



## Accessible PowerPoint Guide

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### Overview

The purpose of this guide is to provide instructions on how to create and edit PowerPoint® presentations to ensure compliance with Section 508. This guide will provide details on how to make PowerPoint presentations accessible for individuals using assistive technology.

### How to Use This Guide

This guide features headings that provide information regarding various components on PowerPoint accessibility. Quickly find the component you want to learn about by navigating to the corresponding heading.

### Additional Training Resources

- [How to Author and Test Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation Training Videos](#)
- [How to Create Accessible PowerPoint Templates](#)
- [More Training Materials from Section508.gov for Accessible PowerPoint Presentations](#)

### Layout Design and Logical Reading Order

Begin by navigating to Design and selecting a theme for your presentation.

- Keep slide designs minimal and simple to avoid confusion.
- Avoid using colors with low contrast in the background and foreground, as this may reduce readability.
- Avoid using backgrounds with patterns, as this may reduce readability.
- Select fonts that are easy to read.
  - Avoid using script-style fonts.

### Slide Layout

Screen readers usually read content from the top of the display going toward the bottom. This means that the slide's title will likely be read first followed by items placed after it. Images, objects, and tables must be placed in the correct reading order.

- Enter a title on the slide. The title will be presented as a heading to screen reader users.
  - Ensure that the slide title is descriptive.
- The slide layout can be altered by navigating to the Home tab in the Ribbon and selecting Layout in the Slides section. Select a slide layout after opening the dropdown menu.
  - Ensure that all elements within a slide are properly positioned if changing the layout. PowerPoint may not always correctly align elements after changing a slide's layout. This situation is more likely to happen when changing the layout of a custom slide.
- Use the Slide Master, a tool to adjust elements on all slides, by navigating to the View tab in the Ribbon and then selecting Slide Master in the Master Views section.

- New slide layouts can be created by selecting Insert Layout in the Slide Master tab of the Ribbon.
- Click on the Rename option in the Edit Master section to name the new slide layout.
- Begin to create the slide layout.
- Use the Selection Pane to adjust the logical reading order of a slide.
  - Navigate to the Home tab in the Ribbon and look for the Select option in the Drawing section. Click on Select and navigate to the Selection Pane option.
  - A sidebar will appear on the left showing all objects on the slide. The highest-ranking item is shown at the very bottom, while the lowest ranking item is shown at the very top. Think of this pane showing slide elements in layers.
  - A screen reader will read the element that appears at the bottom first in the Selection Pane.
    - Sending an item to the back means the screen reader will read it first.
    - Sending an item to the front means the screen reader will read it last.
  - Reorder slide elements either by clicking and dragging them or by using the up and down arrow buttons next to each element.
  - Each slide element has an eye icon next to it in the Slide Selection Pane. Clicking the eye icon will visually hide the slide element, but a screen reader will still read it.
- Ensure the correct reading order of each slide by using the Selection Pane. The slide title should always be the first element on the slide.

### **Colors and Contrast**

- Ensure that color combinations have high contrast.
- If colors have meaning (e.g., red means stop), convey the meaning of the colors with a text description. Also use a text description to explain any meaning conveyed by size, shapes, and objects.

### **Columns**

- Do not create columns with spaces and tabs, as this type of formatting will not ensure that content is read in the correct reading order.
- Create columns by navigating to the Home tab of the Ribbon. Then select the Columns option in the Paragraph section.
  - Select the number of columns that you need to add.
  - Select the Add or Remove Columns options to evaluate whether the correct number of columns become highlighted. The PowerPoint is considered accessible if the correct number of columns are highlighted.

### **Lists**

- Do not create lists with characters such as dashes or hyphens, as assistive technology may not correctly display the information.
- Use the built-in lists feature.
  - Navigate to the Home tab of the Ribbon and select either the Bullets or Numbering options within the Paragraph section.

## **Data Tables**

- Do not use images of tables to present data, as this method is considered inaccessible.
- Data tables with merged and split cells in PowerPoint are also considered inaccessible.
  - A PowerPoint with complex data tables must be converted to an accessible PDF.
- Do not create data tables within another table.
- Only create data tables using the built-in Tables functionality.

Create accessible data tables by doing the following.

- Navigate to the Insert tab of the Ribbon and select Table.
- Select the number of rows and columns needed to create the table.
- Ensure that the Header Row option has a checkmark.
- Ensure that the First Column option has a checkmark if the first column of the table contains headers in each row.
- Ensure a table style with high contrast has been selected.

## **Alt Text for Images and Objects**

All images and objects must have alt text to ensure accessibility. Alt text should convey the purpose of the image.

Add alt text to images and objects by doing the following.

- Select the image or object.
- Right click or press Shift + F10.
- Select Edit Alt Text.
- Enter Alt Text in the edit field that appears.
  - Select the Mark As Decorative option if the image or object is a decorative element.
- Select Close when finished.

## **Links**

Add accessible links to a PowerPoint by doing the following.

- Copy the link that you will insert into the PowerPoint presentation.
- Type a descriptive and unique name for the link.
- Select the text that describes the link.
- Press Control + K to access the dialogue box for links.
- Paste the link into the edit field and press OK.

## **Background Information on Slides**

Information placed on the Slide Master, including watermarks and header and footer information, may not be accessible to individuals using assistive technology. Follow the steps below to make this inaccessible content more accessible.

- Ensure Headers and Footers are enabled.
  - Navigate to the Insert tab of the Ribbon.
  - Select the Header and Footer option in the Text section.

- Ensure a checkmark appears next to Footer.
- Type the information you are placing in the footer.
- Select Apply.
- Ensure that vital information in the headers and footers can be selected in the Selection Pane.
- Arrange the vital information in the correct reading order.

### **Changing Languages for Accessibility**

PowerPoint presentations containing content written in multiple languages requires each language to correctly be identified. Use the built-in language tool to identify each distinct language by doing the following.

- Select (highlight) the text written in another language.
- Navigate to the Review tab of the Ribbon.
- Select Language in the Language section.
- Select Set Proofing Language.
- Select the language of the selected text.
- Select OK.

### **Embedded Media**

Accurate descriptions are necessary for embedded audio, video, and multimedia content. Provide the following information based on the type of content embedded into the PowerPoint.

- Audio Only: Accurate and complete text transcript
- Video Only: Accurate and detailed text description
- Multimedia: Accurate synchronized captions and detailed audio descriptions

### **Flashing Objects**

Flashing objects should not ever be used as they can cause seizures.

- Create content without flashing objects.
- Remove all flashing objects to ensure accessibility.

### **File Name and File Format**

- Ensure that a descriptive and unique file names are used to identify the PowerPoint file.
- Ensure that the PowerPoint file is saved in the .pptx format to ensure accessibility.

### **Accessibility Checker**

Use the built-in Accessibility Checker to find inaccessible content. Make the necessary changes if inaccessible content is detected. Note that the Accessibility Checker may not always detect all inaccessible content.

## Creating Accessible PowerPoint Templates

Create accessible PowerPoint templates by using the Slide Master tool.

Access the Slide Master tool by doing the following.

- Navigate to the View tab of the Ribbon.
- Select Slide Master in the Master View section.

Various slide layouts are displayed on the left side of the screen in the area where slide thumbnails are usually positioned.

- Customize all slide elements with the guidelines provided in this document to ensure PowerPoint templates are accessible.
- Ensure that each Slide Master has a descriptive name.
  - Navigate to Rename.
  - Type in a descriptive Slide Master name.
  - Select Rename.
- Ensure each slide within the template has the proper reading order.
  - Evaluate the reading order by using the Selection Pane
  - Navigate to the Home tab of the Ribbon.
  - Navigate to the Select option.
  - Navigate to the Selection Pane.
- Each slide should have a unique title.
- Inform users of the template to add new slides via the New Slides command.
- Inform users of the template to add content via Placeholders.
- This tool should be used when creating templates only.
- Each unique Slide Master requires each individual PowerPoint presentation to include accessible contents.