



## Guidance for Accessible (PowerPoint) Presentations

### Summary of minimum measures to take:

- Use the Accessibility Checker to identify issues in your presentations (section 1)
- Use sans serif fonts such as Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri (section 6)
- Use strongly contrasting colors such as off-white background with black text (section 4)
- Add alt text to non-decorative visuals, add closed captions to videos (section 8)
- Ensure objects within individual slides are in the correct order (section 5)
- Give each slide a unique title (section 3)

### 1. Check accessibility while you work.

- In PowerPoint, the Accessibility Checker is a tool that reviews your content, flags accessibility issues, explains why the issues might present a problem for someone with a disability, and suggests how you can resolve the issues.
- To manually launch the Accessibility Checker, select the Review tab, then “Check Accessibility.” The Accessibility pane (Inspection Results) will open, and under “Warnings,” you can view potential accessibility-related issues with each slide.

### 2. Avoid overly complicated slides.

- Limit the amount of content on each slide.
- Avoid complicated slide transitions.
- Avoid complicated animations. When animations are necessary to make information easier to understand, keep them simple.
- Avoid blinking or flashing animations that could trigger seizures.

### 3. Give each slide a unique title.

*A person with a visual impairment who uses a screen reader relies on slide titles to know which slide is which, keeping track of their location within the deck.*

- The title should be unique, and should describe the take home message of that slide. If multiple slides will have the same take home message, add a number or another discerning addition (e.g., “YFG Deletion in Mice is Embryonic Lethal - 1”)
- Instructions for titling a slide using the Accessibility tab can be found at the following link: [Title a Slide](#). At this link, you can also find instructions on how to position a title off the slide for the purpose of saving space for other content.



#### 4. Use inclusive colors and contrast.

*Strong contrast and careful color choices make it easier for people with low vision or colorblindness to view your content. Inclusive use of color and contrast applies to text versus background as well as different colors in graphs or charts.*

- The Accessibility Checker can be used to list potential slides/objects that may not have sufficient contrast (see above for guidance on using this tool). Under “Warnings,” select “Hard-to-read text contrast.”
- For people with perceptual differences (e.g., dyslexia), a white background with dark text can be difficult to view; off white, cream, or a light color background is preferred over pure white.
- When presenting in a relatively light room, the ideal background versus text color combination is off-white (or a very light color background) with black or very dark text; when presenting in a relatively dark room, the ideal combination is a black or very dark background with off-white or very light text.
- Ensure that color is not the only means of conveying information. To check how your slides will appear to people with low vision or colorblindness: in the Review tab, select “Check Accessibility” which will add an additional tab, called “Accessibility.” From that tab, select “Inspect Without Color.” Select that option again when you are ready to restore your color.

#### 5. Ensure the order of your objects on each slide is correct.

*Screen readers read the slide contents in the order they were added to a slide, which may not necessarily be the order you intend to present them.*

- To set the order of objects on a slide: from the Home tab, select “Arrange,” then “Selection Pane.” Drag listed items into the correct order.
- Instructions for how to set the reading order can be also found at the following link: [Using the Reading Order Pane.](#)

#### 6. Use accessible typography.

*Accessible fonts are defined as those that do not exclude or slow down the reading speed of anyone reading a slide, including people with low vision, perceptual differences, or people who are blind. The right font improves the legibility and readability of the text in the presentation.*

- Use a minimum font size of 18; 24px is best for in-person presentations.
- Use sans serif fonts such as Arial, Tahoma, Calibri, Helvetica, Century Gothic, Verdana.
- Do not use font styles that are particularly thin or light (e.g., Arial Narrow or Helvetica Light).
- Avoid excessive use of all-capital letters. When using all-capitals, it is easier for screen readers if you “all caps” your text: With your text selected, click the Format menu, then “Font.” In the pop-up window, select “All caps.”



- Avoid excessive use of italics or bold. By default, screen readers will not inform the user of the emphasis.
- Use larger font sizes and/or bolded text for headings.
- Do not justify your text.
- When presenting equations, go to the Insert tab, then select “Equation.”
- When using abbreviations or acronyms that could be misinterpreted by screen readers, add alt text for the text box.
- There should be sufficient blank space between lines of text (people with perceptual differences often see text merge or distort).
- Accessible Font Colors:
  - Use bright colors or high-contrast colors when using color to differentiate a word(s).
  - A person with a visual disability might miss meaning conveyed by particular font colors. To remedy this, ensure hyperlink text includes an underline (not just blue color), or add alt text to describe intent.
- Use the Accessibility Checker to find insufficient color contrast in text, including within hyperlinks, shapes, tables, or SmartArt with solid opaque colors. It will not find insufficient color contrast in all cases, such as text in a transparent text box, or color contrast issues in non-textual content.

## 7. Make tables accessible.

- Screen readers keep track of their location in a table by counting table cells. If a table is nested within another table, or if a cell is merged or split, the screen reader loses count and can't provide helpful information about the table after that point.
- Blank cells in a table could also mislead someone using a screen reader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table.
- Use column headers: To specify column header information, place the cursor anywhere in a table. On the Table Design tab, in the “Table Styles Options” group, select the “Header Row” checkbox. Type your column headings.
- If you have hyperlinks in your table, edit the link text, so the links make sense and don't break mid-sentence.
- Ensure the tables render properly on all devices, including phones and tablets.
- Test accessibility with Immersive Reader. Instructions for how to test accessibility with Immersive Reader can be found at the following link: [Use Immersive Reader in PowerPoint.](#)



## 8. Add alternative (alt) text to visuals.

*Alt text helps people with visual disabilities (using screen readers) understand what is important in the non-decorative visuals on your slides. Non-decorative visuals include pictures, SmartArt graphics, shapes, groups, charts and graphs, embedded objects, ink, and videos.*

- Alt text should be short, and describe what is important about the visual; alt text should not be added for purely decorative visuals.
- Avoid using text in images as the sole method of conveying important information. If you use images with text in them, repeat the text in the slide. In alt text of such images, mention the existence of the text and its intent.
- How to add alt text:
  - To add alt text to your visuals in PowerPoint, select “Check Accessibility” (Review tab) to view visuals missing alt text, or right-click on an individual visual and select “View Alt Text.”
  - To add alt text to your visuals in Keynote, select the visual, then right click on the visual. From the menu, select “Format Picture,” then click the “Layout and Properties” button, then “Alt Text.”
  - Instructions for using alt text can also be found at the following link: [Add Alt Text](#).
- NOTE: Some versions of PowerPoint offer an option to auto-generate alt text. The descriptions generated are rarely helpful, and we do not recommend using this.
- Photos and Images:
  - Use one to two sentences to describe the subject(s), the setting, the actions/interactions, other relevant information.
  - Do not include “image of” or “photo of.”
  - Example: *“Two adult mice seen from above. Both mice are the same length, but the mouse on the left is nearly double as wide/fat.”*
- Diagrams, Graphs, and Charts:
  - Use alt text to provide information or insights conveyed by the object.
  - Example: *“A line graph showing weekly mouse body weight from birth through eight months old for YFG knockout and control mice. At three months old, the weights of the knockout mice surpassed the weights of the control mice by two-fold. This magnitude difference was maintained through eight months old.”*
- Videos:
  - Videos require alt text even if the audience member can hear sounds.
  - Alt text should describe the content and purpose of the video.
  - Videos should use alt text as well as captioning for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Tables:
  - Tables added as pictures/object (not directly made in PowerPoint, or copied from Excel) should include alt text.
  - Remember to provide alt text if color or another tool is used to highlight part of a table.



## 9. Create accessible hyperlink text and add ScreenTips.

- Links should be edited to convey clear and accurate information about the destination, so that people who use screen readers can comprehend them (not the actual address “https://...”).
- Avoid using link text such as "Click here," "See this page," "Go here," or "Learn more." Instead include the full title or other description of the destination page.
- You can also add ScreenTips that appear when your cursor hovers over text or images that include a hyperlink. Instructions on how to create hyperlinks and ScreenTips can be found at the following link: [Add a Hyperlink to a Slide](#).

## 10. Use captions, subtitles, and alternative audio tracks in videos.

*Subtitles assume viewers can hear the audio and are typically used when the viewer doesn't speak the language used in the video. Captions include background noises, speaker differentiation, and other relevant information, making content more accessible for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Captions can be open (embedded into the video) or closed (able to be turned on and off).*

- PowerPoint supports closed captions and subtitles that are embedded in video files.
- To make your PowerPoint presentations with videos accessible, ensure the following:
  - Videos should include an audio track or alt text with descriptions of the video.
  - Videos that include dialogue should also include closed captions, open captions, or subtitles in a supported format.

## 11. Save your presentation in a different format.

- Certain file formats work better with screen readers and Braille readers.
- Before converting a presentation into another format, be sure you have run the Accessibility Checker and fixed all reported issues.
- To convert to your PowerPoint file to Microsoft Word on a PC, select: File, Export, Create Handouts, Create Handouts.
- For full instructions, see: [Save a Presentation in a Different Format](#).