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## Adding Headings to a Document

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A common accessibility-related issue in online course content are documents that do not use proper heading-styles. Many faculty who upload Word documents to their D2L courses receive feedback from [Ally \(BB Ally\)](#) that tells them their “*document does not have headings*” and that adding headings will improve the document’s accessibility.

In this tutorial, you will learn why proper heading styles are so important and how you should apply these styles in your Word documents.

### WHAT ARE PROPER HEADINGS?

Just because it *looks* like a heading doesn’t mean it *is* a heading. A proper heading is text that has been “tagged” as a **Heading 1**, **Heading 2**, **Heading 3**, etc., using the properties defined for each in the **Styles** menu. Using these style-tags provides essential structure to a document; this structure provides navigational anchors for students who use screen-readers or voice-commands to move through a document.

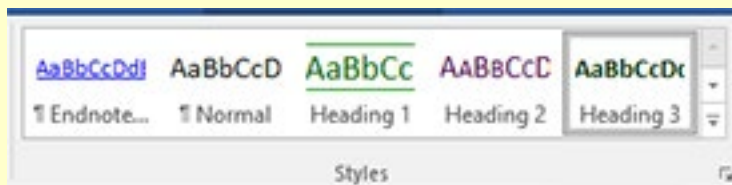
For example, by tabbing through a file, a student using a screen-reader can quickly scan through a list of headings and go directly to the page they want. Without this structure, a student using a screen-reader will have to listen to the whole document until they get to the page they want.

#### This Is a True Heading (Tagged As Heading 3)

The formatting of the above text is all controlled by the settings for the “Heading 3” style in this Word template. By applying a proper style, the text is “tagged” as a real heading that defines the section-level content that follows.

This tag creates a navigational anchor in the document and will be recognized by screen-readers.

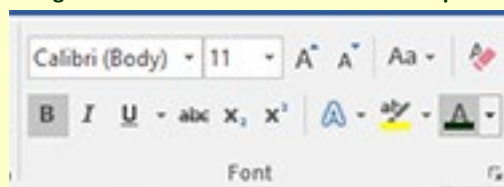
Figure 1 The Styles menu in this Word template



#### This Is Just Text That is Visually Formatted To Look Like a Heading

The above text was just formatted to look like a heading. By bolding and changing the colour, this text visually resembles a heading for this section. However, it has not been tagged as a heading and a screen-reader will interpret the text as just another paragraph. Formatted this way, the text provides no navigational anchor for a screen-reader to find.

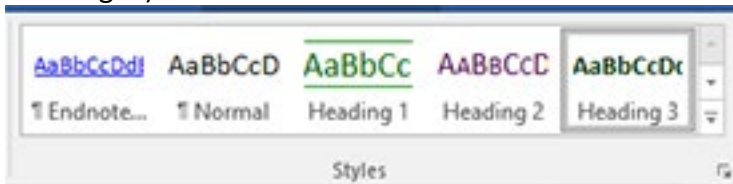
Figure 2 The Font menu in this Word template



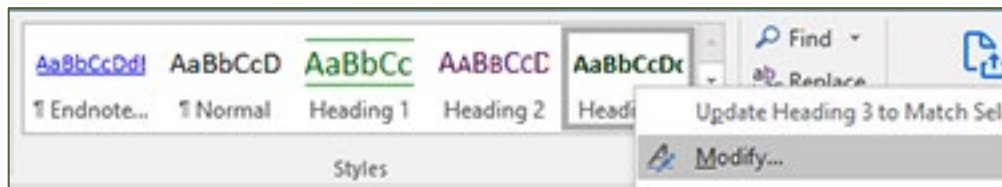
## TIPS FOR CREATING ACCESSIBLE HEADINGS & STRUCTURE

Follow these steps to create an accessible, heading-based structure for your Word documents.

1. Use the **Styles** tool and begin with the built-in heading styles\* (e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3.)



*\*If you want to edit the properties of a Heading (e.g. font, colour, size, etc.), you can right-click on style in the Styles menu and choose to Modify the settings. When you edit the properties for a Heading style in Word, those changes will automatically apply to every other instance of that Heading style in your document.*



2. Nest headings and sub-headings properly.

Each document begins with a **Heading 1**; the next section-level is a **Heading 2**; a **Heading 3** is nested under a **Heading 2**, etc.

There should only be ONE **Heading 1** per document.

3. Do not skip heading levels.