Accessible Excel Cheat Sheet

Structuring Tables

- Keep headings structures as simple as possible. Excel can be set so screen readers will read column and row headings (see below) but it can only read one level of each.
- Place the table title, instructions and/ or other important information in the top, left cell (A1) since the screen reader initially places the focus there. If the information visually spans multiple cells then merge cells.
- Avoid merging cells within tables as that can cause confusion with column and row headers.
- Avoid empty columns or rows. Screen reader users may assume the table is complete when they reach an empty cell.

Defining Names

Defining the name of the table indicates to a screen reader whether Column and/or Row Headings are available. A screen reader will then read those column names instead of the default cell letter and number.

1. Place the focus in the top left corner of the table.
2. Go to **Formulas>Define Name** (Alt, W, W)**.** This opens the **New Name** dialogue box.
3. Type one of the following in the Name Field.

For a single table per sheet with no built-in sorting:

- Use **Title** if the table has Column and Row Headings
- Use **RowTitle** if the table has only Row Headings
- Use **ColumnTitle** if the table has only Column Headings
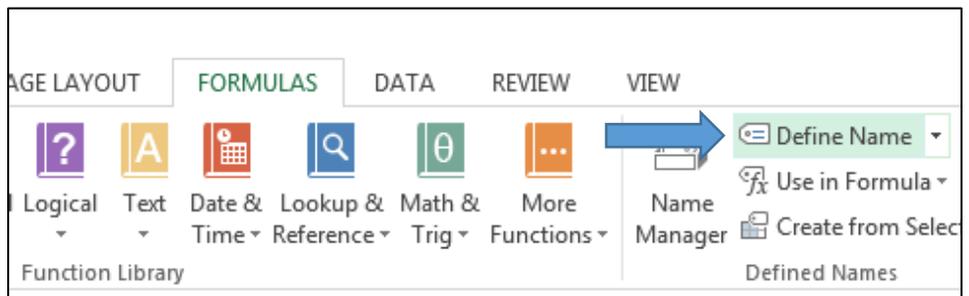
For multiple tables on a single sheet or for tables with sortable columns:

- Use **TitleRegion[UniqueTableNumber].[UpperLeftCell].[LowerRightCell].[SheetNumber]** if the table has Column and Row Headings
- **RowTitleRegion[UniqueTableNumber].[UpperLeftCell].[LowerRightCell].[SheetNumber**] if the table has only Row Headings
- **ColumnTitleRegion[UniqueTableNumber].[UpperLeftCell].[LowerRightCell].[SheetNumber]** if the table has only Column Headings

Notes

- **RowTitle** and **ColumnTitle** are all one word with no spaces.
- Only define names in the top left cell of each table. If you need to delete names, use **Formulas>Name Manager.**
- Use the default sheet number for the tab. As long as the number remains unique between sheets, you can change the sheet names and order without affecting the screen reader.
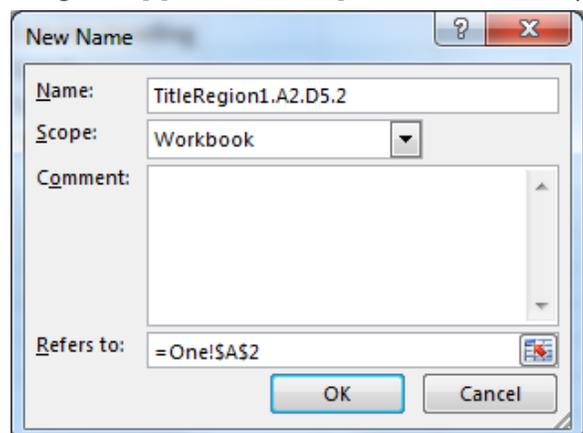
Images and Charts

When navigating objects in Excel, screen readers present (in order):

- Object type
- Chart title (if it is a chart)
- Location on the worksheet
- Alternative text

1. Avoid using images whenever possible and never use purely decorative images.
2. Create unique and informative chart titles.
3. Add alternative text to both images and charts by:
   a. Right-click on the image and choose **Format Picture…** or **Format Chart Area**
   b. Click on the **Size & Properties** icon and then on **Alt Text.**
   c. Enter useful alternative text in the **Description** field (not the Title field).

Accessibility Checker

- Use the **Accessibility Checker** to verify your work by selecting **File>Info>Check for Issues.**
- The accessibility checker shows errors, warnings, and tips along with suggestions to fix issues.
- Merged cells outside of tables will show up as errors but should not be fixed.

More Tips

- Use unique and informative sheet names to help users navigate.
- Remember to run spell check.
- Use at least 12 pt. font size.
- Do not use color alone to convey information.
- Provide sufficient color contrast.
- Simplify the language and ensure it is appropriate to the audience.
- Use no more than 3 different fonts.
- Avoid using ALL CAPS, unless the word is an acronym.