

Introduction to Accessible Excel Files

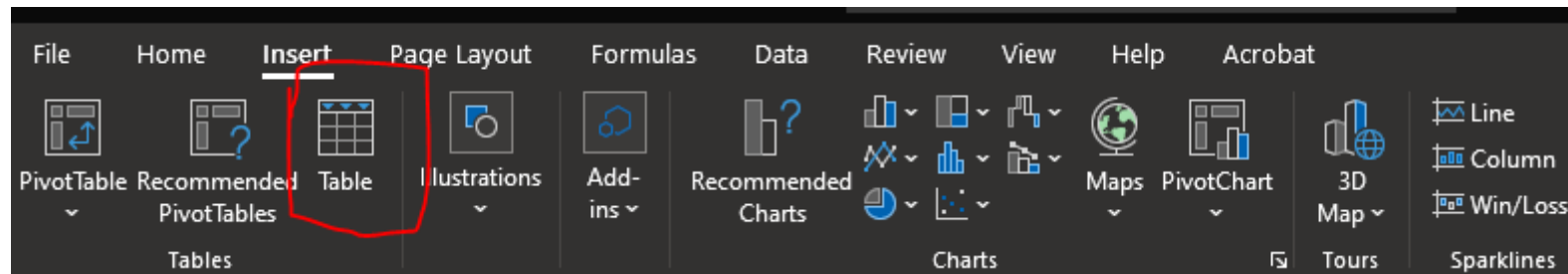
Rename worksheets

- Screen readers read worksheet names, so make sure those labels are clear and descriptive. Using unique names for worksheets makes it easier to navigate the workbook.
- By default, Excel names worksheets as Sheet1, Sheet2, Sheet3, and so on.
- Right-click the sheet tab, click **Rename**, and type the new name.

Create accessible tables

Put your data in tables. Use the Tables command in the Insert Ribbon, or Home > Format as Table. Tables allow you to sort and filter your data.

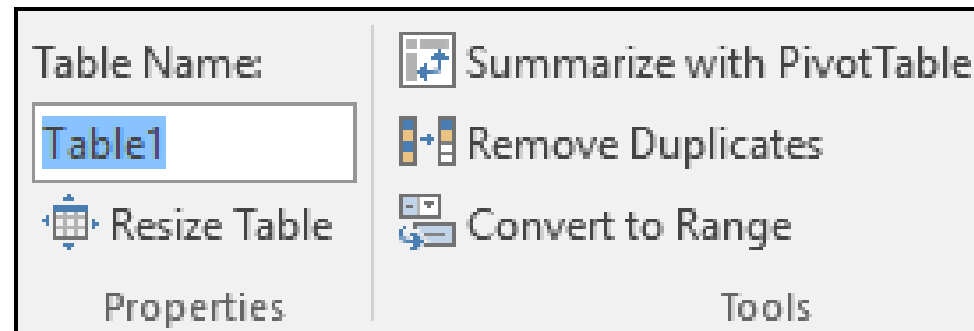
Tables also help you identify a set of data by name, and you can format the table using styles that make the data stand out. When you name and format your table, you can be sure that everyone can understand your data.



It is important to specify column header information and use a simple table structure to make sure that screen reader users can navigate the tables easily. Use one table per sheet.

Name your table

- To make it easier to refer to a table, give each table a descriptive name. A meaningful table name like "EmployeeList" is more helpful than the generic "Table1."
 - Table names must start with a letter, an underscore (_), or a backslash (\) and cannot contain spaces.
1. Place the cursor anywhere in the table.
 2. On the **Table Design** tab, under **Table Name**, replace the default name, such as 'Table1,' with a more descriptive one.



Select an accessible table style

- To make your table more accessible, select a table style that has colors with a strong contrast. For example, choose a style that alternates between white and a dark color, such as black, dark grey, or dark blue.
1. Place the cursor anywhere in the table.
 2. On the **Table Design** tab, in the **Table Styles** group, select the style you want.

Use Table Headers

- Screen readers use header information to identify rows and columns. Clear table headers provide context and make navigating the table content easier.
1. Place the cursor anywhere in a table.
 2. On the **Table Design** tab, in the **Table Style Options** group, select the **Header Row** checkbox.
 3. Type the column headings.
- For instructions on how to add headers to a new table, go to [Create a table](#).

Table structures to avoid

- Avoid blank cells, columns, and rows. When navigating using the keyboard, a blank cell, column, or row might lead a screen reader user to believe there is nothing more in the table.
 - If there is no need for a blank cell, column, or row, consider deleting it.
 - If you cannot avoid a blank cell, column, or row, enter text explaining that it is blank. For example, type N/A or Intentionally Blank.
- Avoid splitting or merging data cells: Screen readers keep track of their location in a table by counting table cells. If a table is nested within another table or if a cell is merged or split, the screen reader loses count and can't provide helpful information about the table after that point. Merged or split cells can make navigating Excel tables with assistive technologies very difficult, if not impossible. Always keep your tables straightforward and simple. To ensure that tables don't contain split cells, merged cells, or nested tables, use the [Accessibility Checker](#).

Use an accessible template

- Select **File** > **New** and search for accessible templates using the **Search for online templates** field.
 - Accessible templates contain instructions that explain how to work with the template.
 - There's plenty of white space around the text in the template, so it's easier to read.
 - The colors contrast well, so they're easy to distinguish.
 - All fonts are 12 points or larger.
 - Headings and labels, including worksheet names, are descriptive, so users who rely on screen readers get detailed information.

Add text to cell A1

- A screen reader starts reading any worksheet from cell A1. If you have a table on the worksheet, A1 should preferably be the title of the table.
- If the sheet is long or complex, add instructions or an overview of the sheet in cell A1. This will inform people who are blind what's being presented in your worksheet and how to use it. This instructional text can match the background color. This will hide it from people who can see but allows it to be read by screen readers.

Add alt text to visuals

- Alt text helps people who can't see the screen to understand what's important in visual content. Visual content includes pictures, SmartArt graphics, shapes, groups, charts, pivot charts, embedded objects, ink, and videos. In alt text, briefly describe the image and mention its intent. Screen readers read the text to describe the image to users who can't see the image.

Add accessible hyperlink text and ScreenTips

- People who use screen readers sometimes scan a list of links. Links should convey clear and accurate information about the destination. For example, avoid using link texts such as "Click here," "See this page," "Go here," or "Learn more." Instead include the full title of the destination page. You can also add ScreenTips that appear when your cursor hovers over text or images that include a hyperlink.

Use an accessible font format

- To reduce the reading load, select familiar sans serif fonts such as Arial or Calibri. Avoid using all capital letters and excessive italics or underlines.
- A person with a vision disability might miss out on the meaning conveyed by particular colors. For example, add an underline to color-coded hyperlink text so that people who are colorblind know that the text is linked even if they can't see the color.
- For headings, consider adding bold or using a larger font.

Use accessible font color

- To ensure that text displays well in a high contrast mode, use the **Automatic** setting for font colors. For instructions on how to change the font color, go to [Format text in cells](#).
- Use the [Accessibility Checker](#) to analyze the spreadsheet and find insufficient color contrast. The tool now checks the documents for text color against page color, table cell backgrounds, highlight, textbox fill color, paragraph shading, shape and SmartArt fills, headers and footers, and links.

Create accessible charts

- Charts help make complex information easier to understand. To make charts accessible, use clear and descriptive language for the chart elements, such as the chart title, axis titles, and data labels. Also make sure their formatting is accessible.
- Add alt text to a chart by Right-clicking on the chart and select Edit Alt Text.

Delete blank worksheets

- Screen readers read worksheet names, so blank worksheets might be confusing. Do not include any blank sheets in your workbooks.
- Right-click the Sheet tab and select Delete.

Name cells and ranges

- Name cells and ranges so that screen reader users can quickly identify the purpose of cells and ranges in Excel worksheets. Users can use the **Go To** command (Ctrl+G) to open up a dialog box which lists all the defined names. By selecting a name, a user can quickly jump to the named location.
1. Select the cell or range of cells that you want to name.
 2. Select **Formulas > Define name**.
 3. Enter the name and select **OK**.

Check accessibility using the Accessibility Checker

- The Accessibility Checker is a tool that reviews your content and flags accessibility issues it comes across. It explains why each issue might be a potential problem for someone with a disability. The Accessibility Checker also suggests how you can resolve the issues that appear.
- In Excel, the Accessibility Checker runs automatically in the background when you're creating a document. If the Accessibility Checker detects accessibility issues, you will get a reminder in the status bar.