Email and eBlast Accessibility with Microsoft (MS) Outlook

➔ **Requirements**

Requirement	HHS ID(s) / Checklist(s)
Select **Aa HTML** in the **Format Text** tab.	4A / WebApps
Headings must be appropriately identified and ordered sequentially.	4A / WebApps 4C & 4D / Word
Bulleted or numbered lists must be created using the Microsoft built-in feature located in the **Paragraph** group of the **Home** tab. Sub-lists require using a different bullet or number style to distinguish it from the "parent" style.	4A / WebApps 4F & 4G / Word
The text wrapping of photos or Images must be set **In Line with Text**.	2E / Word
Meaningful images must include **Alternative (Alt) Text**.	2A / WebApps 2A / Word
The purpose of each link (or image button) can be determined from the link text alone, or from the link text and its context (e.g., surrounding paragraph, list item, table cell, or table headers).	5B / WebApps 9C / Word
Color alone is not used to distinguish links from surrounding text unless the luminance contrast between the link and the surrounding text is at least 3:1 and an additional differentiation (e.g., underline) is provided.	9G / WebApps 5B / Word
Color contrast ratio for all text and images of text must be **4.5:1 or greater** to pass HHS accessibility standards.	5E / WebApps 5F / Word
Color cannot be the only means used to convey meaning. If color is used (e.g., in a pie chart or a table), the item must also include text representation or use patterns to differentiate each element.	5A / WebApps 5A / Word
Use a simple table structure that allows data to be in separate cells (avoids merged cells) and does not contain blank cells (especially header cells).	4B / WebApps 4H & 4J / Word

➔ **Best Practices**
- Use concise wording in the Subject line.
- Use meaningful link text to help people with cognitive or visual impairments.
    - o Do not use links with "Click Here" if it can be avoided. Users of assistive technology (AT) rely on link descriptions a lot more than other users.
- Test all hyperlinks to ensure they work **and** direct the user to accessible content.
- Use line spacing throughout the body of the email (located on the Format Text tab in the Paragraph group) instead of hard returns.
    - o Delete the hard returns between paragraphs and use Line Spacing to add space "before" and/or "after" each paragraph.
- Ensure content is linear (e.g., in one column).
- Avoid using layout tables for positioning.

➔ **How To's**

Instructions are based on MS Office 365 and assumes actions are taken in a **New Email** window.

Headings

Format headings:
1. Select a phrase to be a **Heading**.
2. From **Format Text** tab > **Styles**, select **Heading 1** - **Heading 6** respective to its hierarchy in the email.

Change the appearance of the default heading styles:
1. In **Format Text** tab > **Styles**, locate the desired style name.
2. Activate the context menu (or right click) and select **Modify…**
3. In the **Modify Styles** dialog, change the formatting properties to achieve the desired expression.
4. Activate the **OK** control when finished.

Update a style based on existing text formatting:
1. Highlight the text that has the desired appearance.
2. Navigate to **Format Text** tab > **Styles** and locate a desired style.
3. Activate the context menu (or right click) and select **Update [Style Name] to Match Selection**.
4. Note the **Styles** group reflects the formatting of the highlighted text. Future selection of that style will provide the same expression.

Why are headings important?
Headings offer hierarchy, structure, and navigation to sections for users of AT.

Bulleted or Numbered Lists

Group items as a related list:
1. Locate and select the desired text or place the cursor at the desired location for a list.
2. From the **Home** > **Paragraph** tab, select **Bullets** or **Numbering.** Use the arrow menu to change the list style.
3. Note: Sub-list (indented) items must use a different list style than the item one level up.

Why are lists important?
Lists help identify a hierarchy and relationship between information; specifically, numbered lists indicate a specific order of the information.

Photos and Images

Set the text wrapping of a photo to "In Line with Text":
1. Select the **Layout Options** control and choose **In Line with Text**.
2. Or, activate an image's context menu (or right click) and select **Wrap Text** > **In Line with Text.**

Why is selecting "In Line with Text" wrapping important?
Some of the surrounding text might not be read by the AT, the Alt Text cannot be found by some AT, and the correct reading order might not be achieved by AT when the proper text wrapping is not used, or content may be read in a confusing manner.

Add Alt Text:
1. Navigate to the context menu (or right click on the image) and select **Edit Alt Text**. In the Alt Text pane, type in a summary for the purpose of the image.
2. Keep Alt Text to 250 characters or less.

Why is Alt Text important?
It describes the image or object and its context to someone uses AT. Alt Text must be added to pictures, clip art, charts, and shapes.

Meaningful Link Text

Include meaningful text for a hyperlink:
1. Navigate to the **Insert** tab on the ribbon.
2. Select (or left click) on **Link.**
3. Select (or left click) on **Insert Link…** and the Insert Link dialog appears.
4. Type meaningful text in the "**Text to display**" field.
5. Add a web address (URL) in the "**Address**" field.
6. Activate the **OK** control when finished.

Why is meaningful link text important?
It is important that each link has meaningful text describing the purpose of the link without relying on the surrounding text. Meaningful link text can also provide clues about the destination of the link, which assists users in determining whether to activate the hyperlink.

Color Contrast

Test for color contrast:
To test for color contrast, refer to the OS accessibility color contrast guidance.

Note: Color contrast is the difference between the foreground color (text, in most cases) and the background color. The contrast ratio must be 4.5:1 or greater to pass HHS accessibility standards. Logos are exempt from this requirement.

Why is color contrast important?
Color contrast between text and the background can impact one's ability to receive information, especially if the recipient has a visual deficiency. Ensuring the contrast ratio is minimally 4.5:1 (preferably greater) ensures the information can be communicated and received in an accessible manner.

Simple Tables

Insert a simple table into an email or eBlast:
1. Navigate to the **Insert** tab from the ribbon.
2. Select the **Table** menu item and activate **Insert Table**.
3. Enter the desired **Number of rows** and **Number of columns**.
4. Highlight the **top row**, which is identified as the columns header row.
5. Activate (or right click) the context menu and select **Table Properties**.
6. Select the **Row** tab and check "**Repeat as Header Row at the top of each page**."
7. Activate the **OK** control when finished.
8. Highlight the **entire table**.
9. Activate (or right click) the context menu and select **Table Properties**.
10. Select the **Row** tab and uncheck "**Allow row to break across pages**."
11. Activate the **OK** control when finished.
12. Enter data into the table. **Important**: Avoid merged cells.

Why is using the Insert > Table function important?
Using the Insert > Table function makes the table structurally accessible for users of AT.