Video Transcript

MS Excel 2010 Accessibility Features

Welcome to the third tutorial in our series on how to Create Accessible Microsoft office documents. If you haven’t checked out the other videos in this series, I encourage you to do so. Many of the tips that are presented there apply in all of the applications. In this tutorial we are going to look at some specific things that you can do to make your Excel sheet more accessible.

Just as a reminder Microsoft Accessibility Checker will catch the vast majority of errors in your document.

In this tutorial we will be looking at a couple of things that Microsoft Accessibility does not check. We will be looking at the use of Name Files to format our cells, using Range names to find areas on our spreadsheets, and the importance of using patterns and colours in our charts.

We will be looking using Excel pre constructed Name Styles allows us to control the appearance of cells across all of our columns. This has several advantages for accessibility. First of all it helps users to understand the function of a specific cell by its appearance.

Secondly, it also gives you the ability to modify the styles in order to increase font size or contrast to make things easier for them to see. Now to apply a Named Style, simply click on a cell that you want to apply the Style to and in the Home tab, come over to Cell Styles and from the Cell Styles window, select the style that applies to that particular cell.

In this case I have applied Heading One to the Title of this table to indicate this is actually what the table is all about.
I am going to apply a h2 Style to the two column headers for the data. And finally across the totals row I am going to use the drop down list next to cell styles and I am going to select the total style.

One of the lesser known features of Microsoft Excel and this is really unfortunate because Name Ranges could actually assist with navigation within an Excel spreadsheet. To name a range or apply a name to a series of cells first begin by selecting series that you want to name.

Then go to the Formulas tab and select Name Manager. In the Name Manager, you can click on ‘New’ to give this area a new name. You will see that it automatically detected operating cost usage from the title. I am going to go with that for now, just remove some of these underscores, but I am going to include a little more information such as the actual range itself.

So that range stretches from A4 to C9. And then I also going to also include a reference to the page on which it appears. In this case annual_operating_cost. And I am going to click ok. I have added the name to my Name Manger. I am going ahead to close this window.

Let me show you what the effect of using the Name Manager is. I am going to pop over to another tab, Construction Cost, and then using drop down list in the Name box, I can see here the Operating Cost usage table. Clicking on it allows me to jump immediately to that table. Of course that name box is totally accessibility by keyboard and so users of accessible technologies will be able access here and navigate to the different section of your spreadsheet.

Let’s take a look at one other accessibility issue that isn’t caught by the Microsoft Accessibility Checker. And that issue is colour. In this case it is the colours used in this chart, we have a burgundy colour indicating aqua, and a blue colour indicating conventional.

Both of them are solid colours and may be indistinguishable to someone with a disability. So to correct this, we are going to change one of the data series to a pattern. I am going to double click on one of the data series to open the format data series window. From here I am going to select Fill and select a pattern fill.
It is important to select a pattern that is distinguishable from all other patterns on the page. From the Foreground colour, select a colour with a sufficient contrast. When you are done, click close.

Now it is obvious which is aqua and which is conventional, whether I can or not I can distinguish colour.

Tips and continuing to work the Accessibility Checker you will end up with an accessible spreadsheet

Let’s move on to PowerPoint