

# Creating Accessible Webpages

## Use proper page structure

- Organize the page using heading tags. Create an outline of main topic areas with sections in each area. This provides benefits in search engine optimization, helps people using screen readers to quickly scan a page, and helps students with learning disabilities “see” the outline of the content.
- Most web content management systems allow you to mark portions of a document as paragraphs or headings. In the web world, there are 6 headings: H1 through H6, with H1 the most important heading and H6 the least important heading. H1 is usually used as the page title, H2 as the subtitle, H3 as section headings, and H4 - H6 as subsection headings.
- When using a word processing system to initially create content, use the built-in tools for structuring content. See “Creating Word Documents That Are Accessible for Screen Readers “ to learn how. When transferring these documents to the web, or as pdf documents, the structure you create in the word processing program transfers as well. Well-structured documents are part of the universal design process.

## Describe images on a page using the “alt” tag

- To successfully do this, imagine that you are describing what you are seeing to a friend you are speaking with on the phone.
- Be descriptive of colors, action in the image, what people are doing, etc. In other words, try to paint the picture with words so your friend can share in the visual experience.
- It is important to be brief and succinct.
- If the image has a specific purpose, such as searching a catalog, use that as the alt text. For example, “Search the catalog” is more useful than “Photo of books and other reading materials scattered on a table.”
- Put essential information first. “Student joyfully tosses graduation cap into the air: Swarthmore Graduation 2013” is more useful than “Swarthmore Graduation 2013: student joyfully tosses graduation cap into the air.”
- Maintain the alt-text. If the images change, change the alt text as well.
- Your professionalism is reflected as much by your choice of images as your writing of the alt-text. Spell words correctly or they will be mispronounced by screen readers.
- If you are unable to provide a good description, consider not adding the image at all.

## Links

- When links do not link to other web pages, but to PowerPoint slides, pdfs, audio files, word documents, spreadsheets, etc., add a visual cue at the end of the link name, such as “Health Insurance Coverage Request opening square bracket PDF closing square bracket.” This informs the user that the link will open a particular type of file.
- Use meaningful text for links. “Download the Financial Aid Application” is more useful than “Click here” or “Download.” Use the link text to convey the intention of the link. Ask yourself if the link text makes sense out of context. Keep in mind having identical link text whose links go to different places (e.g. “Click here”) are confusing for all visitor and particularly those listening through a screen reader.