

# Accessibility Cheat Sheet for PowerPoint

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## Creating Accessible PowerPoint Slides

### Choose an Accessible Template or Theme

Go to **File > New** and search for “accessible.” You will find a listing of all the templates that developers have tagged as accessible PowerPoint templates.

Start from one of these to ensure you create an accessible PowerPoint presentation.

### Create Accessible Slides

Select **Home > New Slide** and choose one of the pre-defined slide layouts. These slides are put into a logical order so that screen readers will read your slides from top-to-bottom.

## Slide Order

There may be times when pre-built slides won't work for you, or you need to add or delete elements while editing a presentation.

By default, screen readers read the slide's title first. Then, it will read any additional content on the slide **in the order that it was added**. It's always good to check your Slide Order in case your elements weren't created in a logical reading order (usually from top-to-bottom).

### *To Check & Edit Slide Reading Order:*

1. Go to **Home > Arrange > Selection Pane**. The Selection Pane will appear in a panel on the right.
2. Slide reading order goes from **bottom-to-top**. Therefore, the slide Title should be at the **bottom** of the list, so it is read first.
3. Drag and drop each row to change the slide's reading order.

## Creating Accessible PowerPoint Elements

### Font Guidelines:

- Use a large font size (18pt or larger).
- Use a familiar, sans serif font like Calibri or Arial to reduce reading load.
- Include ample whitespace between sentences and paragraphs.
- Avoid using ALL CAPS and ***excessive italics!!!***

### Slide Title Guidelines:

- Every slide must have a title, even if it's [hidden off-slide](#).
- Each slide title should be **unique**.

People who are blind, have low vision, or have a reading disability rely on slide titles to navigate presentations.

Students can skim or use a screen reader to quickly scan the list of slide titles and skip straight ahead to the slide they need, so every slide title should be **unique**, even if you don't want it displayed on your slide.

## Tables

### *Table Guidelines:*

- Select **Insert > Table** to create and size your table. Or, paste a table from Excel.
- **Do not merge or split cells.** Use a simple table structure.

### *Identify Table Headers:*

PowerPoint allows you to identify a **single row** of column headers and a **single column** of row headers.

1. Click inside the table. **Table Tools** options and a **Design** tab should appear.
2. Go to the **Design** tab.
3. **To Set Headers:** In the **Design** tab:
  - a. If your table's top row contains column headers, check **Header Row**.
  - b. If your table's first column contains headers for each row, check **First Column**.

Most screen readers do not identify table headers yet in PowerPoint, but this process is still recommended because support for table headers in Microsoft Office is constantly improving.

### *Set Table Styles*

In **Design > Table Styles**, select a style that visually identifies your table headers, and make sure the style has good contrast.

**Note:** The **Design** tab only appears if you click within an existing table.

## Visuals (images, graphics, shapes, charts, etc.)

Provide **Alternative or "Alt" Text** descriptions for visuals that **convey meaning**. Decorative images need no description but can only be set to "decorative" in newer versions of PowerPoint (2019 and newer).

### *Alt Text Should:*

- Be **accurate** and **equivalent** – present the same content or function as the image
- Be **succinct** – no longer than a short sentence or two
- End with a period (.) – so screen readers will pause afterward
- NOT be redundant – don't repeat info already in surrounding text
- NOT use phrases like "image of" or "graphic of" – screen readers will state when they've encountered a graphic.

- Match its context to surrounding content. Meaning, if you're talking about a certain topic, your visual's alt text should be related to that topic.

### *Adding Alt Text to Images*

Add Alt Text in **Newer** versions of PowerPoint (version 2019 and later):

1. Right-click the image and select **Edit Alt Text**.
2. In the new panel, **replace the description** to accurately reflect the message you want that image to convey to your students.
3. If this image is purely decorative, check the box to **Mark as decorative**.

Add Alt Text in **Older** versions of PowerPoint (version 2016 and earlier):

1. Right-click the image and select **Format Picture**.
2. Go to the **Layout and Properties** panel and click **Alt Text**.
3. Describe the image succinctly in the **Description** box.
  - a. If the image is purely decorative, type the word "decorative" into the **Description** box.

## Links / Hyperlinks

### *Hyperlink Guidelines:*

#### **Links should:**

- **Be descriptive and meaningful out of context**
- **Help people know where they're going**

### *How to Hyperlink Text:*

1. Select the descriptive text you wish to make a hyperlink.
2. Press **Ctrl + K** (cmd + K for Mac), or **right-click** your selection and choose **link (hyperlink** in older versions).
3. On the left side of the dialog window, choose **Existing File or Web Page**.
4. Paste the URL into the **Address** line.
5. Select **OK**.

### *How to Print Links:*

If there's a chance your presentation will be printed:

1. Create descriptive hyperlinks as described above.
2. Put the URL (minus http:// or https://) in parentheses () after the hyperlink and remove the link that PowerPoint automatically creates. For example, (www.google.com).
3. If PowerPoint automatically creates a hyperlink for your partial URL:
  - a. Press **Ctrl + K** within the hyperlink/URL.
  - b. Select the **Remove Link** button at the right of the dialog window.
4. If adding a URL in-line with text is too distracting, put a superscript (<sup>1</sup>) directly after the hyperlink and reference the URL later in the slide like a footnote.
  - a. Remove the hyperlink PowerPoint automatically creates by doing steps **3a-b** in this list.

## Saving Your PowerPoint as an Accessible PDF

### Using the Accessibility Checker

First, [add the Accessibility Checker](#) (PDF download) to your Quick Access Toolbar in PowerPoint. Then, click the icon to open the Accessibility Checker panel. The panel will appear on the right.

All the accessibility errors and warnings PowerPoint can detect in your presentation will appear in this panel. Click each **category** to expand or collapse the category list, and click each **item** to find and fix the accessibility issue.

Instructions for fixing each issue are shown at the bottom of the Accessibility Checker panel when one is selected. Fix as many issues as you can to ensure your presentation is accessible to all your students. Start with the **errors first**, as these are more important to fix.

### Save Your PowerPoint Presentation as an Accessible PDF

**DO NOT** Print to PDF or Save as Adobe PDF; this will not create an accessible PDF.

*To Save (Convert) your PowerPoint Presentation to an Accessible PDF:*

1. Go to **File > Save As** and choose where you want the PDF file to be saved.
2. Change **Save as type** to **PDF (\*.pdf)**.
3. Fill the **Title** field with a Title for your PowerPoint presentation.
4. Select the **Options...** button.

- a. Check both **Document Properties** and **Document structure tags for accessibility** checkboxes.
  - b. Select **OK** to save and close Options...
5. Select **Save** to convert your PowerPoint to a PDF.

If you leave **Open file after publishing** checked, your PDF will display when it is done converting.

## Resources

- [Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations](#) (Microsoft)
- [Creating Accessible Word Documents](#) (Microsoft)
- [Contrast Checker](#) (WebAIM)
- [IT Accessibility](#) (TAMU)
- [Accessibility Series](#) (eSAIL Tutorials)
- Need additional help? Please ask for accessibility help at [EngrLearnTech@tamu.edu](mailto:EngrLearnTech@tamu.edu).