ILLINOIS VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CETLA)
Creating Accessible Excel Documents

Accessibility Requirements for Excel Spreadsheets

Excel files should be created without color coded data and without images. Images should be limited to logos or arrows used sparingly and with alternative text descriptions. Excel files shared electronically should be created using the recommendations below and then checked with the Microsoft Accessibility checker before posting.

Accessibility Guidelines

1. Choose font and fill colors that have good color contrast.
2. Do not color code information
3. Limit the use of merged cells
4. Provide clear descriptions for column and row headings.
5. Add alternative text descriptions to all images, and smart art graphics.
6. Use the Microsoft Accessibility checker before sharing electronically
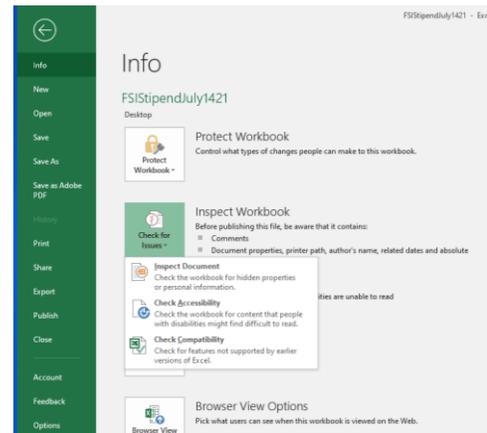
Using the Microsoft Accessibility Checker

Check the Excel file with the Microsoft Accessibility checker, by clicking on the File tab and then expanding the Check for Issues options and selecting Check Accessibility. The checker will provide a list of any issues along with instructions on how to correct them.

Creating Spreadsheet PDF format Handouts

When saving an Excel worksheet to a pdf format, click on the Options button and confirm that the option to include document structure tags for accessibility is checked. Documents that are provided in print format should contain text that is at least a 12 point font so choose the page size, margins, and print area accordingly. Once the document is saved to pdf format a secondary check with the Acrobat DC Accessibility checking tool will often find that items, like shapes, background images, and smart art graphics will be missing tags. The tags may be added in Acrobat DC.