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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). Keep in mind, 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.

Insert a Table

To create and accessible table:

- Go to the `Insert Tab` on the `Ribbon Menu`
- Go to `Table`
- Choose the number of boxes you want across to create columns, and then choose the number of boxes you want down to create rows for your table.

When you add a table to your document, two new tabs appear in the ribbon:

1. Design
2. Layout

These are the `Table Tools`.

We do not add any decorative additions to our tables. They only need to have basic border lines around all cells, and include the accessible formatting outlined below.

Here is a quick demo for How to Insert a Table in MS Word

Create Header Row

Table cells should be marked as table headers or header rows when they serve as labels to help interpret the other cells in the table. Correctly identified headers provide metadata that the screenreader user can call up as needed as they navigate the data points.

To set the Header Row:

- Navigate to the `Table Design Tab`
- Select `Header Row`
- Enter the text into the top row of the table for each column
- Your table now has a header row!

Having a Header Row will make it easier to understand the information that the table contains. Some screen readers can be set up to read column names at any time, which can help when working with a large table.

Next, ensure `Repeat Header Rows` is enabled. This ensures the header row is repeated across pages. Do this even if the table does not go over multiple pages.

To enable `Repeat Header Rows`:

- Place the cursor in the first row of the table.
- Right click to open the menu and select `Table Priorities`
- This will open the Table Properties dialog box
- Select the Row Tab in the Properties dialog box
- Uncheck `Allow Row to break across pages`
- Check `Repeat as header row at the top of each page`

Create Table Description and Title

The last step is to enter a description and a title for the table. These should always be included to give context to a table. Descriptions should answer the question: `What is the table's purpose and how is it organized?`

For example: `A breakdown on the project funding separated by columns for the activity name and cost.`

Remember to keep the description short and direct. A good guideline is to keep it around 140 words.

Tables rarely come with a description, so you will have to always include it. Some tables will come with captions, but these tables will still need the additional Alt-Text description along with the caption. Remember to always include a title. See below for details.

To add a Description and Title:

- Select the Table
- Right click to open the menu and select `Table Priorities`
- This will open the Table Properties dialog box
- Select the Alt-Text Tab in the Properties dialog box
- Enter the title into the title textbox
- Enter the description into the description textbox
- Select Ok.

Insert Caption (if present)

Captions are provided by the publisher, and are treated the same way as we would a caption for an image with one small difference: `the caption goes above the table as opposed to below it.`

To Insert a Caption:

- Select the entire table or right click near the edge table to open the menu
- Select `Insert Caption`
- In the Caption dialog box, type in a short description
- Remove the label (i.e. Figure, Equation, Photo) by selecting `Exclude Label from Caption`
- Type or copy and paste the book's caption in the caption field

When you select `Exclude Label from Caption` the number will remain. This will have to be removed manually after insertion.

Congratulations! You now have an accessible table! Remember, for even more accessibility, you can break down larger complex tables into smaller ones with headings. If the data in a table is not tabular, then it should be presented as a list or paragraph. Remember not to split or merge cells when creating your accessible table. See presentation for more explanation.

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

Further Help

- Accessible Word Document Design: Tables and Columns
- Insert an accessible table in Word

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?

• Mills Brothers Discography—By Song Title¶

Song Title¤	Release Type/ Date¤	Release Label/ Number¤	Session Date¤	Master Number¤	Album Title¤	Matrix Number¤	Notes¤
Across The Alley From The	Single¶ 04/15/47¤	Decca¶ 23883-B¤	03/03/47¤	73811¤	—¤	—¤	—¤
Across The Alley From The Alamo¤	LP¶ 08/15/55¤	Decca 01-8148¤	03/03/47¤	73811¤	Souvenir Album	MG4154 8¤	—¤
Across The Alley From The Alamo¤	LP¶ 03/13/61¤	Decca DI-4084 (DI-74084)¤	03/03/47¤	73811¤	Our Golden Favorites¤	MG-7813¤	A2¤
Across	LP¶ 08/01/66¤	Decca DXB-193	03/03/47¤	73811¤	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

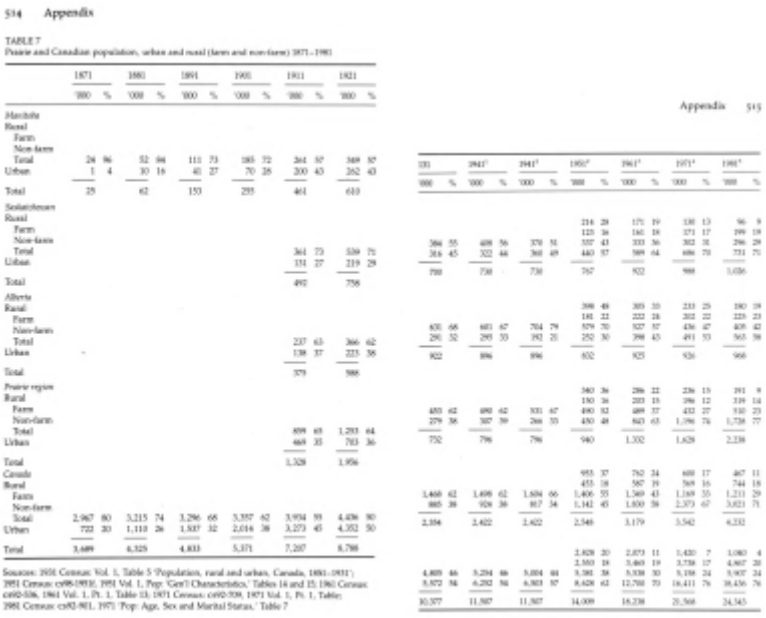

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TABLE 7

Prairie and Canadian population, urban and rural (farm and non-farm) 1871–1981

	1871		1881		1891		1901		1911		1921	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Manitoba												
Rural												
Farm												
Non-farm												
Total	24	96	52	84	111	73	185	72	261	57	369	57
Urban	1	4	10	16	41	27	70	28	200	43	282	43
Total	25		62		153		255		461		610	
Saskatchewan												
Rural												
Farm												
Non-farm												
Total									361	73	539	71
Urban									131	27	219	29
Total									492		758	
Alberta												
Rural												
Farm												
Non-farm												
Total									237	63	366	62
Urban									138	37	223	38
Total									375		588	
Prairie region												
Rural												
Farm												
Non-farm												
Total									859	65	1,253	64
Urban									469	35	703	36
Total									1,328		1,956	
Canada												
Rural												
Farm												
Non-farm												
Total	2,967	80	3,215	74	3,296	65	3,357	62	3,934	55	4,436	50
Urban	722	20	1,110	26	1,837	32	2,014	38	3,273	45	4,352	50
Total	3,689		4,325		4,833		5,371		7,207		8,788	

Sources: 1931 Census: Vol. 1, Table 5 'Population, rural and urban, Canada, 1881–1931'; 1951 Census: cat98-1951E, 1951 Vol. 1, Pop: 'Gen'l Characteristics,' Tables 14 and 15; 1961 Census: cat92-536, 1961 Vol. 1, Pt. 1, Table 13; 1971 Census: cat92-709, 1971 Vol. 1, Pt. 1, Table; 1981 Census: cat92-901, 1971 'Pop: Age, Sex and Marital Status,' Table 7

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'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
						214	28	171	19	138	13	96	9
						123	16	161	18	171	17	199	19
394	55	408	56	370	51	337	43	333	36	302	31	296	29
316	45	322	44	360	49	440	57	589	64	686	70	731	71
710		730		730		767		922		988		1,026	
						398	48	305	30	233	25	190	19
						141	22	222	28	202	22	225	23
630	68	681	67	704	79	579	70	527	57	436	47	405	42
291	32	295	33	192	21	252	30	398	43	491	53	565	58
922		896		896		832		925		926		966	
						340	36	286	22	236	15	191	9
						150	16	203	15	196	12	319	14
650	62	690	62	531	67	490	52	489	37	432	27	510	23
279	38	307	39	266	33	450	48	863	63	1,196	74	1,728	77
732		796		796		940		1,352		1,628		2,238	
						953	37	792	24	668	17	467	11
						453	18	587	19	569	16	744	18
1,460	62	1,498	62	1,504	66	1,406	55	1,369	43	1,169	33	1,211	29
885	38	926	38	817	34	1,141	45	1,800	58	2,373	67	3,021	71
2,354		2,422		2,422		2,548		3,179		3,542		4,232	
						2,829	20	2,073	11	1,430	7	1,080	4
						2,593	19	3,465	19	3,738	17	4,907	20
4,805	46	5,294	46	5,054	44	5,381	38	9,538	50	9,159	24	9,907	24
5,572	54	6,292	54	6,303	57	8,628	62	12,768	70	16,411	76	18,436	76
10,377		11,587		11,357		14,009		18,238		21,568		24,343	

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://bclc.wiki.libraries.coop/doku.php?id=public:nnels:etext:tables#table_headers

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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?

	Deaf Patients n = 94		Hearing Patients n = 180	
Diagnosis	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Eating Disorders				
Anorexia Nervosa	0	0	3	1.7
Eating Disorder NOS	0	0	2	1.1
Total Eating Disorders	**0**	**0**	**5**	**2.8**
Adjustment Disorder				
Adjustment Disorder	**5**	**5.3**	**0**	**0**
Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders				
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**
Substance Use Disorders				
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				
Disorders First Diagnosed in Infancy, Childhood or Adolescence				
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**
Personality Disorders				
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

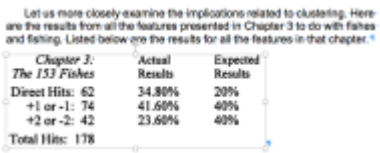
Diagnosis	Deaf Patients n = 94		Hearing Patients n = 180	
	n	%	n	%
Axis I				
Mood Disorders				
Bipolar Disorder	8	8.5	17	9.4
Depression NOS	1	1.1	0	0
Depression (Secondary to Substance Abuse)	1	1.1	0	0
Major Depressive Disorder	17	18.1	15	8.3
Major Depression With Psychosis	3	3.2	0	0
Mood Disorder NOS	0	0	6	3.3
Total Mood Disorders	**30**	**32.0**	**38**	**21.0**
Anxiety Disorders				
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**
Somatoform Disorder				
Somatization Disorder	**2**	**2.1**	**0**	**0**
Psychotic Disorders				
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**
Dementia and Executive Functioning Disorders				
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**
Impulse Control Disorders				
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.

Q: In Theomatics, instead of creating tables the author has used images. Should I put a producers note in for each 'table'?

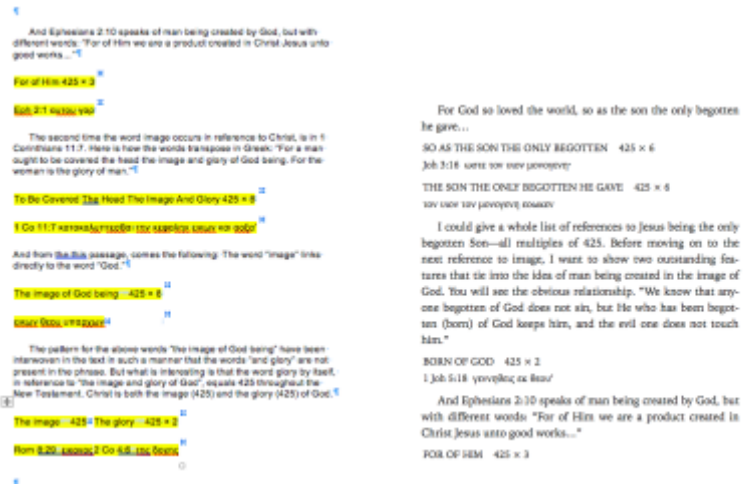


Let us more closely examine the implications related to clustering. Here are the results from all the features presented in Chapter 3 to do with fishes and fishing. Listed below are the results for all the features in that chapter.

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		

A: Images of tables need to be presented as tables, just as images of text should be presented as text. You can see how to make accessible tables here:Tables. If you have questions about creating tables, let us know! We may need to add in a short alt description if the table is not sufficiently described in the surrounding text.

Q: Theomatics 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.



For God so loved the world, so as the son the only begotten he gave…

SO AS THE SON THE ONLY BEGOTTEN 425 × 6

THE SON THE ONLY BEGOTTEN HE GAVE 425 × 6

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 × 2

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 × 3

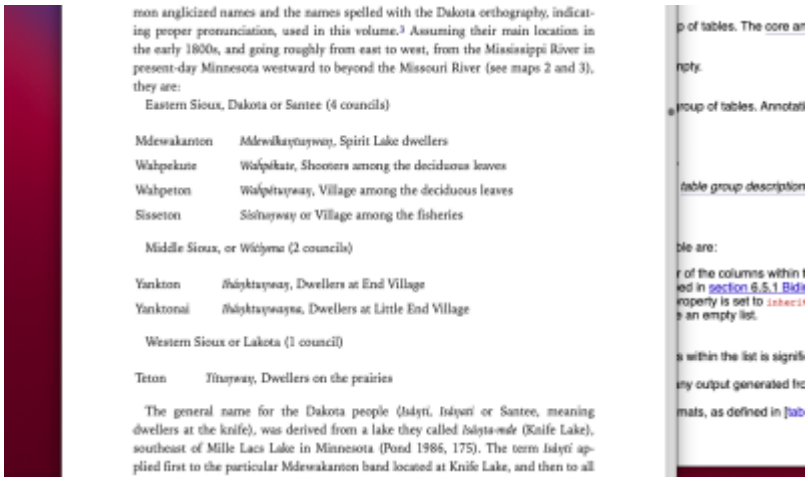
A: You've got that right - none of the tables in this book should be there (as far as I can tell). As you say, they've been used for formatting purposes, a big no-no. All the tables should be converted to text within the narrative flow. I don't think these are true lists (a list of items); I would format these as normal paragraph text.

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	*Mdewákaŋtuŋwaŋ*, Spirit Lake dwellers
Wahpekute	*Waȟpékute*, Shooters among the deciduous leaves
Wahpeton	*Waȟpétuŋwaŋ*, Village among the deciduous leaves
Sisseton	*Sisítuŋwaŋ* or Village among the fisheries

Middle Sioux, or *Wičíȟena* (2 councils)

Yankton	*Ihášktuŋwaŋ*, Dwellers at End Village
Yanktonai	*Ihášktuŋwaŋna*, Dwellers at Little End Village

Western Sioux or Lakota (1 council)

Teton	*Títuŋwaŋ*, Dwellers on the prairies

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

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?

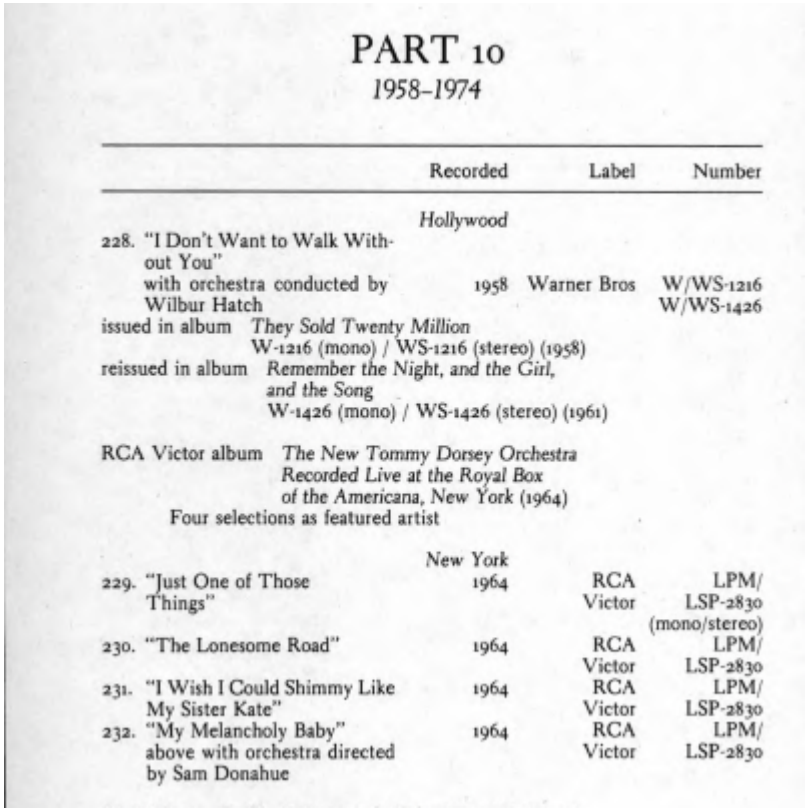
A: It seems like the Arrows are in the `Regular` column. You can enter them using unicode. https://unicode-table.com/en/sets/arrow-symbols/IHere are all the codes for arrows.

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 Without 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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