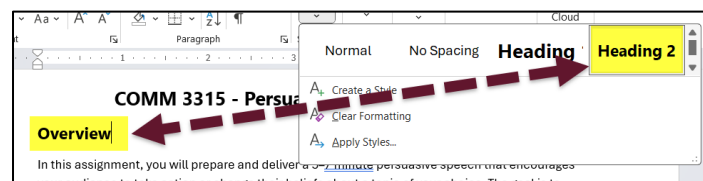

2. Under the **Home** tab, in the **Styles** section, **right-click the heading style** (*Heading 1*, *Heading 2*, etc.) that should match your customized text.

3. Select **Update Heading # to Match Selection**.

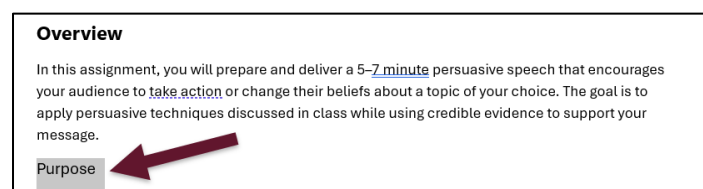4. The text is now a header at the selected level, and the heading style is now using custom formats.

5. Repeat #1-3 to **update** all heading styles you use.

6. Now that your heading styles are updated, you can reuse them throughout your document:

   a. Highlight another section title in your document.

   b. **Click on an updated heading style** to apply your customized formatting instantly.
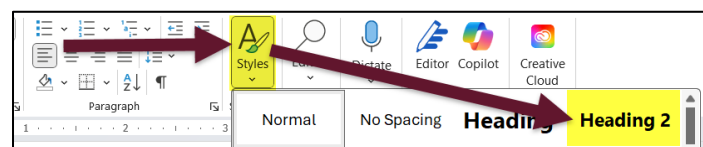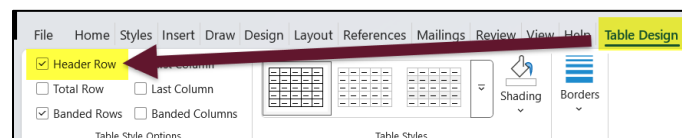
Fix Table Headers

Adding header rows helps screen readers announce each cell's context, making data easier to understand.
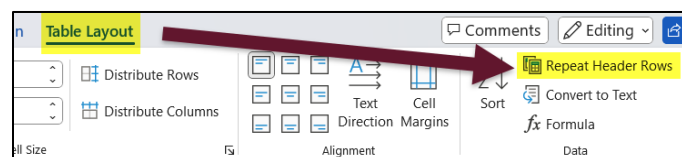
1. **Click** anywhere in a table's **header row**.

2. Go to the **Table Design** tab, and check the box for **Header Row** in the Table Style Options group.

3. Go to the **Table Layout** tab, and enable the **Repeat Header Rows** option.

Tip: Avoid merging cells or creating complex table layouts, as they can confuse screen readers.
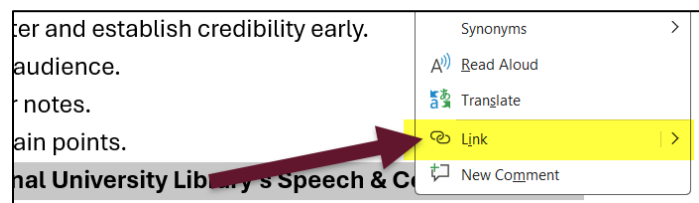
Use Meaningful Links

Meaningful links inform users of where the link will direct them, even when read out of context by a screen reader.

1. Highlight the text you want to turn into a link.
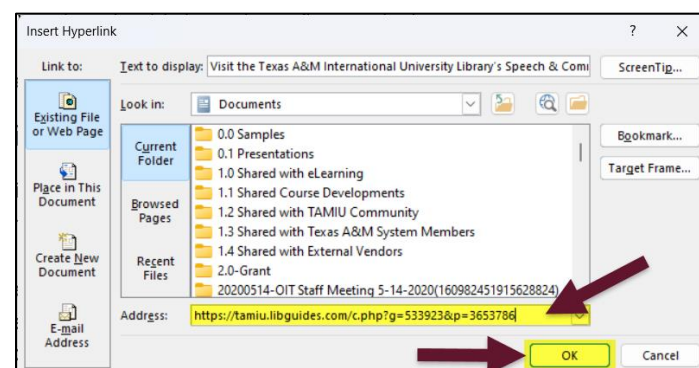   a. Use descriptive text for the link, such as *View Course Syllabus* instead of *Click here*.

2. Press **Ctrl + K** (Windows) or **Cmd + K** (Mac), or **right-click** and choose **Link**.

3. In the dialog box, paste or type the web address in the **Address field**.

4. Select **OK** to save the link.

Tips: Ensure Color Contrast

Good color contrast makes text readable for everyone, including users with low vision or color blindness.

The following are some general tips to follow:

- Use dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background.
- Avoid using color alone to convey meaning (for example, red for "important").
- To check contrast, print in grayscale or use an online contrast checker like **WebAIM Contrast Checker**.
- Adjust text or background colors until the text is easy to read.

Tips: Maintain Logical Reading Order

A logical reading order ensures screen readers follow content in the correct sequence.

1. Use simple layouts with one main column whenever possible.
2. Avoid placing important text inside text boxes, headers, or footers.
3. If using columns, make sure the reading order flows naturally from left to right and top to bottom.
4. Check the order by tabbing through the content or switching to Draft View.
5. Reorganize any elements that disrupt the logical flow.

Check Accessibility in Word

The **Accessibility Checker** in Microsoft Word helps you identify and fix accessibility issues before sharing your document with students.
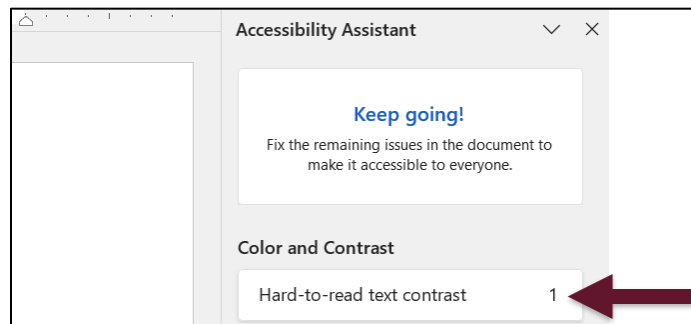
1. Go to the **Review** tab on the ribbon.
2. Select **Check Accessibility**.
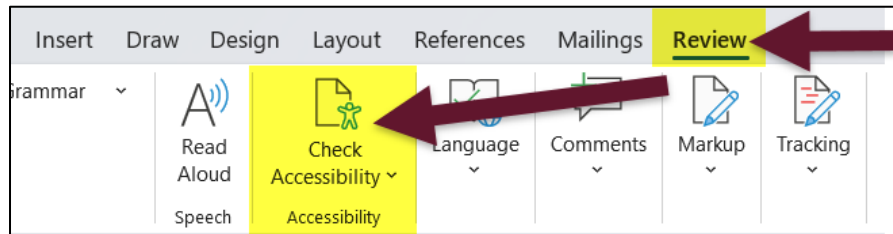
3. The **Accessibility Assistant panel** will open on the right side of the screen.
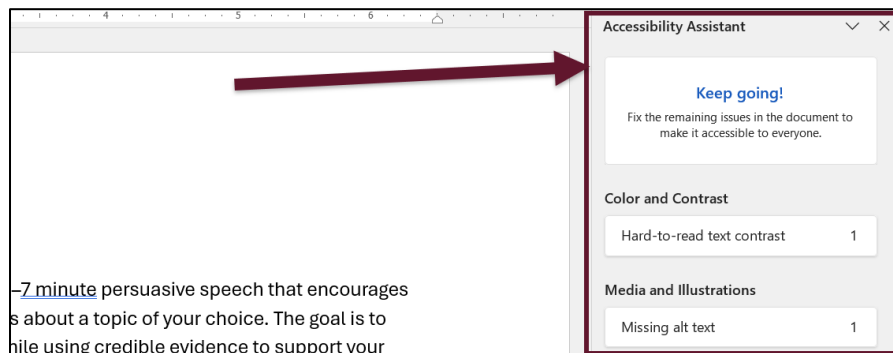
4. Review any listed issues in the panel.

5. Click each issue for details and suggested fixes.
6. Follow the prompts to correct issues directly from the panel.

Tip: Run the Accessibility Checker each time you finalize a document to ensure it's ready for all learners before uploading it to Blackboard.

Need Assistance?

For guidance with accessibility in Word or other instructional technologies, contact the **eLearning Team**. We're here to support you with Blackboard Ultra, course accessibility, and digital teaching tools!

TAMIU eLearning

For more support, contact the eLearning Team:
Email: elearning@tamiu.edu | **Call:** 956-326-2792 | **Visit:** CWT 208, Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 6 PM