

Heading Hierarchy 101: Quick Fix Guide¹

Use proper heading styles—not bold text or font size alone—to organize content and support accessibility. When correctly implemented, headings:

- Enable screen reader users to navigate content efficiently by jumping between sections
- Support keyboard-only users who rely on heading navigation
- Help users with cognitive disabilities understand content organization
- Improve readability for everyone through clear visual structure
- Allow users to quickly scan and locate specific information

Here's how to structure your documents using heading levels across common platforms:

All Platforms

- Never skip heading levels (e.g., don't jump from Heading 1 to Heading 3)
- Use the same heading level for content of equal importance throughout your document
- Write clear, descriptive headings that accurately represent the content that follows

Microsoft Word

- Use the “Styles” group on the Home tab.
- Apply Heading 1 for main titles (e.g., course title).
- Use Heading 2 for main sections (e.g., Weekly Modules).
- Use Heading 3 for subsections (e.g., Assignment Instructions).
- Use the Navigation Pane (View > Navigation Pane) to check structure.

Google Docs

- Use the Styles dropdown (usually shows “Normal text”) in the toolbar.
- Apply Heading 1 for your main title.
- Use Heading 2 for main sections (e.g., Lessons, Policies).
- Use Heading 3 for subsections (e.g., Examples, Exercises).
- Open “View > Show Outline” to check structure.

PowerPoint

- Use the “Title Slide” and “Title and Content” layouts for automatic heading structure.
- Slide titles function like Heading 1—use them to label every slide.
- Open “View > Outline View” to verify the reading order of slide titles
- Avoid duplicate slide titles.

Canvas (Rich Content Editor)

- Use the “Paragraph” dropdown menu in the toolbar.
- Choose “Heading 2” for main sections—Canvas reserves Heading 1 for page titles.
- Use Heading 3 or Heading 4 for nested content.

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