Welcome to our second in our series on accessibility. In this tutorial, we will be focusing on Microsoft Word. Now Microsoft Word includes the Accessibility Checker as do all the other programs and the Accessibility Checker will scan your documents and find the majority of errors. In this video we will be looking at some of the errors that Microsoft does not catch. Specifically we will be looking at three ways in which you can improve the accessibility of your Microsoft Word documents. First of all, we are going to discuss the use of built in document structuring features such as page breaks, lists and columns. We will have a closer look on how to use heading properly and then finally we will take a peek at what it takes to generate an automatic table of content.

Many of the most common accessibility errors occur due to a misuse or misunderstanding of Word structuring features. In order to get a better look at what is going on in the background of our document, I am going to turn on the Show Paragraph marks by clicking on the Paragraph Mark button in the Home tab. Here we will see displayed a series of paragraph marks that have been inserted in an effort to start a new title on a new page. This will cause an accessibility error by repeating the word ‘blank’ for each empty paragraph. In order to correct this, it is a matter of simply the paragraph, or repeated paragraph, and then using the page break function within Word. It is most easily accessible using the ‘Control Enter’ feature.

Another common mistake is the misuse of bulleted or numbered lists. By manually entering a bulleted list or a numbered list, accessible technologies are not able to properly parse the lists. And repeat the content of that list to the user. It is important that when we use lists we use the built-in structuring tools that are provided by Microsoft Word. Here I have a manual list that was typed in using the bulleted characters as well as some tabs. I am just going to select it, and then I am going to come up here and click on bullets. Now Word will automatically convert those bullets. I will just increase the indent here and bring them back to where I want to see them. And the same thing will happen down here with this numbered list. Again just numbers.
typed in with tabs. I can tell that this has not used as an automatic list, because when I click in it, the numbered list icon does not light up. In this case, what I am just going to do is highlight that numbered list, and then I am going to click on the numbered list button where it automatically converts it and now I have a numbered list that is completely accessible.

Another important consideration in making an accessible Word document is the proper use of columns. In order to create a column look in my document, it is important that I use Word’s structure column tool, rather than creating text boxes, or some other method. In order to apply columns, I am simply going to select that text that I want to simply select the text that I want to add into columns, and then in the page layout tab, I am going to click the Columns button, and then select the number of columns I want to apply. In this case, I am going to select two. This make a column approach for visual readers. However, for those using accessible technologies, will hear a continuous text.

The second thing we will want to consider when we are creating an accessible Word document is that we use our Heading properly. Now Word has several Styles that has been made available to us, and they are a mix of Formatting Styles and Structural Styles. If I go up to my Styles Window here, you will see several Styles with names such as Captions, Normal, Title, etc. And there are a few others with names Heading 1, 2, 3 and 4. Those with the titles Heading are actual structural Styles, and should only be used to describe sections of our document. For example, in the document, I have a section here named Cambria Mentorship Award. And this is listed as a Heading 3. Now, unfortunately, the person who designed this made Heading 3 follow a Heading 1, and this is structurally incorrect. Heading 3 should always follow Heading 2. So if this is in fact a Heading 1, that is a primary title, then the subsequent heading should be a Heading 2.

Bearing in mind that our structure helps with navigation and clarity in our document, will help us to properly outline the document for accessible technology.
Finally, our third suggestion for creating an accessible document is inclusion of an automatic Table of Contents. Word generate automatic Table of Contents based on the structural headings that you have used throughout your document. So once again, the structure is important.

To insert an automatic Table of Content, place your cursor where you wish your Table of Content to appear. And then in the Reference Tab, simply click on the first icon, Table of Content. You have several selections here to choose from. So I am just going to pick the first automatic Table of Content. And you can see here that it has been added to my document, including the page numbers. The real advantage here is that the Table of Content is fully navigable and thus easier for someone using an assistive technology to read and understand the conceptions and structure of the document, and to navigate the document easily.

The Microsoft Accessibility Checker will take care of most of the main errors within our document and if we follow through, we will make an accessible document.

This concludes this tutorial. We will be moving on to Excel next.