Accessible Document Checklist

Use this detailed checklist to ensure your course documents are fully accessible and compliant with ADA standards. Each step includes additional guidance to help you create materials that meet the needs of all learners.

# Document Structure

* **Use Built-in Heading Styles**:
  + Apply heading styles (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2) in Word, Google Docs, or similar tools to create a logical structure.
  + Avoid using bold or large font alone to indicate headings, as screen readers cannot interpret these as structural elements.
* **Create a Table of Contents (Optional for Long Documents)**:
  + Use the document’s built-in table of contents generator to make navigation easier for all users.

# Images and Graphics

* **Add Descriptive Alt Text to Images**:
  + Provide a concise description of each image that conveys its purpose.
  + Avoid phrases like "Image of…" or "Picture of…" and focus on meaningful context (e.g., "A chart showing quarterly sales growth").
  + Mark decorative images as “decorative” in tools like Word or Adobe if they do not convey essential information.
* **Ensure Accessibility of Complex Visuals (e.g., Charts or Graphs)**:
  + Supplement charts and graphs with detailed descriptions or data tables for users who cannot view them visually.

# Color Contrast

* **Check Color Contrast for Readability**:
  + Use tools like the [WebAIM Contrast Checker](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/) to ensure text has a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 against its background.
  + Avoid relying on color alone to convey meaning (e.g., “Click the red button”) and provide alternative cues (e.g., “Click the red button labeled ‘Submit’”).

# Text Formatting

* **Use Simple, Readable Fonts**:
  + Choose sans-serif fonts like Arial, Verdana, or Calibri, which are easier to read for most users.
  + Avoid decorative or script fonts that can hinder readability.
* **Limit Use of All Caps and Italics**:
  + Use bold or headings for emphasis instead of all caps or italics, which can be harder to read.

# Hyperlinks

* **Add Meaningful Hyperlink Text**:
  + Use descriptive text that indicates the destination or purpose of the link (e.g., “Learn more about accessibility resources” instead of “Click here”).
  + Avoid using URLs as the link text (e.g., “<https://example.com>”).

# Tables

* **Ensure Tables Are Accessible**:
  + Use the table tool in Word or Google Docs to create structured tables.
  + Add a header row to each table and mark it as a header in the document settings.
  + Avoid using tables for layout purposes, as they can confuse screen readers.

# Accessibility Checks

* **Run Built-In Accessibility Checkers**:
  + Use the built-in Accessibility Checker in Word to identify issues.
  + Review and address flagged issues, such as missing alt text or improper heading structure.
* **OPTIONAL Preview with a Screen Reader**:
  + Test your document with a screen reader like NVDA or VoiceOver to ensure compatibility.

# Additional Best Practices

* **Use Bullet Points and Numbered Lists Appropriately**:
  + Use the built-in list tools to create ordered (numbered) and unordered (bullet) lists.
  + Avoid manually creating lists with symbols or spaces.
* **Keep File Sizes Manageable**:
  + Optimize images and other media to reduce file size, ensuring quick downloads and compatibility with assistive technologies.
* **Save in Multiple Formats (Optional)**:
  + Provide documents in multiple accessible formats to give users options based on their needs.