

Accessibility Fact Sheet

What is a visual disability?

An individual with a *visual disability* or *visual impairment* is someone who has vision loss that impacts their daily living. This includes both *blindness* and *low vision*. Even individuals with similar vision issues may have very different levels of functioning, may rely on different support options, and may use the vision they do have in different ways.

Low Vision vs. Blindness

A person has *low vision* when he or she has significant loss of vision that cannot be corrected by glasses or contacts. This includes impaired *visual acuity* and impaired *visual fields*.

Total *blindness* is the inability to tell light from dark, or the total inability to see. A person who is *blind* uses tactile or auditory senses for navigation and communication.

Fact: Over 7 Million Americans have a Visual Disability

U.S. Census Bureau

What is accessibility?

Creating content with accessibility features lowers barriers by providing equal access and opportunities to people with a diverse range of abilities. A person with a visual impairment can use assistive technology to access, navigate, and read text and images on the screen. Assistive technology is also used by people with a variety of challenges, such as motor difficulties and cognitive or learning disabilities.

“Accessibility is all about our ability to engage with, use, participate in,
and belong to, the world around us.” – John Allen

Different types of Assistive Technology

A *Screen Reader* is a software application which converts text into “synthesized speech” allowing the user to listen to the content. Some popular screen readers are **JAWS**, **NVDA**, and **Window-Eyes**. In addition to the elements presented verbally, this technology offers a wide range of keyboard shortcuts to navigate content with ease. An inaccessible document would not allow the screen reader to function properly.

CCTV (closed circuit television) systems are powerful magnifying tools for individuals with low vision. Users can enlarge images and text, adjust contrast (dark text on light background or light text on a dark background), and auto focus to view the content.

Why is accessibility important?

If electronic documents are not created with accessibility in mind, they become very *difficult*, if not *impossible*, to read or navigate for individuals with visual impairments. *Accessibility* is a right that is protected by both federal and state law. Creating accessible content is important to ensure access to people with disabilities, but can also *benefit* your organization. Individuals with visual impairments want to access your products, services, and information.

An organization that **focuses on accessibility** can improve employee recruitment and retention, increase productivity, and build a corporate image that projects a culture of diversity and inclusion.

Would YOU like to know how to make your documents *accessible*? Check out the OOD e-learning module [Creating Accessible Documents with Microsoft Word](#) today!