Guidelines for Accessible Word Documents

Microsoft Word is one of the most common word processors available today. There are several guidelines that can be observed to make content created in Word more accessible.

Headings

A good heading structure is the most important accessibility consideration for Word documents (WebAIM). Proper headings allow screen readers to navigate through the page easily. Changing the font of text or making it bold, does not make a heading. To change a block of text to a heading, select it and click on the appropriate style. An added benefit of using headings is that you can easily create a table of contents for your document. Use the 'Title' style to designate the document title. Heading level 1 should be used for main body headings, followed by heading levels 2 and on for subheadings within Heading 1.

Watch the Demo

Proper Hyperlinks (Meaningful)

Make the hyperlinks that you use in your document descriptive so that a visually impaired person using screen reading technology knows where the link will take them.

Correct: Read more about Red Rocks Community College

Incorrect: To read more about Red Rocks Community College, click here

Incorrect: Read more about Red Rocks Community College: http://rrcc.edu/about-us

To create a proper hyperlink, select the text in the document, choose the **Insert** tab on the toolbar and select **Hyperlink**.

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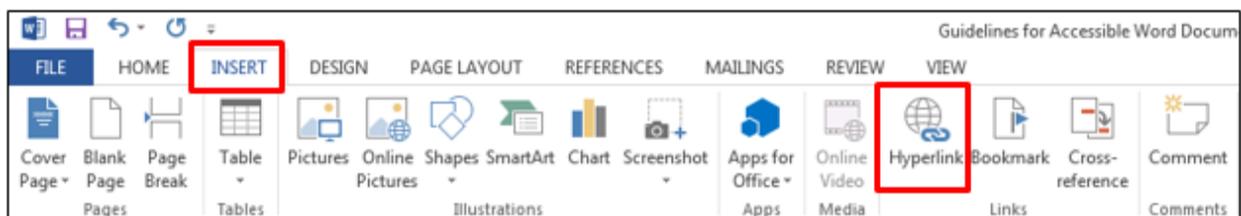
Provide a meaningful description of the hyperlink in the **Text to display** box and then add the URL in the **Address** box. Select **Ok** when you are done.
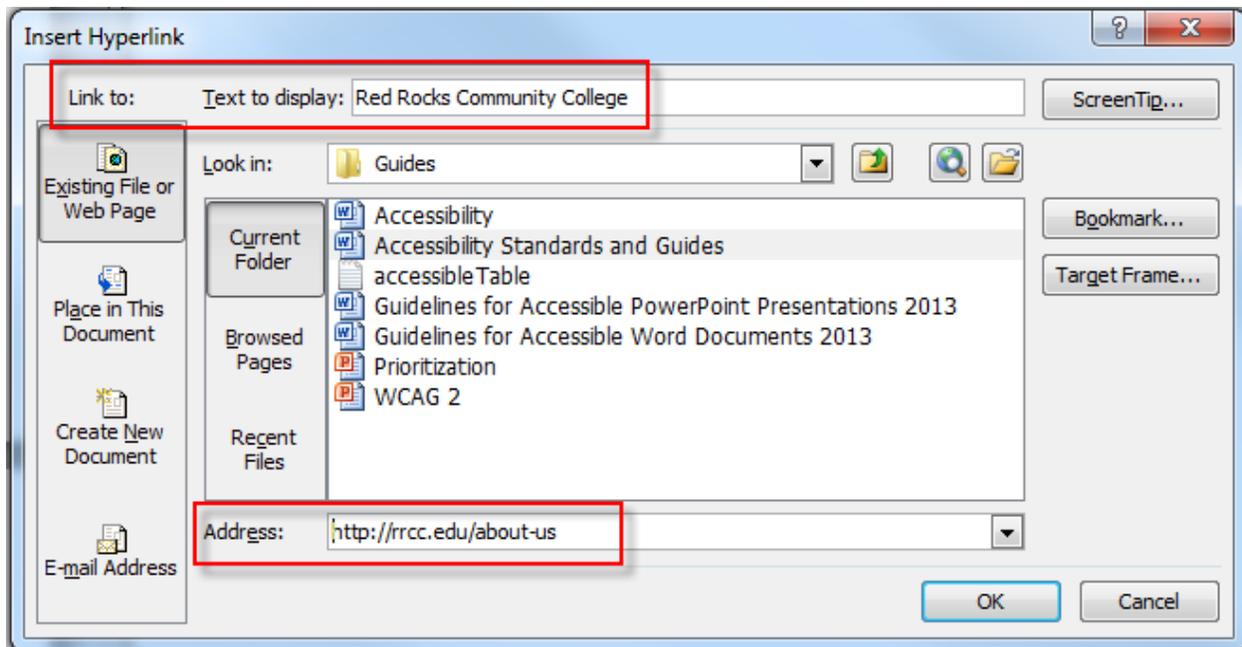
[Watch the Demo](#)

Images and Objects

Do not copy and paste images into your document. Provide an alternative text description (ALT text) for each image. The ALT text should describe the non-text content so that the person using a screen reader can understand what the image means and how it is important. The ALT text **Title** option is limited to 100 characters. For complicated images or objects, include a detailed description in the **Description** box.

Alt text should be included for any of the following objects in your presentation:
- Pictures
- Clip Art
- Charts
- Tables
- Shapes (that don't contain text and are not in groups)
- SmartArt graphics
- Groups (all objects in this list, with the exception of shapes, should also have alt text when in groups)
- Embedded objects

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Use the **Insert** tab and the **Pictures** option to select and insert your image.
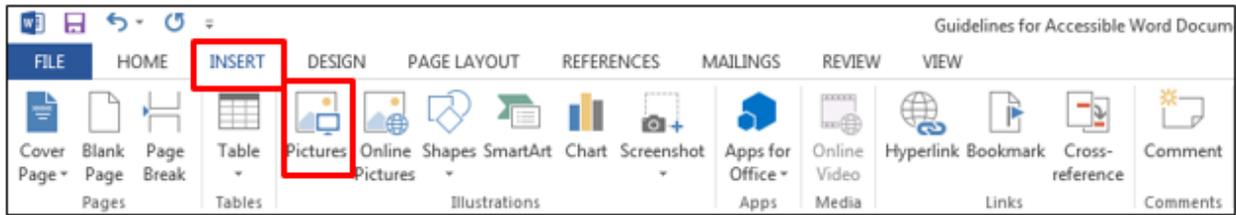
Browse for your image and select **Insert**.
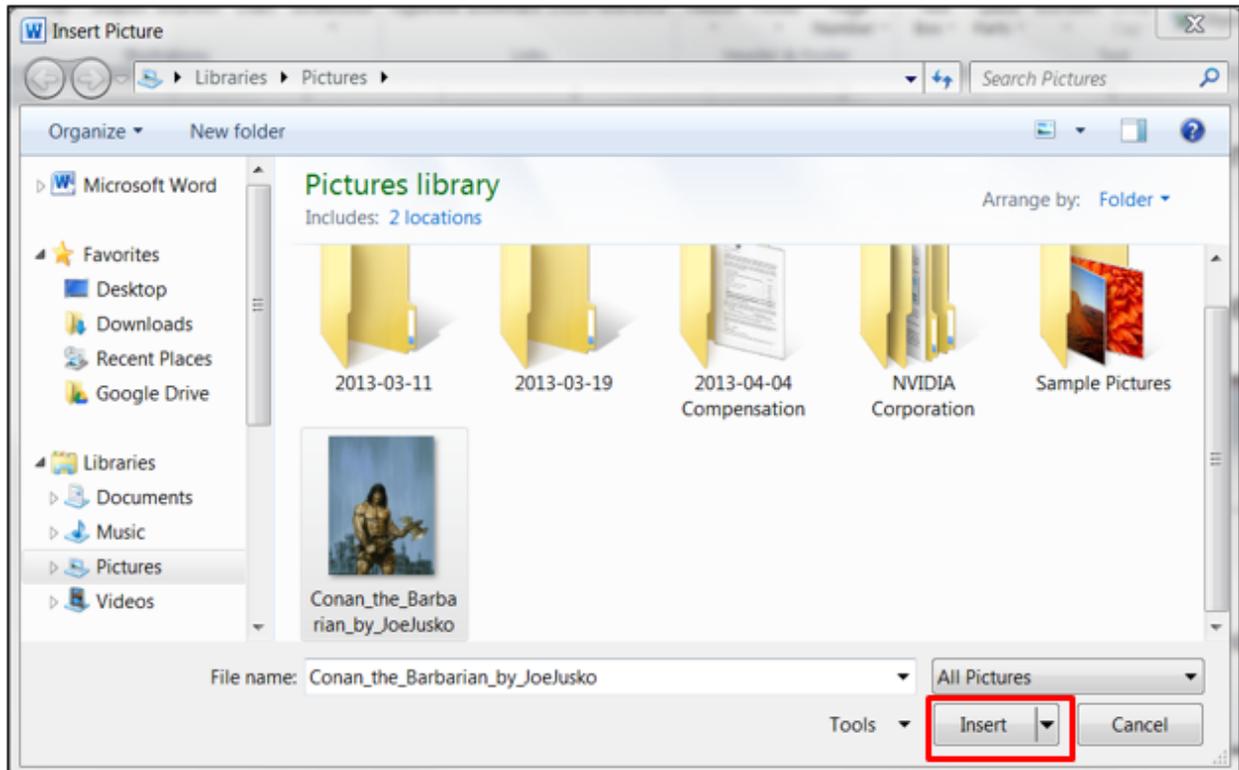
Right-click on the inserted image and choose **Format Picture**. A pane will appear on the right side of the document. Choose the third icon (Layout & Properties) from the pane and then select **ALT TEXT.** Choose a title for the image in the **Title** box and a **Description** if needed.

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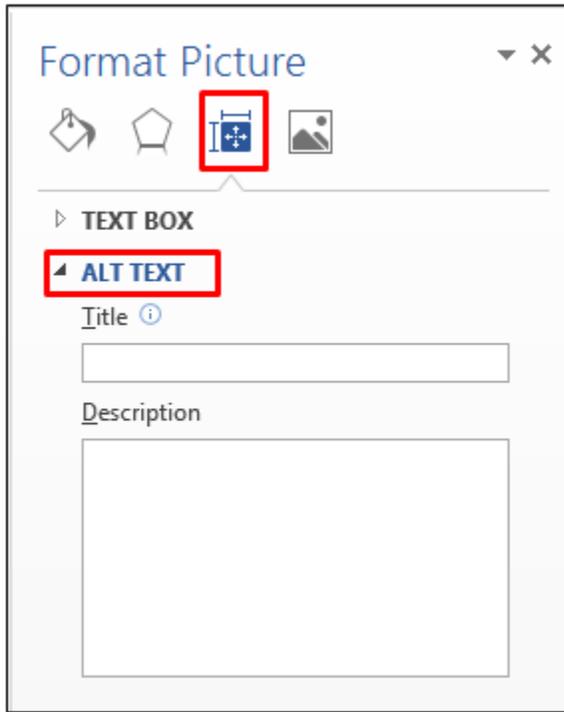
Tables

Screen readers read tables from left to right through each row and from the top row to the bottom row. Do not merge or split cells in the table. Keep the tables in your document small and simple. Do not use the Draw Table tool in Word to create tables. Indicate header rows for tables and provide ALT text for your tables.

View examples of good and bad tables

Select the **Header Row** checkbox from the **Design** tab.
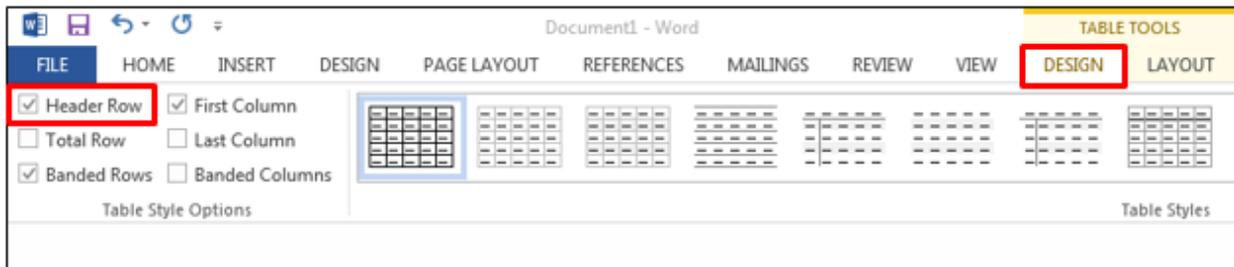
Select the header row in your document and from the **Layout** tab, select **Repeat Header Rows** (used for long tables that span more than one page).

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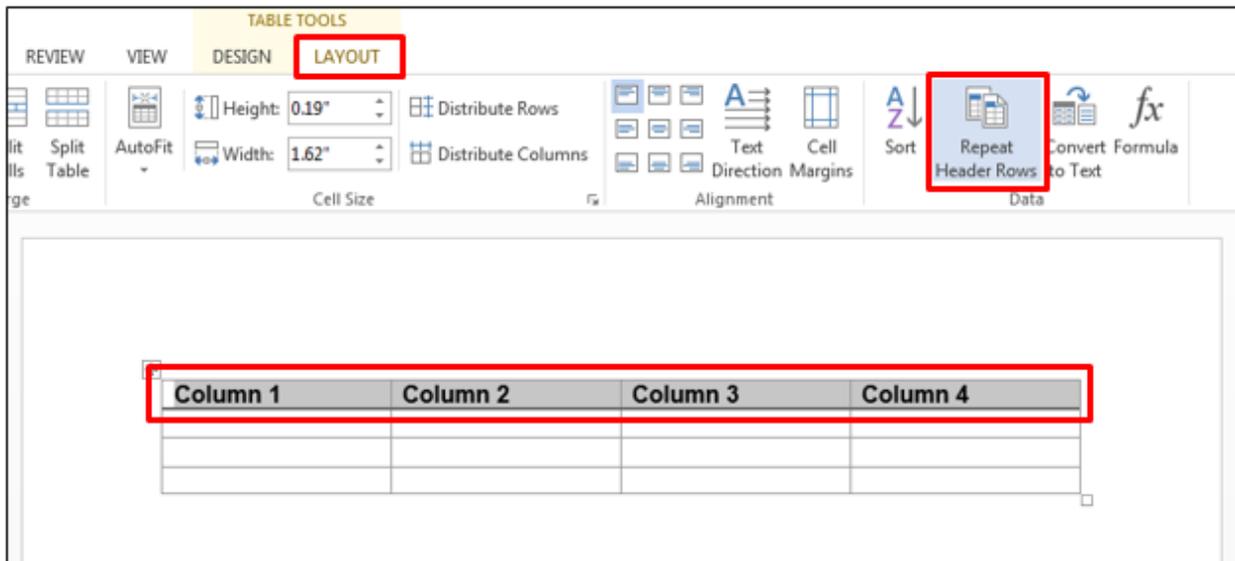
Right-click anywhere in the table and select **Table Properties**. A new window appears. Select the **Alt Text** tab and enter ALT text to give a summary of what the table is about. Enter this in the **Title** box and add a **Description** if needed (recommended for complicated tables that need more than just a title).

[Watch the Demo](#)

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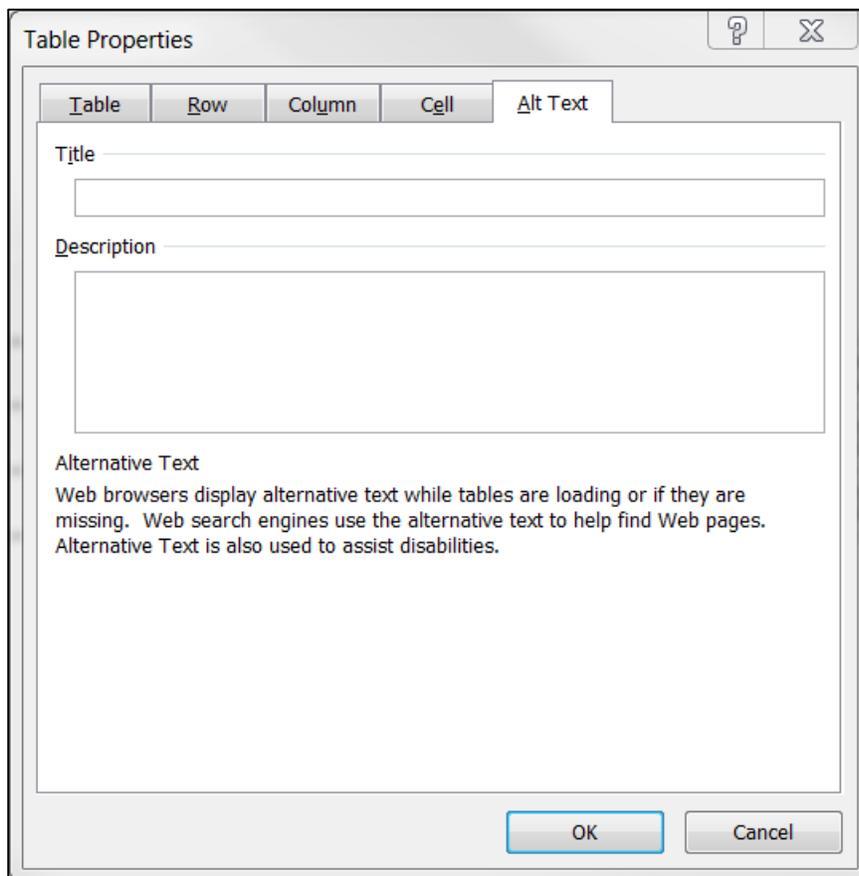
Use of Color and Contrast

For everyone and especially for learners with visual impairments and color deficiencies, there should be strong visual contrast between the text presented in a document and the background. Color should also not be used to convey meaning as learners with color deficiencies will not understand it. This, however, does not mean that you cannot use colors. Do not use colors alone to convey meaning in your document.

Bad examples of the use of color:

The following items in red are mandatory, items in green are optional:

Calculus textbook

Student Solutions Manual

TI 84 Calculator

Graph Paper

Colored Pencils

Click on the Green box to continue or the Red box to go back.
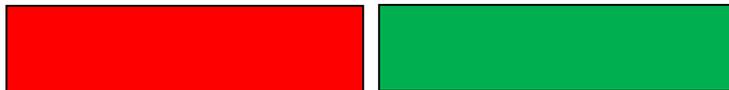
Bad example of the use of contrast:

Welcome to Spring 2013! Our first day of class is January 20, 2013.

Tip: Starting with Microsoft Office 2010 a new tool for PowerPoint, Word, and Excel called the **Accessibility Checker** is available that you can use to check your PowerPoint presentations for any issues that might make it challenging for a user with a disability.

Save As PDF Settings

Select the **File** tab,

Select **Save As.**

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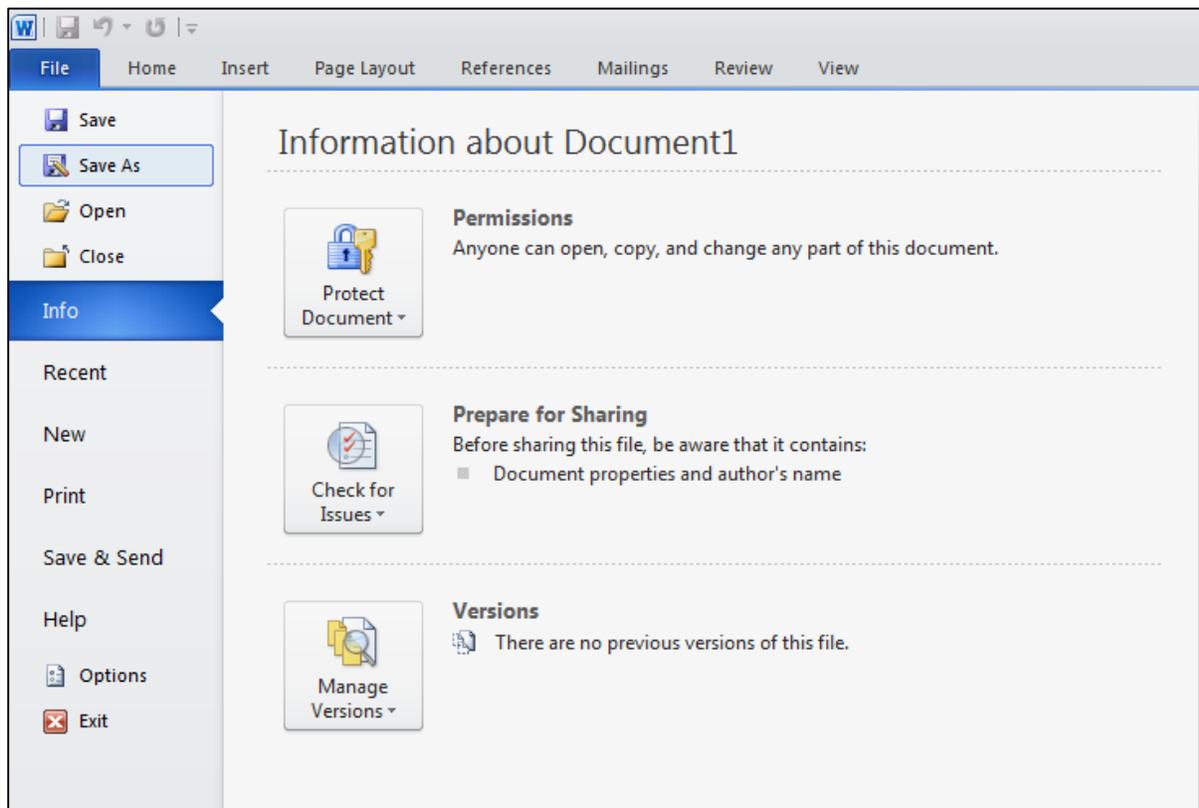
Select **PDF** from the **Save as type:** pull down menu.

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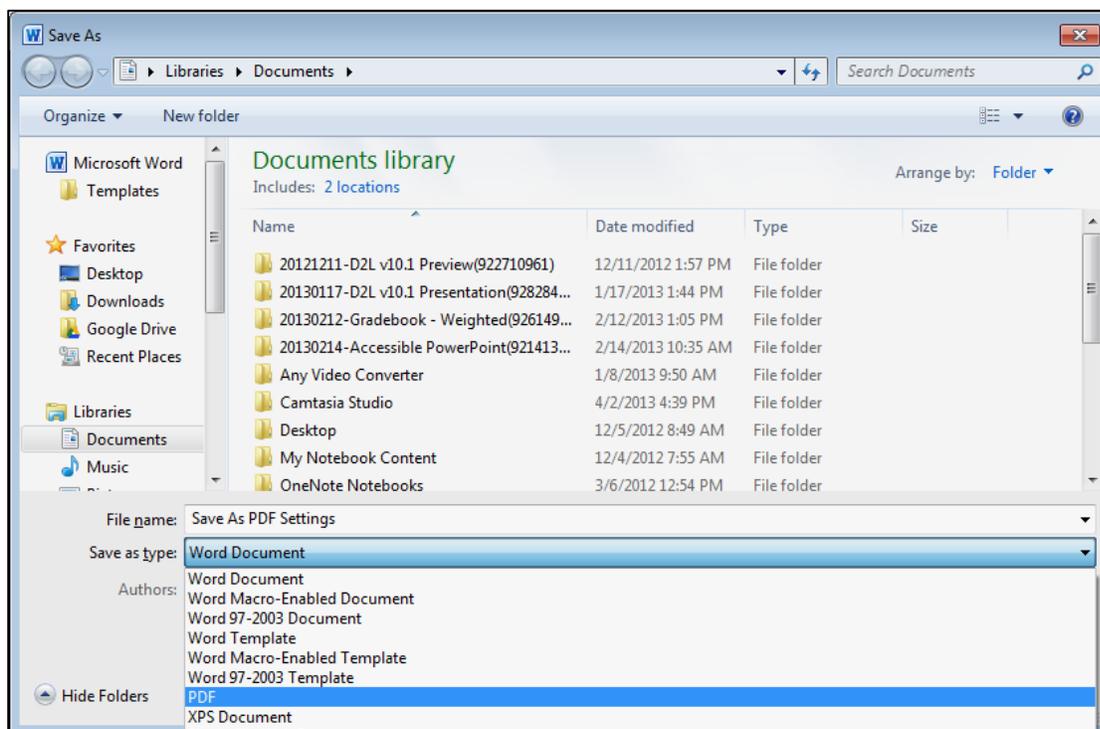
Select the Options button and make sure that the **Document structure tags for accessibility** checkbox is marked then select **OK**.

Edit the **File name** and select the destination folder if necessary then select **Save**.

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