Steps for Creating Accessible Documents

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Introduction

This document presents the steps I used to create accessible documents for the portfolio. Two different approaches to start with were used for this document and for the other two Word documents.

I am working on Apple devices, so I used the word processing software of Apple called Pages to create those documents. After creating those documents, I saved them as Word documents and PDF document for one of them.

Steps used to create accessible documents

Two approaches

It depends on if the document is created from scratch, or if the document contains information retrieved from Internet or any external sources.

* For the *Orangutan* and *Quinoa Salad* documents, the information were retrieved from Internet using copy/paste commands. When the documents were complete, I selected the entire text, and I applied font style and font size to it.

* For this document, *Steps for Creating Accessible Documents*, I started from scratch with a blank page, so before entering any information to the document, I first set font style and font size to it.

In both cases, the font style I selected was *Helvetica*, the default font style used in Apple products. I chose this font style because, like Arial and Verdana, this font is sans-serif. Using sans-serif fonts is the first element to take into consideration when creating accessible documents. For the font size, I chose 12pt, the minimum font size recommended for accessible documents.

Images

After entering the text and applying font style and font size to it, I added images to the documents, at least for the two others. Then, I set spaces and margins around the images, as needed.

Structure of the documents

Before continuing with these documents, I needed to analyze their structure in order to better apply the appropriate formatting. This allows a better accessibility and a better navigation, especially for persons using screen reader softwares, This consists of adding titles and headings to the documents.

Titles and headings

On top of each document, I applied the *Title* style to the tittle of the documents. Then, I applied a *Heading 1* style to each major section of the documents. For example, in this document, *Heading 1* style was applied to *Introduction*, *Steps used to create accessible documents*, *Conclusion*, and *References* sections.

For each section containing sub-sections, a *Heading 2* style was applied to the sub-sections. For example, in the *Quinoa Salad* document, *Heading 2* was applied to the sub-sections *Ingredients, Directions*, and *Cook's Note*. If a sub-section contains inner sub-sections, sub-heading styles will be applied, like in the *Orangutan* document, *Heading 3* styles appear.

Bullet and numbered lists

In the documents I created, I inserted bullet and numbered lists. To make sure that these lists will be accessible, I created them by following the following steps:

* For bullet lists, I started the line with an asterisk followed by a space. Then, each time I pressed *Enter* on the keyboard, a bullet was added in front of the new line.

* For numbered lists, I started the line by writing the number 1 followed by a dot and a space. Then, each time I pressed *Enter* on the keyboard, a number (the previous one increased by one) was added in front of the new line.

Back to the images

After working on the structure of the documents (headings and lists), I went back to the images to add alt text to each one. To do so, I selected an image, I went to the image section of the software and I added text into the description field. Unlike the latest version of Microsoft Office that automatically generates text for the description field, Pages leaves the field blank. In order for screen reader softwares to identify images, the description field of each image in a document must be filled out.

Links and more

Also, to make a documents fully accessible for individuals who are blind and visually impaired, links to webpages must be added by selecting a word or a group of words, and inserting or adding the link to it, by copying the link to the appropriate field, instead of pasting the whole address directly into the body of the documents.

Wrap-up

The last step I performed to make the documents accessible, especially for screen reader softwares, was to go through the documents and get ride off extra and unnecessary spaces.

Conclusion

In summary, to create accessible documents, I chose a font style sans-serif, and I selected a font size of 12pt. I analyzed the structure of the documents to apply titles and headings appropriately. I created bullet and numbered lists by following the required steps, I added alt text to each image, and I replaced Internet links by words or groups of words links. Finally, I eliminated all unnecessary spaces. All theses steps make documents accessible and facilitate the navigation inside them for people who are blind and visually impaired, and for screen reader softwares.

References

To help me create those documents, I used the information contained in *Week 4 Lecture* and *Week 5 Lecture* documents, and in the document *Accessible 101: A Guide to Making Content Accessible*. I also visited the support page from Apple about creating accessible documents.