Excel spreadsheet accessibility- Best Practices

Basics-

* Ensure all sheets have descriptive name and the name of the excel file is descriptive (so user can determine what sheets or files are important to them)
* No empty rows or columns- information on all sheets should start in cell A1
* No merged or split cells- you can adjust cell size with format cells tool (Located in the home tab and listed under the cell tools)
* Titles to tables/charts are allowed to merge across cells
* Use descriptive hyperlinks (same as you would in with a word document)
* Alternative text needs to be added to all images or charts (describe what the chart is and what it is trying to convey- so the user can decide if they want to access the chart).
* Use sufficient contrast of colors. Use the [WebAIM](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/) color contrast checker as a resource.
* At the end of the worksheet, write “end of worksheet” (if you do not like how this looks for visual users, change the text color to match the background color- screen readers will still read the text that visual users will no longer see it).
* When saving the file, excel remembers the last sheet and last cell you were working on. To ensure screen readers open the file to A1, save the file with A1 cell selected.
* Avoid using color as the only way to convey meaning
* When you are done adding content to your excel spreadsheet- hide all the empty cells to the right of the content (select the row after your content, hit shift + control and then the right arrow key- right click and select hide)
* Hide empty cells at the bottom of your content (select the row after your “end of worksheet” cell, , hit shift + control and then the down arrow key- right click and select hide)
* Run accessibility checker (listed under file tab- check for issues-check accessibility)
* Before printing or converting to PDF you want to “set the print area”. To do this- highlight entire worksheet, select page layout tab, then find page setup ribbon and select set print area.

# More Complex

* Floating elements, such as images or something created outside of the cells, ensure you give descriptive alt text as to how the element is related to the spreadsheet.
* Use cell styles as an accessible alternative to conveying meaning through color. (Located in the home ribbon and under styles- use an existing cell style or modify your own with “new cell style”. The visual affect will be the same to vision users but there is underlying markup that will indicate to AT that special formatting is applied)
* If spreadsheet is long and complex, designate A1 as a descriptive cell. Examples: “This sheet contains 3 data tables or this sheet contains one chart and 2 tables OR this sheet has 1 long table with 500 rows grouped by department”
* If excel spreadsheet needs to be converted to PFF. Use acrobat plug in (in preferences tab, make sure “enable accessibility and reflow with tagged adobe pdf). Once converted, the PDF will NOT be fully accessible and will still need remediated. Send PDF to me for remediation, if you want to try remediating the PDF. Use action wizard in Adobe Pro DC to walk you through PDF error.

# Tables/Charts

* When creating a table, select the cells you want in the table. Hit insert tab, select table, in create table dialogue ensure “my table has headers” and select okay. Excel creates a header row with the table.
* When adding headers to an already created table- Click anywhere in the table, the design tab will appear- check header row box. Default headers will appear, rename and then delete the old row.
* If you have two tables on a spreadsheet, leave one blank cell between the tables and resize to your liking.
* Making a table accessible to a screen reader- select top left cell in your table, choose formulas in the ribbon, choose name manager, choose new in top left corner, new dialogue box opens, in the name field type: TitleRegion1 (if this is the first table in your worksheet) then a period (.) then the range of cells in your table from top left cell to bottom right cell with a period (.) in between, then another period (.) then the worksheet number

\*\*Example: TitleRegion1.a2.g7.1. \*Ignore all other fields\*

A B C D E F G

|  |
| --- |
| 1Movie Showtimes |
| 2Type | Jan | Feb | March | April | May | June |
| 3Sci Fi | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 |
| 4Horror | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5Comedy | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 6Romance | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| 7Drama | 5 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 |

* If you table only has one column header with no row header then your name field would be: \*\*ColumnTitleRegion1.a2.f3.1

A B C D E F

|  |
| --- |
| 1.Movie Showtimes |
| 2. Jan | Feb | March | April | May | June |
| 3. 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 |

* If you table has one row header and no column headers then name your field would be: \*\*RowTitleRegion1.a2.b7.1

A B

|  |
| --- |
| 1Movie Showtimes |
| 2. Jan | 4 |
| 3. Feb | 4 |
| 4. March | 2 |
| 5. April | 1 |
| 6. May | 3 |
| 7. June | 6 |

* Code these titles when you are done creating your table
* CHARTS- - add labels to your chart in the layout tab (at minimum the chart title and horizontal and vertical axes). Use more than just colors to distinguish between the data in the chart. Click on the line and click on format tab- change the shape outline to different dashes or arrows.