

MAKING ACCESSIBLE MEDIA: ADOBE IN DESIGN TUTORIAL

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INSTRUCTOR: In this tutorial, we will be looking at creating accessible documents using Adobe InDesign. Here, for this tutorial, I have a piece of artwork that I've created and although it looks complete, a lot of the features haven't really been implemented to make this accessible when I export it to PDF. So, today, in this tutorial, using this piece of artwork, we're going to look at properly using Paragraph Styles so that the content is tagged. We'll also look at adding alternative text to the images that are in the layout. We'll also discuss what to do with hyperlinks so that they are identifiable by a screen reader. And then we'll also talk a little bit about document identification and adding correct information in the meta data of your document.

So, let's get started with working with the Paragraph Styles. So, you're going to want to go to "Window," "Styles," "Paragraph Styles." I already have mine open here, so I'm just going to pop it open and pull it here to the side so you can have a good look at it. So, currently, my Paragraph Styles panel is empty, which indicates that I'm not using any style. So, even though I have white text, black text, some is bold, some is big, I've done that all manually, which means that none of the content is tagged based on its visual hierarchy. Visual hierarchy meaning this is the title, this is the content, this is contact information. Using the Paragraph Styles will allow me to then tag these pieces of content to start building the visual hierarchy for a screen reader.

Let's make our first paragraph style by highlighting the title. Coming to the Paragraph Styles panel, we're going to click the "New Style" icon and that will populate Paragraph Style 1. So, what we want to do is we want to double click that and then of course we want to give it a name so we know what the style is for. So, style name is "Title." Normally, if you were in the process of designing, you would then use the options here to start styling it, So, you'd pick a font, you'd pick a colour, you'd pick the alignment, and you would do all of this through the Paragraph Styles panel. Because mine's already styled, you can see that it's already pulled in the properties. So, I am good there, I don't need to make any of those changes but what I do want to change in the Paragraph Style options is the "Export Tagging." So, what export tagging does is it identifies that this particular piece of text is attached to paragraph style title and then what we're going to do is we're going to choose a tag for a screen reader to

then identify as a title.

So, here, what we want to do, we'll see "p" which stands for a paragraph. We see h1, h2, h3, h4, this stands for headings. So, this would be your title, heading one, subtitles, sub subtitles, sub sub sub subtitles, and so on and so forth. So, here, this is the title, this would be in h1. So, I want to tag it that way, so that way when the screen reader is reading the PDF, it knows, hey, this is first. This is the most important piece of text to start with. Now I'm going to click "OK." And now that's been styled and tagged.

So, I'm going to do the next chunk here, I'm going to do the body text, so, the body text as the content. And again, we're going to do the same thing, we're going to click a new style, double click the paragraph style that it generated, and we're going to put in "Body text" as the name. And I'm going to jump down here to the "Export Tagging," and here, the tag that I would choose is "Paragraph" because this is paragraphs of content. So, I'm going to hit "p" and I'm going to hit "OK." So, visually, it doesn't change anything in your design but what we're doing is we're building a structure in the back end for an alternative device to read the document properly.

The next thing that we're going to look at is adding alternative text to all of the images that you've included in your designs. So, here I've got three images and we're going to go through and we're going to add some alternative text. So, when a user is using a screen reader, the screen reader just simply identifies image. Without alternative text, it can't describe the image to the user. So, adding alternative text then allows that person to understand the entire design. So, we're going to click on this image that we've placed, of the microphone, I'm just going to move my, close up my Paragraph Styles here. So, I've got the image selected and what I'm going to do is I'm going to go in to "Object" and I'm going to go in to "Object Export Options," and that's going to open up our "Export Options" dialogue box. So, you'll see that there are three tabs along the top. The one that we want to focus on today is "Alt Text." So, we'll click on that and you'll see "Alt Text Source: Custom" and then we can type in what we would like the alt text for this image to be. So, I am going to put in "Close up of a microphone on a TV studio desk." So, now that image has some alternative text so when screen reader comes to it, it will identify it as an image and then read this alt text so someone can understand what the picture is showing. So, I'm going to hit "Done." Excellent.

Now I'm going to come down here to my Humber logo and I'm going to do the same thing. So, I've got it selected, I'm going to go to "Object,"

“Object Export Options,” and here I’m going to type in “Humber College Logo.” Now, sometimes there are images or graphics in our design that we don’t necessarily need the screen reader to pick up. So, for example, this piece here, this sort of additional Humber branding that’s on the picture, it’s really not integral to the piece. So, when the screen reader is reading my postcard that I’ve designed here, I want it to skip this image. So, that is part of, again, the same dialogue box, so I’m going to go to “Object Export Options” and here what I’m going to do, I can add in some alt text, so I can put in “Custom” here. “Humber Tag Line.” But really, what I’m going to do is I’m going to go into the tagged PDF and I am going to apply the Artifact tag, and the Artifact tag basically tells the screen reader this isn’t that important, so you can skip it. And that’s what I’m going to do with that piece. So, you can sort of prioritize which images require the screen reader to address and which ones it can just skip over.

The next thing we want to work on are our links. So, if we look here in the blue box, you can see that we have a link to the Humber website, as well as two email links. Currently, these are just words, it’s just a paragraph. They’re not active. So, in a PDF, it wouldn’t be clickable and the screen reader wouldn’t identify it as a hyperlink. So, we want to make these actual real hyperlinks. So, to do that, we’re going to go to our hyperlink panels. So, we’ll go to “Window,” “Interactive,” “Hyperlinks,” and that will open up this little panel here and you can see that the panel has no links attached to it, so we’re going to start building some. So, we’re going to highlight “humber.ca” and in the Hyperlinks panel down at the bottom, we’re going to create a hyperlink. And here, what we want to do is we don’t want a link to email here, we’re going to link to a URL. And so, it’s picked up the URL, “http://humber.ca.” Fantastic. Okay.

And then, it’s also applying a character style and this now brings us back to the styles from the beginning of the tutorial. Character styles are a little bit different in the sense that they don’t tag entire bodies of text but rather just specific lines or single words, and that’s what it’s doing here. So, it’s taking that one word that I’ve highlighted and it’s applying a style called hyperlink, which is fantastic because that means it’s now tagged as a hyperlink. So, I’m going to hit “OK.” And I’m going to have a look here at my document.

So, because it’s applying this prebuilt hyperlink character style, you’ll notice that my link turned blue. In normal circumstances, that would be

fine if it was just in the body of the text on a black and white page, but in this design piece, it doesn't work. Blue on blue is clearly not legible. So, what I'm going to do is I'm going to go into the Character Styles panel and I'm going to open it up. I'm going to double click on that style Hyperlink and what I'm going to do is I'm just going to go into character colour and I'm going to put it back to white. And I'm going to hit "OK" and close up this panel here. Great.

So, the next thing I'm going to do is I'm going to work on these email addresses. So, again, I'm going to come into this text box and highlight what I would like to be clickable. So, in this case simply the email address. And I'm going to make a new hyperlink. This time, though, instead of linking to a URL, I'm going to link to email. So, that's the address that I would like to link to. It's going to use the same character style, hyperlink, so it will have the underline and be white. The underline is important because it is a visual cue that something is clickable. Without a hover state, we do need something to let people know that they can click it and the underline is a pretty common indicator. And I'm going to hit "OK." Great. So now, if we look at the Hyperlinks panel, we can see that there is a little mail icon for the email address and then there's a little circle for the URLs.

Alright, our last step now is to add some document info, so I'm just going to close up all of these panels here, tuck them away, and I'm going to now add a title, an author, and some meta description to the document. So we're going to go under "File" and we're going to go to "File info," and that will open this great big dialogue box and this is where we can put in that information. So, this just, again, meta information for a screen reader so it can identify the documents. Here are going to put in our title, "Making Accessible Media." We'll make Humber College the author. And you'll see that there are quite a few fields here. You can get very specific and detailed in your meta description, which is really best practice if you're putting documents online. It helps people find them. In our case here, this would actually be something distributed internally, so we're just going to put in a description. We're not going to be too concerned about the title or the author because we're using an organization and the copyright notices at this point. So really, we're concerned about document identification in this exercise. So, we've got a title, an author, and then we'll put in a brief description here. A short description of... A short description introducing our new online course. Alright. Okay. And then we're going to hit "OK."

Looking at our final document, we can see that really not much has changed. Visually, it still looks the same. However, we've added a whole bunch of information on the back end so when we export this to PDF, it will have all the appropriate tags and information for a screen reader to then identify the pieces of information. Building your documents in InDesign, with these best practices in mind, such as consistently using Paragraph Styles, tagging hyperlinks, and using alternative text for your images, will help you create more inclusive and accessible communications.

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