NIC Word Accessibility Checklist

The Accessibility Checker native to Word will accurately check against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1.

1. **Use Built-in Headings and Styles**

* **Why**: Headings provide structure and allow screen readers to navigate efficiently. They make it easier for all users to understand the document hierarchy.
* **How**:
  + **Apply a built-in heading**: Use Word’s built-in heading styles (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2). Navigate to the "Styles" section on the ribbon and apply the appropriate style to your text.
  + **Customize the Styles**:
    - Place your cursor in some formatted content (e.g., a heading) within your document.
    - Right-click on one of the Heading styles (e.g., Heading 1) in the "Styles" pane.
    - Select **"Update Heading # to Match Selection"**. This will modify the style to match the formatting of the selected heading text.

This method ensures that your document's headings are consistent and accessible while also allowing you to match the style to your preferred design.

* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.3.1 Info and Relationships](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#info-and-relationships)

1. **Provide Alternative Text for Images**

* **Why**: Makes images understandable for people using assistive technologies.
* **How**: Add meaningful alt text to images via the "Alt Text" option in the right-click menu.
  + **When to Add Alt Text**: If the image conveys information critical to the content, describe its purpose and meaning.
  + **When to Mark Images as Decorative**: If the image is purely decorative (e.g., background patterns, visual embellishments) and adds no meaningful context, mark it as decorative. This ensures it is skipped by assistive technologies.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.1.1 Non-text Content](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#non-text-content)
* **Helpful Tool:** [**Alt Text Generator from ASUEdPlus**](https://asuo-ai-labs.streamlit.app/Image_Accessibility)URL: https://asuo-ai-labs.streamlit.app/Image\_Accessibility

1. **Use Sufficient Color Contrast**

* **Why**: Good contrast improves readability for users with visual impairments, including color blindness.
* **How**: Use an online contrast checker to ensure a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for regular text and 3:1 for large text. Avoid using color alone to convey meaning.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.4.3 Contrast (Minimum)](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#contrast-minimum)
* **Helpful Tip**: Creating a new Word from a template using the keyword “accessible” will provide you with a default colors of adequate contrast.
* **Helpful Tool**: [**Color Contrast Analyser**](https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/)  
  Download URL: https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/

1. **Use Meaningful Hyperlink Text**

* **Why**: Links with descriptive text help users understand their purpose without needing additional context.
* **How**: Replace generic phrases like "click here" with meaningful text, such as "Download the accessibility guide." Add the hyperlink via the right-click menu "Insert Hyperlink" option.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [2.4.4 Link Purpose (In Context)](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#link-purpose-in-context)

1. **Use Lists for Structured Content**

* **Why**: Properly formatted lists help screen readers identify content as a list and convey the number of items and hierarchy.
* **How**: Use the built-in numbered or bulleted list tools under the "Home" tab. Avoid creating lists manually with symbols or spaces.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.3.1 Info and Relationships](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#info-and-relationships)

1. **Use Tables for Data, Not Layout**

* **Why**: Assistive technologies can navigate data tables effectively when they are properly formatted, but layout tables can confuse users.
* **How**: Insert tables via the "Insert" tab, ensure they are simple, and use the "Table Design" tools to mark header rows. Avoid merging or splitting cells unnecessarily.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.3.1 Info and Relationships](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#info-and-relationships)

1. **Avoid Using Blank Spaces for Layout**

* **Why**: Screen readers interpret extra spaces or tabs as empty elements, which can confuse users.
* **How**: Use Word’s alignment, indentation, and spacing tools instead of pressing the spacebar or Tab key multiple times.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.3.2 Meaningful Sequence](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#meaningful-sequence)

1. **Add a Document Title and Metadata**

* **Why**: Proper titles and metadata make it easier for assistive technologies to identify and present document information.
* **How**: Go to File > Info > Properties and fill in the "Title" field with a descriptive document title. Add metadata like the author and subject if relevant.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [2.4.2 Page Titled](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#page-titled)

1. **Add a Table of Contents for Long Documents**

* **Why**: A Table of Contents (ToC) aids navigation for all users, especially those using screen readers.
* **How**: Use Word’s automatic ToC tool under the "References" tab. Ensure it is updated when new headings are added or changed.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [2.4.1 Bypass Blocks](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#bypass-blocks)

1. **Test Using Accessibility Checkers**

* **Why**: Identifies potential issues and ensures compliance.
* **How**: Use PowerPoint’s built-in Accessibility Checker under the ***Tools***menu to flag errors and warnings.
* **WCAG Criterion**: [4.1.2 Name, Role, Value](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#name-role-value)

1. **Ensure All Text is Readable by Assistive Technologies**

* **Why**: Text inserted as images or non-standard fonts may not be accessible to screen readers.
* **How**: Avoid using text in images or converting text to decorative elements. Use standard, readable fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri, [Atkinson Hyperlegible](https://www.brailleinstitute.org/freefont/)).
* **WCAG Criterion**: [1.4.5 Images of Text](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#images-of-text)