**How to Write Accessible Emails**

Email is one of the communication corner stones within academia and the community at large. Creating accessible emails means an instructor can reach a wider range of students, especially those students who may use assistive technologies, such as screen readers. Potentially, all students can benefit from accessible emails that are structured in a consistent manor enabling them to easily find and see the information they need. An instructor who applies sound email accessible practices provides a model to all students on how to use email for communications in an effect way.

**Why it is Important to Create Accessible Emails**

In a learning environment where online communication is a daily occurrence for most, e-mail accessibility is becoming increasingly important. Ensuring that e-mails are accessible involves making sure that all students can access, read, and work with your e-mails, including those with disabilities who use assistive technology, such as screen readers, magnification, eye-tracking technology, and text-to-speech features (Hamilton, 2017).

By making emails accessible, you are unlocking your content to everyone, including people with different disabilities, so that they can read and work with your messages. It is especially important for professors to ensure that they create accessible emails because between 15% and 20% of post-secondary students have a disability (Snyder et al., 2019).

**Step-by-step instructions for Accessible Outlook Emails**

The following resources provide step-by-step instructions on how-to make Outlook emails accessible to people with diverse disabilities. You will learn, for example, how to add alt text to images so that people using screen readers will have access to a description of the image. In addition, you will learn how to use fonts, colors, and styles, in order to optimize the inclusiveness of your email messages.

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| **Type of resources** | **Accessibility How-To Tips Provided** | **Online Resource** |
| Government website | 1) Setting HTML as the default format2) Choosing email fonts3) Setting the default font4) Creating an accessible signature5) Adding ALT text to an image6) Adding accessible tables and lists | * [How to create accessible Outlook emails](https://gov.wales/how-create-accessible-outlook-emails)
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| Microsoft support website | 1) Adding ALT text to an image2) Adding meaningful hyperlinks3) How to convey information in an accessible way4) Using sufficient contrast5) Choosing appropriate font style and size6) Using built-in headings and styles7) Adding accessible tables | * [Make your Outlook email accessible to people with disabilities](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-outlook-email-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-71ce71f4-7b15-4b7a-a2e3-cf91721bbacb) [For Mac, Windows, web]
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| Microsoft support website | 1) Using the accessibility checker2) Fixing recommendations3) Checking accessibility while writing an email | * [Improve accessibility with the Accessibility Checker](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/improve-accessibility-with-the-accessibility-checker-a16f6de0-2f39-4a2b-8bd8-5ad801426c7f?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us%23picktab=windows)  [For Mac, Windows, web]
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| Videos - MS support  | 1) Setting HTML as the default format2) Choosing email fonts3) Creating an accessible signature4) Setting an email background | 1. [Improve email accessibility](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/video-improve-email-accessibility-ebf3730a-18f8-4b57-81d1-730086231775?wt.mc_id=otc_accessibility_video_training&ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us)
2. [Improve image accessibility in email](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/video-improve-image-accessibility-in-email-e93969e3-21c1-47ad-a4c5-0e5fb868a7f8)
3. [Add accessible tables and lists to email](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/video-add-accessible-tables-and-lists-to-email-dcaa9ca4-be57-4499-8af7-56409ab73b18)
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**Checklist Tips**

**Please check off the accessibility tips that you have included in your email. (Print PDF version)**

\_\_\_ I set HTML1 as the default format for my email.

\_\_\_ I used a simple, sans serif font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Segoe UI, or Franklin Gothic Book)

\_\_\_ I used a font that was 12-point or larger.

\_\_\_ There is a good colour contrast between the text and the background (e.g., black text on a white background).

\_\_\_ I added alt-text to all the images in the e-mail.

\_\_\_ I made sure that images are in line with the text, so that they are detected by screen readers.

\_\_\_ I used bulleted lists or tables to present information requiring more structure.

\_\_\_ I created an accessible signature.

\_\_\_ I included meaningful hyperlinks.

\_\_\_ All the attachments I added to the email are accessible.

\_\_\_ I used built-in headings to organize e-mail content.

**1 Note:** HTML format allows for greater flexibility in email design, such as the use of different fonts, styles, and colors, as well as accessible tables, embedded images, and meaningful hyperlinks.

**References**

Hamilton, C. (2017, August 28). 10 tips for making your e-mails accessible. *INSIGHTS*. <https://www.epsilon.com/us/insights/blog/10-tips-for-making-your-emails-accessible>

Snyder, T. D., de Brey, C., & Dillow, S. A. (2019). *Digest of education statistics 2017* (Report No. NCES 2018-070). National Center for Education Statistics. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED592104.pdf>

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