

# 5 Keywords

## to Get Started in Digital Document Accessibility

**Making your content accessible is not only the right thing to do, but it also expands your reach to the 15-20% of the global population who live with disabilities.**

**Document accessibility begins with an accessible PDF.** PDFs provide several ways for screen readers and other assistive technology to navigate a document. Understanding these keywords will be important for interpreting your accessibility test results.

**For additional tips, check out the post [“5 Tips to Get Started in Digital Document Accessibility.”](#)**

If accessibility sounds overwhelming, reach out to the [Learning and Resource Center](#) for assistance. Our team includes experts in design, accessibility, and e-learning who are ready to guide you through the process or take your project from concept to completion.

Content for this tipsheet was written by **Lindsey Engelhardt**.

- 1. Accessibility standards.** In the U.S., the federal agency that develops the accessibility standards is the [U.S. Access Board](#). The board aligns with the internationally recognized standards PDF/UA for its PDF-based standards. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has its own set of standards.
- 2. Tags and tag tree.** One key feature of a PDF is its use of tags. When correctly set up and exported, a PDF will provide a list of tags and their classifications. This list of tags is referred to as a tag tree. Classifications such as <p> (meaning a paragraph tag), <TOC> (meaning a Table of Contents tag), or <H1> (meaning a Headline 1 tag) help users navigate the document and understand the hierarchy of the content.
- 3. Alt text.** Alternative, or “alt” text, is what screen readers read aloud when they come upon a figure or link in a digital document. Alt text on figures, which can be logos, charts, images, icons, etc., should succinctly describe what sighted people see when they look at the figure. Alt text for links should describe where the link leads so users have a sense of where they will be taken if they select the link.
- 4. Reading order.** Reading order is another way screen readers and assistive technologies navigate content. Designers need to ensure that the reading order is properly set on each page of their document. A properly set reading order allows users to flow through the content in the order the designer or author intended.
- 5. Color contrast.** Having a strong color contrast ratio ensures that users can see your content. Large headlines have a smaller contrast ratio compared to body text. This does not mean that your body text can only be black on white. There are many ways designers can be creative with the use of color and still meet the color contrast ratio requirements.
- 6. (Bonus word) Artifact.** To “artifact” something means to hide something from the screen reader. You can do this using paragraph or object styles in Adobe InDesign. Microsoft Word and PowerPoint also provide this option but refer to it as “mark as decorative” within the alt text panel. Be careful when deciding whether something should be artifacted. You should only artifact items that do not need to be read aloud for the content to be understood. When in doubt, leave it in (and provide alt text). It’s better to provide more information than to intentionally hide something.





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## Learning and Resource Center

### A centralized team of designers and developers

TriMetrix's Learning and Resource Center (LRC) brings the expertise, skills, and creative know-how to help our clients effectively reach their audiences.

We work with your project's subject matter experts to make your content and messaging come alive for your audiences through print and digital content and innovative learning solutions. Our team collaborates with clients to develop effective and efficient learning solutions grounded in adult learning theory. This approach magnifies the knowledge, skills, and application of learning for your audiences.

Let's get started.

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