PowerPoint

# Intro

There are steps that you can take to make your PowerPoint as accessible as possible. One way to start is to use the Check Accessibility tool to determine accessibility issues with your PowerPoint and follow the prompts to fix issues. The Check Accessibility tool is located under File, Info, and Check for Issues in Microsoft PowerPoint 2016 and under Review in Office 365.

If you are not using the Check Accessibility Tool, you can use the following steps to make your PowerPoint more accessible.

# Templates

Use templates to set the slide’s correct reading order. Reading order signals a screen reader to announce objects and read text in a particular order. PowerPoint will already have an idea of logical reading order based on the objects in a predefined layout. To adjust the slide’s reading order, select Home and click Arrange. Under Arrange, click Selection Pane. This will show you the slide’s tab order. Note that PowerPoint tab order reads from bottom to top; this means that the first item read by a screen reader will be the bottom item in the selection pane.

To modify templates, go to View and click on Slide Master. Slide Master allows you to edit template layouts. Use the selection pane to see the layout’s tab order. After modifying the layout, adjust the tab order to follow a logical reading order.

# Title

Adding a title to your PowerPoint gives assistive technology, like screen readers, more information about the document. You can set a title by going under File and selecting Properties. Click on Advanced Properties and, under Summary, add a title property. The title should describe the document’s content, and it may be the same as the filename.

# Language

Set your PowerPoint’s language to signal assistive technology about how the document should be read. Some screen readers adjust accents according to the document’s programmatically identified language. If your PowerPoint is in a language other than English, select Review. Under Language, choose Language Preferences. Set the editing language and, if necessary, the display and help languages.

# Hyperlinks

Give your hyperlinks meaningful link text. For example, instead of saying Click here to learn more, your link might say Learn more about this quote. Link text should describe the link’s target. In the example, the link text lets the user know that the target is an article about the quote. This is helpful for all users, and especially helpful for screen reader users. To add a link, under Insert, select Links. Click on Hyperlink, and add the desired URL.

# Media

If you use media, such as audio, include a transcript. For visual media, like a video without sound, include textual descriptions of the media. Caption all multimedia, such as videos with sound. Captions must be synchronized with sound and must be accurate.

# Alt Text

Set alternate text for all images. For users who are unable to see images, alternate text, or, alt text, provides a textual description of the image that a screen reader can then interpret. To set alt text, right click on any image in your document and select format picture. Under the Size and Properties tab, choose Alt Text. Enter your alt text for the image.

Write good alt text can seem challenging. A good rule of thumb is to describe the image as you would describe it aloud. Think about what the audience is supposed to gain from the image, based on the surrounding content. Also, consider what the surrounding content says. If the image is described in detail in the text, as may happen with a chart, simple alt text is sufficient. If the image is not described and is critical to the user’s understanding, you will need to provide more substantive alt text.

# Alt Text-Charts and Graphs

Set alt text for all charts and graphs. Click on the chart or graph, and under Format, select Format selection. Under the Size and Properties tab, choose Alt text and enter your alt text. Similarly to writing alt text for images, consider what information the audience is supposed to get from the chart or graph. Also, consider if the information can be presented in a table or in list format, supplementing or replacing the chart or graph. Tables and lists are more accessible than charts and graphs, and they can display information equally as effectively.

# Tables

If you use a table in your PowerPoint, set your table headers. To do this, click on the table. Under Design, check off Header Row and/or First Column. Use the Header row setting if headings are over columns and the first column if headings are by row.

# Font

Using a readable font also increases your PowerPoint’s accessibility. Fonts with serifs, like Times New Roman, can be difficult to read for people with low vision or learning disabilities. Fonts like Arial and Calibri, which are sans serifs, are easier to read. Be sure to use a font size of at least 11 pt.

# Color

Check your document for color dependence. Ask yourself if your PowerPoint uses color only to convey meaning. An example of color dependence is “All red items show skewed data”. To make this not color dependent, you could change it to “All red, italicized items show skewed data”.

Check your document’s color contrast using Color Contrast Analyser or Color Contrast Pal. The links for these tools are on this webpage. Color contrast between foreground and background should be a ratio of 4.5 to 1. Adjust colors as necessary if your foreground to background ratio does not meet this standard. Also, put text on solid background. Keeping text on solid background makes it easier to read for users who have low vision or learning disabilities. It can also help to keep attention on the text, which is valuable for those with attention difficulties.

# Flashing/Animations

Finally, minimize animations and eliminate flashing elements. Some users have disabilities that can be triggered by moving or flashing material. Simple animations and avoidance of flashing elements helps to make your slides usable for these individuals.

# Conclusion

Following these steps helps make your PowerPoint as accessible as possible for individuals with disabilities.