

Accessibility for PowerPoint

Purpose

In general, the following guidelines are designed to help make presentations accessible for individuals with a disability, such as individuals who are blind, low vision, deaf, or hard of hearing or individuals who have a photosensitivity. However, the checklist is non-exhaustive. Please consult the resources section for additional information on PowerPoint Accessibility.

The Basics

Accessibility Checker

- Microsoft PowerPoint has an accessibility checker. In most versions, it is located under the review tab. Please use this. It doesn't catch everything, but it catches some things and provides helpful explanations on why something is inaccessible and on how to fix it.

Typeface

- Avoid decorative or narrow fonts.
- There's debate about serif vs sans serif.¹ A good rule of thumb is to use a standard typeface and to provide the presentation in a format in which the user can modify the typeface.

Size

- As with typeface, there is some debate about the smallest acceptable font size. Generally, try not to go below size 18 for presentations. Definitely don't go below size 16.

Color

- Background and foreground should have a sufficient contrast ratio. To check the ratio, you can use:
 - [WebAIM contrast checker](#) (if have color #)
 - Color Contrast Analyzer software: can download via [DHS Testing Tools](#)
- Use of Color
 - Avoid using color as the sole means of conveying information.

Hyperlinks

- For distributing digital files, use meaningful hyperlinks instead of spelling out the URL. This makes the document more accessible to screen readers.
- For presenting and for print, include the URL.

Slide Animations and Transitions

- Unnecessary animations and slide transitions can be distracting to audience members.
 - Suggestion: use only if the animation serves a purpose (e.g., revealing an answer to a quiz question).
- Screen readers may read the content twice if animations are on the slide.
 - Suggestion: if animations are used, provide a pdf copy of the presentation in addition to the .ppt.

¹ For those who are curious, the gist is that sans serif is (in general) easier for people with low vision to read while serif fonts are (in general) easier for readers with a reading disability such as dyslexia.



Incorporating Media and Images

Images

- Avoid using images of text. Images of text generally aren't accessible for screen readers and can lose clarity on magnification.
- Provide an alternative text description or label the image as decorative.
- Ensure contrast in images is sufficient. (See “The Basics” for contrast checkers.)

Captioning and Audio Descriptions

- Audio-only media: provide an accurate transcript or other equivalent alternative.
- Video-only media: provide an accurate audio track description or other equivalent alternative.
- Synchronized media (both audio and video): provide accurate captioning *and* audio description of content.

Flashes

- Try to avoid videos that have rapid flashes (three or more in one second) or exceed the general flash and red flash thresholds. (In other words, try to avoid videos with flashing content). If videos with flashing content can't be avoided, alert your audience prior to showing the video.

For when you're sharing the presentation

Slide Titles

- All slides should have a unique title to enable easy navigation.
- You can verify slide titles by going to “Check Accessibility” under the Review tab and then selecting Slide Title. Missing or duplicative titles will be flagged by the Accessibility Checker.

Reading Order

- Verify reading order of elements. Generally, the default order is accurate if you use a standard template but be sure to check anything flagged by the accessibility checker.
- You can verify order by using the Reading Order Pane found under Check Accessibility.

Title

- Ensure the document has a title (not to be confused with a title slide or what you name the file when you save it). In Windows, you can find the title by going to Properties, often found by clicking File and then Info.

Data Tables

- Use the built-in Tables features to ensure the table is accessible to assistive technology.
- Do not put a table into another table or use merged cells, split cells, or images of tables.

Lists

- Use the built-in List features when creating numbered or unnumbered lists.

Resources

Section 508.gov, “[How to Author and Test Microsoft PowerPoint Presentations for Accessibility](#)”

Great Lakes ADA Center, “[Accessible PowerPoints](#)”

[Rocky Mountain ADA Center](#); once you register with a free account, you will have access to on-demand training videos, including one on accessible presentations.