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Creating Accessible Tables

This section will take you through the main steps for creating an accessible table.

When tables are not accessible, the data they contain can quickly become a meaningless sea of numbers, facts and figures to someone moving through them a cell at a time. Readers who cannot see the table cannot use visual cheats like checking the alignment and scanning back to the top headings to orient themselves as they go. Equivalent information needs to be encoded into the table to facilitate comprehension.

Tables are meant to be used for tabular information (data). Tables should never be used to lay out documents. When editing a book, recreate charts and tables using the default functionality of the software (i.e. the **Insert Table** tool).

Tables have a logical reading order from left to right and top to bottom. A well structured table will allow screenreader users to easily navigate and examine data. There are specific keyboard controls for reading tables that differ to the controls for reading regular text. When non-tabular text is rendered with tables, the reading controls are incorrect. This can make it confusing and difficult to read the document with a screenreader.



Do not present non-tabular information in a table format even if it presented as such in a book (i.e. a grocery list with two columns). Present such information as a list in two columns (see [Formatting Columns](#)).



Columns are rarely used when reformatting a book, since they are often just for aesthetics. If this is the case the information is probably best formatted as a [list](#) or `normal` depending on the context. If you are unsure please post a question on the [Production Q&A](#).



Do not use split or merged cells in a Table. Screenreaders can't handle it.



Do not use blank rows or columns in a table for formatting. Blank cells, rows, or columns could mislead someone using a screenreader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table. You can fix this by either removing unnecessary blank cells, rows, or columns, or adding some text indicating the cell is intentionally blank. For example: N/A, "No data" or a hyphen.

How to Convert a Table to Normal Text

If a table is used as layout, you will have to remove the table. One way to do this is to convert a table to normal text.

To convert a Table to Text

- First you highlight the table
- This will open the 'Table Tools' section in the ribbon menu
- Select the 'Layout' tab
- On this menu select the 'Convert to Text' button
- This will open a pop up, you then choose the paragraph break option to separate the text and hit okay.



If you have any questions, check the archive below, if still not clear, post your question on the [Production Q&A](#)

Q&A Archive

Q: Unsure if the tables were formatted correctly in Appendix A at the end of the book 101 ways to meeting angels by Karen Paolino.

From the Tables section of the wiki: "A caption or description should always be included to give context to a table"

I am interpreting the 'or' in 'caption or description' to mean to include one of the two (either caption or description). But given our past conversation on inclusion of alt text, perhaps i should be including both? Caption and Description? But when I followed the wiki's instructions to add a description, it was greyed out and I was unable to edit it, so only captions are present for the tables.

A: I will fix the wording in the wiki, but every table should have Alt-Text. When it comes to not being able to access the Alt-Text in the table priorities, it looks like this is an issue with they way the document was saved. Just resave and replace the document using the 'Save As' option and double check to ensure it is saving as a .docx file. It will prompt you to replace the file, just accept and replace the file. It should now work!

I creates a short video to illustrate what I mean: <https://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/cYn6q2wTtP>

Word is a finicky beast!

Q: Follow up question regarding the song title tables in Four Boys and a Guitar: When I'm making a separate table for each song, I have been putting the song title in the spot labeled "Title" under Table Properties - Alt Text. However, when you look at the tables on the page, there is no visible indication of the song title for each table. I'm wondering if it would improve usability for sighted users to add a level H2 header in front of each table with the song title for that table?

A: Yes, adding the heading and the title in the alt-text priorities works.

Q: I have come to the appendixes at the end of this book and there is a very long and complex table

in Appendix D (starts on page 195 of the PDF, titled Mills Brothers Discography-by song title) that I could use some direction on. It's going to take a lot of time and I just want to make sure I'm tackling it the best way before I start. The issue I'm having is the subheadings for each song title. Here's a screenshot of one way I thought of to deal with them. But I'm also wondering if it would be better to create a separate table for each song. What do you think?

* Miles Brothers Discography - By Song Title *							
Song Title	Release Date	Release Label/Number	Session Date	Master Number	Album Title	Matrix Number	Notes
As The Alley From The Alam o	04/15/47	Decca 2363-B	03/03/47	73811a			
As The Alley From The Alam o	08/15/50	Decca 1-8148	03/03/47	73811a	Source in Album	MG4154-B	
As The Alley From The Alam o	03/13/61	Decca 101-14084 (D1-74084)	03/03/47	73811a	Our Golden Favorites	MG-7813	A2=
As The Alley From The Alam o	08/01/66	Decca OXB-103	03/03/47	73811a	The Best	MG-10406	A3=

A: In this case you should create separate tables for each song title.

Set the heading of the section as 'Mills Brothers Discography-By Song Title'

Set each table tile as simply the song title.

Q: There is a table in "The Canadian Prairies" that I am struggling with. The table is extensive and is split into two pages, and the header column is only visible on the first page - should I combine them

	1971	1980	1981	1990	1991	1992
	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Marble						
Rural						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total	28 86	32 94	111 73	185 32	261 87	348 87
Urban	1 4	30 16	40 27	70 26	200 43	262 43
Total	25	62	153	255	461	610
Settlement						
Rural						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Alberta						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
British Columbia						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Manitoba						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Ontario						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Quebec						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Prince Edward Island						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Saskatchewan						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						
Yukon						
Total						
Farms						
Non-born						
Total						
Urban						
Total						

into a single table?

A: You can combine it into the same table. If you follow the instructions on header rows in the wiki it will be fine: https://bclcl.wiki.libraries.coop/doku.php?id=public:nnels:etext:tables#table_headers

Q: I am editing a book that has very long tables that are images. I obviously need to convert them to readable tables in Word, but my question is should I create on very large table, or should I cut it down into smaller tables?

Diagnosis	Deaf Patients n = 94		Hearing Patients n = 180	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Eating Disorders</i>				
Anorexia Nervosa	0	0	3	1.7
Eating Disorder NOS	0	0	2	1.1
Total Eating Disorders	0	0	5	2.8
<i>Adjustment Disorder</i>				
Adjustment Disorder	5	5.3	0	0
<i>Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders</i>				
Exhibitionism	0	0	1	0.6
Pedophilia	1	1.1	4	2.2
Total Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders	1	1.1	5	2.8
<i>Substance Use Disorders</i>				
Alcohol Abuse	8	8.5	13	7.2
Alcohol Dependence	2	2.1	30	16.7
Cocaine Abuse	0	0	3	1.7
Cocaine Dependence	0	0	3	1.7
Drug Abuse (unspecified)	0	0	8	4.4
Drug Dependence NOS	0	0	2	1.1
Marijuana Abuse	2	2.1	5	2.8
Marijuana Dependence	1	1.1	1	0.6
Polysubstance Abuse	7	7.4	8	4.4
Polysubstance Dependence	4	4.3	2	1.1
Total Substance Abuse Disorders	24	25.5	75	41.7
Axis II				
<i>Disorders First Diagnosed in Infancy, Childhood or Adolescence</i>				
Aspergers	1	1.1	0	0
Borderline Intellection Functioning	7	7.4	0	0
Mental Retardation	18	19.1	8	4.4
Pervasive Developmental Disorder	6	6.4	4	2.2
Total Developmental Disorders	32	34.0	12	6.6
<i>Personality Disorders</i>				
Antisocial Personality Disorder	3	3.2	5	2.8
Antisocial Traits	3	3.2	0	0
Borderline Personality Disorder	11	11.7	12	6.6
Borderline Traits	4	4.3	0	0

Diagnosis	Deaf Patients n = 94		Hearing Patients n = 180	
	n	%	n	%
Axis I				
<i>Mood Disorders</i>				
Bipolar Disorder	8	8.5	17	9.4
Depression NOS	1	1.1	0	0
Depression (Secondary to Substance Abuse)	1	1.1	0	0
Major Depressive Disorder	17	18.1	15	8.3
Major Depression With Psychosis	3	3.2	0	0
Mood Disorder NOS	0	0	6	3.3
Total Mood Disorders	30	32.0	38	21.0
<i>Anxiety Disorders</i>				
Anxiety Disorder	2	2.1	3	1.7
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	6	6.4	1	0.6
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	20	21.3	12	6.6
Total Anxiety Disorders	28	29.8	16	8.9
<i>Somatoform Disorder</i>				
Somatization Disorder	2	2.1	0	0
<i>Psychotic Disorders</i>				
Delusional Disorder	3	3.2	3	1.7
Psychotic Disorder	8	8.5	3	1.7
Schizoaffective	14	14.9	68	37.8
Schizophrenia	6	6.4	86	47.7
Total Psychotic Disorders	31	33.0	160	88.9
<i>Dementia and Executive Functioning Disorders</i>				
Dementia	0	0	14	7.7
Frontal Lobe Syndrome	0	0	1	0.6
Total Dementia and Executive Functioning Disorders	0	0	15	8.3
<i>Impulse Control Disorders</i>				
ADHD	1	1.1	2	1.1
Conduct Disorder	1	1.1	0	0
Hyperkinetic Syndrome NOS	0	0	1	0.6
Impulse Control Disorder	2	2.1	2	1.1
Intermittent Explosive Disorder	3	3.2	0	0
Total Impulse Control Disorders	7	7.5	5	2.8

Diagnosis	Deaf Patients n = 94		Hearing Patients n = 180	
	n	%	n	%
Dependent Personality Disorder	1	1.1	1	0.6
Dependent Personality Traits	2	2.1	0	0
Histrionic Personality Disorder	1	1.1	1	0.6
Narcissistic Personality Disorder	1	1.1	0	0
Narcissistic Personality Traits	1	1.1	0	0
Obsessive-Compulsive Traits	1	1.1	0	0
Paranoid Traits	1	1.1	0	0
Personality Disorder NOS	4	4.3	19	10.5
Schizoid Personality Disorder	1	1.1	1	0.6
Total Personality Disorders	34	36.5	39	21.7
No Diagnosis	2	2.1	0	0

Note: As some participants have multiple diagnoses, total n and percentage equal more than 100.

A: In this case you can break the sub-sections down into their own tables with each disorder its own table. You can caption each table with the name of the disorder.

Let us more closely examine the implications related to clustering. Here are the results from all the features presented in Chapter 3 to do with fishes and fishing. Listed below are the results for all the features in that chapter:

Chapter 3: The 153 Fishes	Actual Results	Expected Results
Direct Hits: 62	34.80%	20%
+1 or -1: 74	41.60%	40%
+2 or -2: 42	23.60%	40%
Total Hits: 178		

Q: Theomantics uses tables-A LOT-but it seems like they are not necessary. It appears that tables are used for formatting spacing, as opposed to actually creating a table. For example; the Chapter headings are in tables (which I remove.) But what should I do with the other 'tables'? There are instances in the book where similar information is presented as a list, and not a table. Should I just remove the tables and have the information formatted as 'Normal' with paragraph breaks between each line? I have included a screen shout of a page from the .doc file and the .epub file as examples. UPDATE: I have been thinking more about this as I move through editing other parts of the book. These sections could work as bulleted lists. If you need more examples I can give you other page numbers, or just open the epub yourself. There are oh so many.

And Ephesians 2:10 speaks of man being created by God, but with different words: "For of Him we are a product created in Christ Jesus unto good works..."⁶

For of Him 425 + 9
unto 2:1 425to 426

The second time the word image occurs in reference to Christ, is in I Corinthians 11:7. Here is how the words transpire in Greek: "For a man ought to be covered like the head the image and glory of God being. For the woman is the glory of man."⁷

To Be Covered The Head The Image And Glory 425 + 8
I Co 11:7 425to 426the 426the 425to 426the 425to 426

And from [this passage](#), comes the following: The word "image" links directly to the word "God."⁸

The image of God being - 425 + 8
what does it mean?

The pattern for the above words "The image of God being" have been interwoven in the text in such a manner that the words "and glory" are not present in the phrase. But what is interesting is that the word glory by itself, in reference to "the image and glory of God," equals 425 throughout the New Testament. Christ is both the image (425) and the glory (425) of God.⁹

The image - 425 = The glory - 425 + 2
Rom 8:20 425to 2 If Co 5:8 the Son

For God so loved the world, so as the son the only begotten he gave...
SO AS THE SON THE ONLY BEGOTTEN 425 x 6
Joh 3:16 425to son one 425to give
THE SON THE ONLY BEGOTTEN HE GAVE 425 x 6
son one 425to 425to 425to 425to

I could give a whole list of references to Jesus being the only begotten Son—all multiples of 425. Before moving on to the next reference to image, I want to show two outstanding features that tie into the idea of man being created in the image of God. You will see the obvious relationship. "We know that anyone begotten of God does not sin, but He who has been begotten (born) of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him."

BORN OF GOD 425 x 2
1 Joh 5:18 425to 425to 425to

And Ephesians 2:10 speaks of man being created by God, but with different words: "For of Him we are a product created in Christ Jesus unto good works..."
FOR OF HIM 425 x 3

Q: I have a question regarding tables in Satan is a Socialist. There are a few simple tables in the book formatted similar to the image of the table below. The tables usually have two rows, one header row

and one with all the content. Should I be adding separate rows for each element in the list (e.g. one row for high/low government control, one row for high/low level of entitlements, and so on). Or is this fine as is? Thanks!

A: It looks like none of these are actually tables, but they used tables to create a columns for comparative lists. You can reformat them as nested lists.

Q: I am currently working on "The Red Road and Other Narratives of the Dakota Sioux" and in part 1 there are three lists of tribes presented in tables. The first column contains the tribes name and the second column contains the english meaning of the tribes name. Because there are no column headers, I am wondering if it would be better to reformat the information in normal style?

mon anglicized names and the names spelled with the Dakota orthography, indicating proper pronunciation, used in this volume.³ Assuming their main location in the early 1800s, and going roughly from east to west, from the Mississippi River in present-day Minnesota westward to beyond the Missouri River (see maps 2 and 3), they are:

Eastern Sioux, Dakota or Santee (4 councils)

Mdewakanton	Mdewakayway, Spirit Lake dwellers
Wapikate	Wapikate, Shoens among the deciduous leaves
Wahpeton	Wahpetayway, Village among the deciduous leaves
Sisseton	Sisotayway or Village among the fisheries

Middle Sioux, or Winema (2 councils)

Yankton	Yanktayway, Dwellers at End Village
Yanktonai	Yanktaywayna, Dwellers at Little End Village

Western Sioux or Lakota (1 council)

Teton	Titayway, Dwellers on the prairies
-------	------------------------------------

The general name for the Dakota people (Isiyi, Isiyuri or Santee, meaning dwellers at the knife), was derived from a lake they called Isiyta-mai (Knife Lake), southeast of Mille Lacs Lake in Minnesota (Pond 1986, 175). The term Isiyi applied first to the particular Mdewakanton band located at Knife Lake, and then to all

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A: So this is an example of a publisher using a table for layout purposes. If the information is a list, then it must be reformatted as a list to be accessible. See the [List section for more information](#). For example:

- Title of List
 - First Language; Indigenous Name

Q: I'm working on People, State, and War Under the French Regime in Canada and in the appendices at the end are several images of tables that I'm transcribing into text. I have two questions about these tables (I put the question here instead of the image Q&A because I felt like it was more applicable to tables). Some of the tables have arrows connecting the data in different cells, and a Note at the end of appendix A reads "Figures given with arrows indicate the combined total for the categories in question." I'm not sure how to indicate this in a table.

Second question, in Appendix A, in the second last table the edge of the last column is cut off, so I cant read all the text. I can infer what the words are intended to be? Or I can leave as is which will mean some partial words and individual letters. How should I proceed?

A: It seems like the Arrows are in the Regular column. You can enter them using [unicode](#). <https://unicode-table.com/en/sets/arrow-symbols/>Here are all the codes for arrows.

If you can with confidence fill in those missing letters and words, then go for it!

Q: Can we use lists within a cell in a table? For example, in "I Had the Craziest Dream," some of the tables identify up to five different LP Reissue identifiers. Can I use an unordered list in that case?

A: No. Lists within tables are not accessible. Could you give me a specific example of what you are trying to reformat?

Q: One of the tables in "I Had the Craziest Dream" is formatted a little funky. It looks like this:

PART 10

1958-1974

	Recorded	Label	Number
Hollywood			
228. "I Don't Want to Walk With- out You" with orchestra conducted by Wilbur Hatch	1958	Warner Bros	W/WS-1216 W/WS-1426
issued in album	They Sold Twenty Million W-1216 (mono) / WS-1216 (stereo) (1958)		
reissued in album	Remember the Night, and the Girl, and the Song W-1426 (mono) / WS-1426 (stereo) (1961)		
RCA Victor album	The New Tommy Dorsey Orchestra Recorded Live at the Royal Box of the Americana, New York (1964) Four selections as featured artist		
New York			
229. "Just One of Those Things"	1964	RCA Victor	LPM/ LSP-2830 (mono/stereo)
230. "The Lonesome Road"	1964	RCA Victor	LPM/ LSP-2830
231. "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate"	1964	RCA Victor	LPM/ LSP-2830
232. "My Melancholy Baby" above with orchestra directed by Sam Donahue	1964	RCA Victor	LPM/ LSP-2830

I'm hoping you can help me decide what exactly is going on in number 228. I think that it's meant to still be under the song title column? And how should I write that up so it's accessible?

A: Great question! There looks to be 4 columns in this table, (and the publisher used a list to also order the information fun!):

-(Number, Song Title, Orchestra details)	Recorded (includes place and year)	Label	Number
------------------------------------------	------------------------------------	-------	--------

It seems to me the best way to do this is as follows (only write the number not list format):

-	Recorded	Label	Number
228."I Don't ... by Willbur Hatch	Hollywood 1958	Warner Bros	W/WS-1216, W/WS-1426
issued in album They Sold...	-	-	W-1216(mono)/WS-1216(stereo)
issued in album....	Hollywood 1961	-	W-1426(mono)/WS1426(stereo)

Note: I used shorthand in my example. In your version you need to type out the full titles and phrases.

Q: Atlantic's Last Stop. What is the difference between the title and the caption of a table? What if the caption provided is essentially the title? (For an example, see the table in Chapter 18.)

A: If the caption is a title, then just repeat it in the title in the properties. All accessible tables require titles in the properties as per the wiki instructions.

WCAG 2.0 — H39: [Using caption elements to associate data table captions with data tables](#)

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