



Thesis & Dissertation Template Checklist

Use this checklist while preparing your document for submission.



TIPS FOR USING THE TEMPLATE

- ☐ **Show hidden formatting.** On the *Home* tab, select *Show/Hide ¶* to display section breaks and other non-printing characters to avoid accidentally deleting important formatting.
- ☐ **Replace placeholder text.** Type directly into the template to help preserve formatting.
- ☐ **Paste carefully.** Use *Merge Formatting (PC)* or *Paste and Match Formatting (Mac)* so pasted text matches the template.
- ☐ **Protect section breaks.** Avoid repeatedly pressing *Delete* or *Backspace* at the end of a section, which may remove hidden section breaks that control formatting.
- ☐ **Open Styles pane.** Use it to check or change text styles. On the *Home* tab, select the *Styles* launcher arrow (PC) or *Styles Pane* (Mac).

Before Submitting Your Document

- ☐ **Add document properties.** Go to *File → Info → Properties (PC)* or *File → Properties → Summary (Mac)*. Add your thesis/dissertation title under *Title* and your name under *Author*.
- ☐ **Check for and correct accessibility issues.** Select *Review → Check Accessibility* and correct any errors or warnings.
- ☐ **Delete instruction boxes.** Remove all grey instruction text boxes.
- ☐ **Save as an accessible PDF.** (PC) *File → Save As → select PDF (*.pdf) as Save as type → Select Options* and verify “Document structure tags for accessibility” is checked → *OK → Save*. (Mac) *File → Save As → under File Format, select PDF → Select Best for electronic distribution and accessibility → Export*.
Important: Do not use *Print → Save as PDF*, which may not preserve accessibility information.



Title Page

- ☐ Maintain margins. Top: 2", Bottom: 2", Left: 2.44", Right: 2.06"

Thesis Template

- ☐ Replace template text.
 - Title; *style: Heading 1*
 - Name, Bachelor's degree, university, city, state; *style: Paragraph text (title page name)*
 - Bachelor's degree year; *style: Paragraph text (title page bachelor year)*
 - Master's degree, month granted, and year; *style: Paragraph text (title page doctorate info)*

Dissertation Template

- ☐ Replace template text.
 - Title; *style: Heading 1*
 - Name; *style: Paragraph text (title page name)*
 - Bachelor's degree, university, city, state; *style: Paragraph text (title page degree info)*
 - Bachelor's degree year; *style: Paragraph text (title page bachelor year)*
 - Master's degree, university, city, state; *style: Paragraph text (title page degree info)*
 - Master's degree year; *style: Paragraph text (title page masters year)*
 - Doctorate degree, month granted, and year; *style: Paragraph text (title page doctorate info)*

Committee Page

- ☐ Replace template text.
 - Full title; *style: Paragraph text (page ii full title)*
 - Thesis/Dissertation adviser name; *style: Paragraph text (dissertation adviser 1)*
 - Committee member names; *style: Paragraph text (committee names)*
- ☐ Delete grey instructions text box and unused committee member lines.
- ☐ Maintain margins. Top: 2", Bottom: 2", Left: 2.44", Right: 2.06"

Acknowledgements (Optional)

- ☐ Keep or delete. If using, delete "(OPTIONAL)" from page title; if not using, delete title and page
- ☐ Include disclaimer. Ensure the disclaimer statement is in the footer of every page of the *Acknowledgements* section
- ☐ Maintain margins. Top: 2", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"



Abstract

- ☐ Replace template text.
 - Name, Date of Degree, Title of Study, and Major Field; *style: Paragraph text (page iv info and vita major field)*
 - Abstract; *style: Paragraph text (abstract)*
- ☐ Maintain margins. Top: 1", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"

Table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures

- ☐ Update tables and lists. Programmatically update each once the manuscript has been completed
- ☐ Delete grey instructions text boxes.
- ☐ Maintain margins. Top: 1", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"

Chapters

- ☐ Replace template text.
 - Chapter title (note, do not erase Roman numeral); *style: Heading 2*
 - Section titles (add as needed throughout chapter); *style: Heading 3*
 - Subsection titles (add as needed throughout chapter); *style: Heading 4*
 - Chapter body text; *style: Paragraph text (chapter body text)*
- ☐ Figures and images.
 - Insert using *Insert* → *Pictures* rather than dragging and dropping
 - Use only *In Line with Text* text wrapping
 - Add alt text to images that convey information, or check the box for *Mark as decorative* for purely decorative images; do not use the automatic alt text generator. For help with alt text, visit [Creating Accessible Learning: Alt Text](#) or [Microsoft: Add Alt Text](#)
 - For data-heavy figures, include a brief description of key trends or takeaways in the body text nearby or figure caption, and/or provide the underlying data in a table
 - Don't rely on color alone to convey meaning. Pair color with labels, patterns, or shapes so information is accessible to readers with color vision deficiencies
- ☐ Figure labels.
 - With all figures and images, add a figure caption including a figure number and title; *style: Figure Caption*
 - Place the title and any corresponding caption above the figure
 - Apply the "Figure Caption" style to the title and caption so it appears in the List of Figures
- ☐ Tables.
 - Insert using *Insert* → *Table*
 - When possible, use a simple table structure and avoid merged, split, or nested cells



- Add alt text (*Table Properties* → *Alt Text* tab) to describe the table's purpose in the *Description* field; do not use the automatic alt text generator
- Place your cursor in the table, select the *Table Design* tab, and ensure *Header Row* is checked
- If your table spans more than one page, set the header row to repeat at the top of a new page by selecting the header row → *Table Layout* tab → check box for *Repeat header rows*
- **Table labels.**
 - With all tables, add a table caption including a table number and title; *style: Table Caption*
 - Place the title and any corresponding caption above the table
 - Apply the "Table Caption" style to the caption so it appears in the List of Tables
- **Bulleted and numbered lists.**
 - Use Word's built-in list tools
 - Avoid using images or characters to give the appearance of lists
- **Hyperlinks.**
 - When possible, hyperlink text that describes the link's destination or purpose instead of using the full URL
 - Avoid vague hyperlinked text such as "click here" or "read more"
 - Use full URLs when required, such as in citations, and ensure the hyperlink is active
- **Maintain margins.** Top: 1", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"

References

- **Format properly.** Format all references according to department and/or committee guidance
- **Maintain margins.** Top: 1", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"

Appendices

- Add a title for all appendices; *style: Heading 3*
- **Maintain margins.** Top: 1", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"

Vita

- **Replace template text.**
 - Name, Master's/Doctorate degree type; *style: Paragraph text (vita name degree)*
 - Thesis/Dissertation title; *style: Paragraph text (vita dissertation)*
 - Major Field; *style: Paragraph text (page iv info and vita major field)*
 - "Completed the requirements of..."; *style: Paragraph text (vita education)*
 - Experience; *style: Paragraph text (vita education)*
 - Professional memberships; *style: Paragraph text (vita education)*
- **Maintain margins.** Top: 2", Bottom: 1", Left: 1.5", Right: 1"



AI HELP PROMPTS

Use the prompts below with an AI tool to help troubleshoot Word formatting issues or draft alt text for images, figures, and tables. Fill in the bracketed text with your own responses.

Always review AI-generated guidance and content carefully for accuracy, accessibility, and appropriateness before applying or submitting it. Do not rely on AI as a substitute for your own judgment.

Help with Microsoft Word Formatting Issues

[Attach the original template file without added content as well as your current document.]

I am adding content to a Microsoft Word template using *[Word version]* on *[PC or Mac]*. I am having this issue: *[describe issue]*. Compare the original template with my current document and provide step-by-step instructions to fix the problem while preserving the template's existing formatting.

Help with Writing Alt Text for Images, Figures, and Tables

[Attach your manuscript.]

I will provide a Microsoft Word document containing my graduate *[thesis/dissertation]*. Draft concise alt text for each image, figure, and table (collectively, "items") that is not marked as decorative. Follow applicable WCAG 2.1 Level A and AA requirements, particularly Success Criterion 1.1.1 and, when applicable, 1.4.5. Follow these rules:

1. Review each item, its caption, and surrounding text to determine its purpose in context.
2. Describe the item's purpose or essential information in context that a reader who cannot visually perceive it would need. Do not reproduce every element verbatim.
3. When available, include the item's label, such as "Figure 2.1" or "Table 3.2."
4. Use captions and surrounding text for context, but avoid unnecessary duplication. Alt text should complement information communicated elsewhere.
5. Include essential text that appears within an image when needed to understand its content or purpose.
6. For tables, summarize purpose, organization, or important relationships; don't reproduce all cell contents.
7. For charts, graphs, and data tables, describe relevant trends or relationships only when clearly supported by the data and surrounding discussion. Do not speculate about unsupported causes, significance, or conclusions.
8. Keep each description concise, generally 1–2 sentences (maximum 3), and omit irrelevant visual details.
9. Do not guess, invent, or infer visual details that you cannot verify. If necessary information cannot be verified, write "Human review needed" and briefly explain why.
10. Do not draft alt text for items programmatically marked as decorative. List them separately as "Decorative."
11. Present the results in document order. For each non-decorative item, provide item label or identifier, draft alt text, and human review note if needed.