

Tricky Non-Text Problems

MS Word features several ways to create content that is problematic to describe, all through the "Insert" tab.



Text Boxes

[Type sidebar content. A sidebar is a standalone supplement to the main document. It is often aligned on the left or right of the page, or located at the top or bottom. Use the Text Box Tools tab to change the formatting of the sidebar text box.]

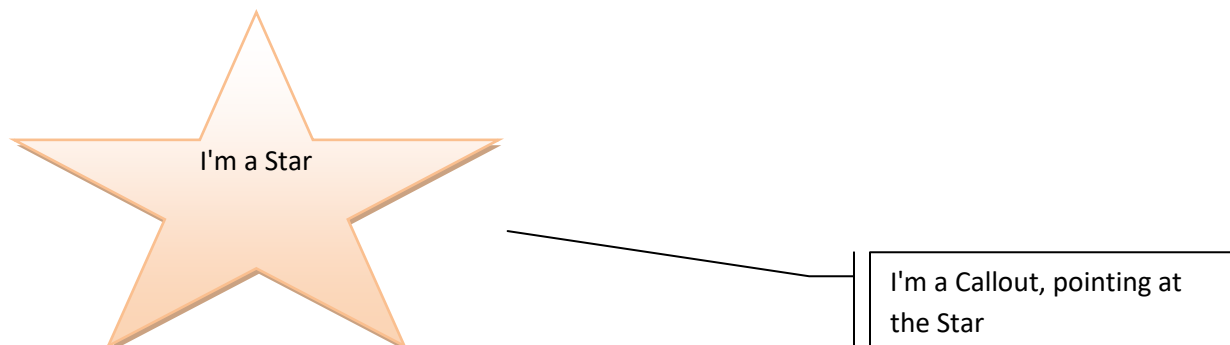
Text Boxes are to be avoided as much as possible. Text boxes are notorious for acting as "black holes" of information, and even when they do share their contents with assistive technologies, it is often out of sequence.

Shapes

You can provide text or alternate text for some of the shapes available in MS Word, but you can't count on that alternate text actually being available to users of assistive technology.

Also, notice that Shapes are not available in MS Word Online, so you will need to have a locally installed version of MS Word to create or edit shapes.

Here is a star and a callout made with MS Shapes:



Most of the time the text you enter will show up as your alternate description, along with a brief label for the type of shape you're using.

Finally, it is important to know that you can also get into trouble with sequencing when you deal with these elements. For best results make sure you are inserting them linearly within your text. This might make life a little tricky, so bring some patience with you.

SmartArt

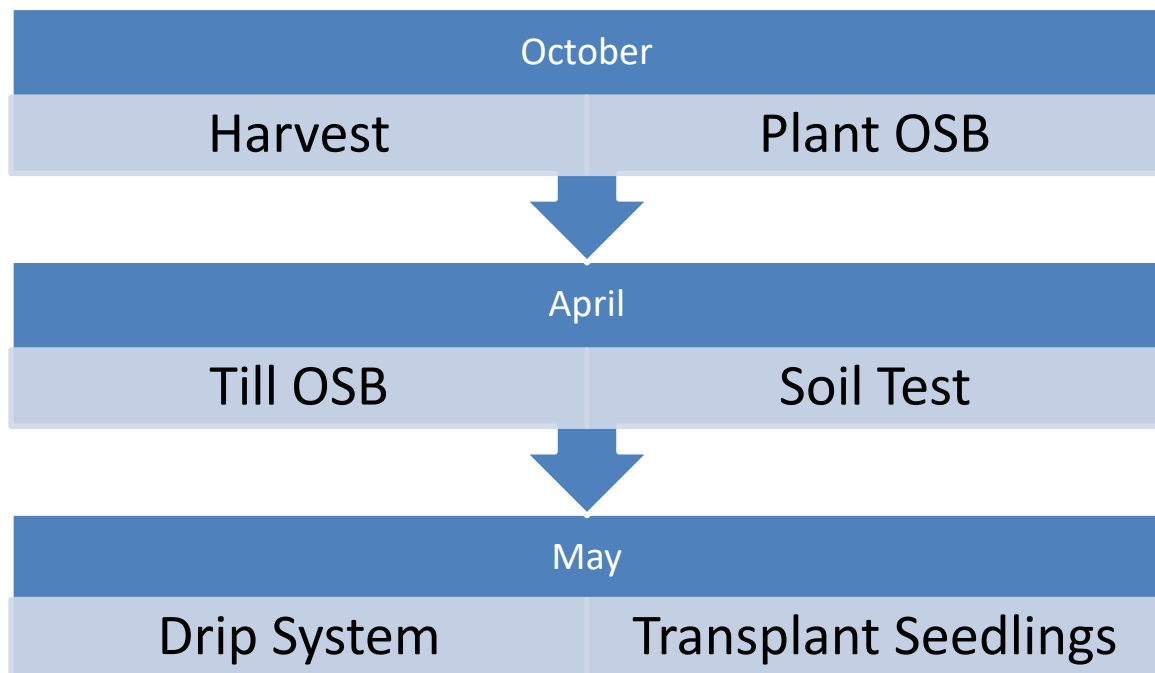
SmartArt can be a problem for accessibility, as there is a chance that not all of the text you enter will be reliably communicated to assistive technologies.

Text you create in SmartArt also might not be visible to assistive technologies, and if it is visible, it might be presented out of sequence.

As if that wasn't challenging enough, each SmartArt object has its own potential for inaccessibility, depending on how complicated it is. This is compounded when you save out to other formats like PDF.

The only constant with SmartArt is that you should present a textual description in the primary narrative that effectively presents the same information being communicated by the SmartArt.

Following is a sample, depicting a process flow:



WordArt

Word Art Shares Your Words With Blind People! (Sometimes)

WordArt does have better alternate text support, but WordArt also creates problems for people with other types of disabilities such as low vision and color blindness.

Symbols and Emojis

Unfortunately, support for Symbols and Emojis is inconsistent and it is recommended you do not use these elements in your MS Word Documents without ensuring the information is also conveyed through the primary text.



Here is an image of what the above symbols and emoji look like when I create them:

