Microsoft Outlook®

Follow these best practices to help ensure your emails are accessible. For more information on Outlook email accessibility, especially signatures, visit mdod.maryland.gov

- **Use HTML format when possible**

  Avoid using Rich Text Format (RTF) as it may not be compatible with other email programs. Check this via File – Options – Mail (Alt, F, O, tab to Mail).

- **Fonts and font size are important**

  Choose sans serif fonts of at least 12-point size for greater readability. Calibri, Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma or Verdana are good font options.

- **Add alt text to images and objects**

  All graphics (photos, images, logos, charts, screen shots) require alt text or captions. Adding alt text to a screen shot? If it shows the steps to complete a task, be sure to describe the steps and the keyboard shortcuts in the alt text.

- **Adding attachments**

  Dragging a document into the body of an email or appointment invitation is not accessible for all versions of Outlook. For emails, use "Attach File" in the ribbon (Alt, H, AF). For appointments, send a separate email with attachments.

- **Use styles**

  When writing longer emails, use built-in formatting styles such as lists and headings.

- **Name your hyperlinks appropriately**

  Use meaningful text for hyperlinks. It is acceptable to display the URL for your email address in your signature. Ensure that hyperlinks go to accessible sites. If a link is to a video, the video needs to have captions. If the hyperlink is to a PDF, the PDF needs to be accessible.

- **Avoid using repeated blank characters**

  Extra spaces, tabs and empty paragraphs can cause screen readers to repeatedly say the word "blank." Instead, use styles with formatting and indenting to create white space. Set up your formatting preferences in a new email, then under "Change Styles," select "Set as Default" (Alt, O, G, D).

- **Check your color contrast**

  Background for emails should be white. Custom backgrounds can cause security issues and load slower on mobile devices. They also may prevent people from being able to read the image's alternative (alt) text if they do not accept the automatic downloading of images (e.g. mobile). Font styles also need good color contrast.

- **Use plain language**

  Put key information up front. Use bulleted lists to segment supporting points. Write using active voice: subject of the sentence performs the action.

- **Signatures must be accessible too**

  Do not use tables to format signatures. Contact information should be in real text, not in a graphic. And, ensure your logo has alternative text.

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mdod.nva@maryland.gov

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