# Film transcript - Accessible documents

**As part of the Responsible Support and Sustainable Development project, the Jagiellonian University in Krakow would like to invite you to a film from the series ‘Find out about learning support programmes and applications’.**

[Rhythmic, dynamic melody in the background during the film]

[Katarzyna Pyryt] Good morning, my name is Katarzyna Pyryt and I am an Assistive Technology Specialist at the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service. In this film, I will show you how to create accessible text documents.

One of the most important aspects is headings. It is a good idea to use them while creating text documents, as they will enable visually impaired people, especially blind people, to navigate through a document in an easier and faster way. You should make sure that headings are created using the style gallery available in Microsoft Word.

Let’s type in some text that will be a headline, for example, ‘Heading 1’. I will select this text and choose ‘Heading 1’ from the style gallery. I can freely modify the visual form of the headline. It does not have to look the way it is defined by default in the application. For example, I can make the text bolder or change the colour to suit my preferences.

I can update the style by placing the cursor inside the header text and then right-click ‘Heading’ in the style gallery and select ‘Update style heading 1’ according to the selection. Now, every time I create a header at that particular level, it will look the way I defined it.

Another important issue is lists. When creating lists in Microsoft Word, you should use

the programme’s built-in functions. For example, let’s create a list of dog breeds. I’m going to write: ‘Dog breeds’. Lists are often made using a hyphen, so I’m going to create such a list here including the Dachshund, the German Shepherd and the pointer.

Please note that visually it looks like a list of elements. In fact, it is not a list of elements and a program used by blind people will not treat this text as a list of elements. As a result, it will probably read the text like this: ‘dog breeds minus the Dachshund minus the German Shepherd minus the pointer. Why minus? Because a hyphen is treated as a regular text.

How to make the screen reader read the real list? To do this, you would have to use the tools built into the word processor. I will remove these hyphens, select my dog breeds and choose the ‘Bullet points’ option from the ‘Main tools’ tab. You will see that instead of hyphens, there are bullet points in the form of filled circles.

If you want to check if what you have created is a real list or just looks like one, place the cursor anywhere in the list and check if the ‘Bullet points’ icon is highlighted on the ‘Main tools’ tab. Of course, the visual appearance of the bullet points can now be freely changed. They do not have to be filled circles. Just click on the ‘Main tools’ tab and then the option ‘Define new bullet point’, ‘Symbol’ - and choose the one you like. For example, I will choose a dash. I can confirm it by clicking OK and you will see that now bullet points have changed into hyphens, however the screen reader will not read them as ‘dash’ or ‘minus’, but it will simply read the elements of the list.

Another important aspect is the language of the content. In text documents, it is a good idea to make sure that the content language is determined correctly. In general, programmes used by blind people offer the option of changing the speech synthesiser as soon as the language of the content changes. This is important because if the text is read by an inappropriate speech synthesiser, it is likely to be unintelligible.

How to change the content language? It is very simple, just select the relevant passage. At the bottom of the text editor window, you will usually see the name of the language. You can click on it and the ‘Language’ window will appear. In this window you can see a list of available languages and select the right one for this text. I will confirm it by clicking OK. If there is no language name at the bottom of the text editor, you can always reach the window with the list of languages through the tab ‘Review’, then the option ‘Language’ and ‘Set proofing language’.

I will show you on the basis of an example why language identification is so important. I will launch a screen reading programme. If the language of the text was marked as English, the synthesiser would probably run in English. The content here, i.e. the breeds of dogs, such as the Dachshund, the German shepherd and the pointer, would sound like this:

[Unintelligible text read out by the speech synthesiser]

[Katarzyna Pyryt] As you may have heard, the text read out by the screen reader is completely incomprehensible. This is why it is so important determine the content language appropriately.

You also need to pay attention to tables. As a general rule, tables should not be used to lay out the content visually. Let me show you this by using an example. There is content here, such as a name, email address, phone number, and at first glance it doesn’t look like a table. Why? Because I have simply hidden the edges of this table. However, if I hover over this area with a mouse, I can see that it is a table. I will now show you the table border so that you can see it clearly too. See, the first column includes a name, surname, e-mail address and telephone number. The second column contains the following data: Katarzyna Pyryt, my email address and phone number.

Navigating tables can be difficult for people using screen readers, which is why tables should not be used in such cases. It would be better if I simply wrote out the data in the body of the document. However, you may want to include some typical tabular data in a document. In such a situation, it is necessary to identify the headings accordingly.

The problem is that in Microsoft Word you can only identify the first row as a header row. If there were headings in columns or if there were some merged cells, marking the headings would be impossible. In addition, it is difficult for visually impaired people to navigate and find information in such a table because it is difficult to link data from a particular column with its header.

Graphics are another important issue. If you insert graphics into your text document, remember that each graphic should be accompanied by a description unless it is typically decorative, but then it should be labelled as such. How to do it? I will show you. I will insert a graphic into my text document. In my case it will be a project logo and now, in order to add a description to this image, I will enter the ‘Format image’ tab, the ‘Alternative text’ option. A window will appear on the right side, where I can enter this alternative text. I am going to write here: ‘The logo of the Breakthrough project’. This text will not be visible in the content of documents, but if a blind person reaches this graphic, the text will be read out to him or her. If it is a classic decorative graphic which does not convey any additional information, it should be marked as a decorative graphic.

Another important issue is the placement of links. Often, we simply copy the address from the address bar and paste it into a text document. Such an address may look like the one you can see here, i.e. ‘https://www.uj.edu.pl/kalendarz’ followed by a string of characters which do not really matter. This link fulfils its purpose because when you click it, you will be redirected to the web page, however it will certainly be inconvenient to read or listen to if someone uses a speech synthesiser as the screen reader will read the link exactly as it is written, i.e. with all the signs, dots, slashes and figures.

Another problem is that when you look at this link, you do not really know where it leads you. You can guess that it is a subpage of the Jagiellonian University, but you have no idea what specific page it is. That’s why you should devote some time to make the link look like this. See, here I have a link called ‘Chinese Summer Course Online’ and it is exactly the same link you can see above. But first of all, it is more understandable because you know which website it takes you to. Secondly, the software used by blind people will read the link in exactly this way, namely ‘link Chinese Summer Course Online’.

How to create such a link? It is very simple. When you paste in the address copied from the address bar, you just need to right-click on it to expand a menu where you select the option ‘Edit hyperlink’. And now, enter the text that should be displayed in the field ‘Text to be displayed’. In this case it is ‘Chinese Summer Course Online’. You need to confirm it by clicking OK.

In this way I know, firstly, where the link leads me, and secondly, it will be easier to listen to, as no slashes, numbers or letters will be read out.

Another important issue is the content formatting. When preparing text documents, you should use a sans-serif font without adjusting. Also avoid dividing words and do not use a multi-column layout.

If you are interested in the creation of accessible text documents and want to learn more, and you are an employee or student of the Jagiellonian University, contact an assistive technology specialist at the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service.

[Louder, rhythmic music]

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