



Accessible Content Core Skill 6: Tables

Tables allow us to present content in a logical and organized way. Accessible tables must be formatted properly and include a table summary. Here are some best practices to ensure tables are more accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Table Use

Tables should only be used to present data. Refer to the example table below.

Schools by Area	Elementary	Secondary
North	45	8
Central	45	8
West	39	8
East	58	11

Do not use a table to format the layout of a document or webpage. Removing table borders to visually format a page with columns is not accessible to screen readers.

Instead, use the specific column tools for formatting information side-by-side (which was used to format this section of text).

Simple Structure

The information in a table should be easy to follow across and down. Tables presented this way will also be accessible to people using a screen reader, which reads each cell from left to right and top to bottom.

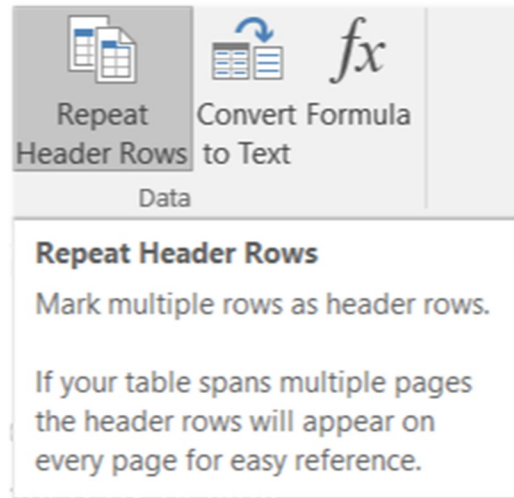
The structure of tables should be kept simple by not using the merge or split cells tools. Combining, merging or splitting cells can make information harder to understand for both visual and non-visual users.

This also means any table titles should go above the table (as a heading), and not in the top row of the table as merged cells.

Header Row

The first row and column of all tables need to be identified as headers. The “Header Row” and “First Column” are usually identified by default.

However, the **“Repeat Header Rows”** needs to be enabled manually in Microsoft Word so that the header row appears on each page if the table continues onto multiple pages.



The “Repeat Header Rows” feature makes tables more accessible to everyone.

A header row offers context to someone using a screen reader by referencing the header row before reading the information below it. For example, the accessible table below would be read by screen reader software like this: “First Name Riley, Last Name Smith, Age 9, Grade 4; First Name Ryan, Last Name Lee, Age 8, Grade 3”.

First Name	Last Name	Age	Grade
Riley	Smith	9	4
Ryan	Lee	8	3

Without a header row, a person using a screen reader will not understand the context of the table. For example, if the same table (above) did not have a header row identified, the reading order for screen reader software would be: “First Name, Last Name, Age, Grade; Riley, Smith, 9, 4; Ryan, Lee, 8, 3”.

Table Summary

Tables are considered complex images that need alt text. All tables should include a summary of the information within the table as alt text and/or in the text around the table.

Do...

- Use a table to present or compare data using rows and columns.
- Add the table title above the table as a heading.
- Create multiple tables separated by headings above each table if the data requires multiple headings.
- Ensure row and column headers are identified, including the "Repeat Header Rows" in Microsoft Word.

Don't...

- **Don't** use tables just to format the layout of information as columns.
- **Don't** add the table title in the first row by merging cells.
- **Don't** merge or split cells in a table.
- **Don't** leave any empty cells in a table.
- **Don't** add a table within another table.