

Creating Accessible PowerPoint

Introduction

PowerPoint presentation is the most commonly used format to deliver lectures in an Online/Hybrid/Web Enhanced face-to-face class. With the increasing population of students taking online courses, it has become imperative to develop fully accessible PowerPoint presentations. In this article, we will focus on how techniques of Universal Design in Learning (UDL) can be incorporated into the PowerPoint presentation structure to improve accessibility and learning outcomes for individuals with differing learning styles, learning abilities, and/or disabilities.

Who should use it?

Any instructor who uses PowerPoint in the online/hybrid/web enhanced face-to-face class to deliver course material/learning content to the students must make sure that the PowerPoint presentation is fully accessible.

What is it?

By designing presentations that conform to UDL principles, it provides greater access to information to individuals with or without disabilities. The techniques help in designing coherently formatted presentations which are responsive to different types of sensory or learning abilities, impairment, or learning preferences. Most importantly, these techniques enhance the coherence of screen reading software used by individuals with visual impairment.

When do you use it?

If you use PowerPoint in your online/hybrid/web enhanced face-to-face class, you must make sure that the presentation is fully accessible for all users.

Where do you use it (install it, put it, etc...)?

Microsoft Office 2003 and higher applications come with the built-in features for accessibility like slide layout, styles, alternative text options for pictures, web links, and tables. The user must be vary of adding alternative text to images, web links, tables, or anything else that require explanation in another format. The use of default styles for headings and other text conforms to the reading order that the screen reader identifies. Vigilant use of colors, backgrounds, and fonts help in making the presentation easily readable and accessible for all users. Thus, in order to make your PowerPoint presentation accessible, you do not need to install any special software, plug-ins, or equipment.

Why do you use it/do it?

Techniques of Universal Design in Learning (UDL) must be incorporated into the presentation structure to improve accessibility and learning outcomes for individuals with differing learning styles and not just for learners with disability.

How to Create Accessible PowerPoint presentations?

In order to make sure that the presentation is accessible, here are a few things to consider:

Create a new slide using the predefined slide layouts

1. Go to **Home** tab and click on **New Slide**
2. **Select** any of the predefined layouts that best works for your presentation design
3. Use these text boxes and picture placeholders to insert the text and pictures

Add alternative text to images and objects

Alternative text (Alt text) appears when you move your mouse over a picture or object, and helps people using screen readers understand the content of the image in the presentation. Alt text must be including for pictures, clip arts, charts, tables, SmartArt graphics, videos and audio files, and hyperlinks.

Alt text can be added by doing the following –

1. Right click the image or object, and then click **Format**
NOTE: For tables, click **Table Properties**
2. Click **Alt Text**
3. Enter a description of the image or object into the **Description** text box.
TIP: Use clear, but concise descriptions. For example, “a red Ferrari” tells the reader more about the image than “a car.”
4. Click **Close**

Use hyperlink text that is meaningful

Hyperlink text should provide a clear description of the link destination instead of just the URL.

To add change the text of a hyperlink, do the following –

1. Select the link and then, on the **Insert** tab in the **Links** group, click **Hyperlink** to open the hyperlink dialog box
2. In the **Text to display** box, make any necessary changes to the text
3. Click **OK**

Ensure that the reading order of each slide is logical

For people who use screen readers to read the content of the slides, it is important to be sure that they read the content in the reading order you intend them to. To check the order in which your slide will be read back, do the following –

1. On the **Home** tab, in the **Drawing** group, click **Arrange** and then choose **Selection Pane**

2. The **Selection Pane** lists the objects on the slide. Objects will be read back beginning with the bottom list item and ending with the top list item. Correct any out of order items using the **Re-order** arrows on the bottom of the pane

Specify column header information in tables

In addition to have alternative text that describes the content of the table, it is useful to have clear column headings for easy navigation. To specify a header to the column, do the following –

1. Click anywhere in the table
2. On the **Table Tools Design** tab, in the **Table Style Options** group, select the **Header Row** check box
3. Add your header information

Increase visibility for colorblind viewers

Colorblindness affects a significant number of people, most often as an inability to distinguish between red and green. Some of the key things that you must keep in mind while designing a presentation are –

1. Avoid using orange, red, and green in your template and text
2. Use texture in graphs, instead of color, to highlight points of interest
3. Keep the overall contrast in your presentation high

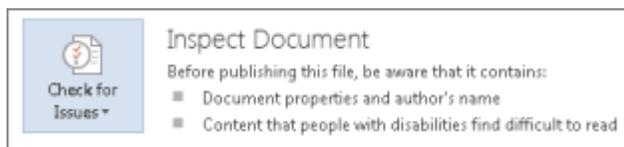
Include closed captions for any audio or video

Whenever you use additional audio or video components in a presentation, ensure that the content is available in alternative formats for users with disabilities, such as closed captions or transcripts.

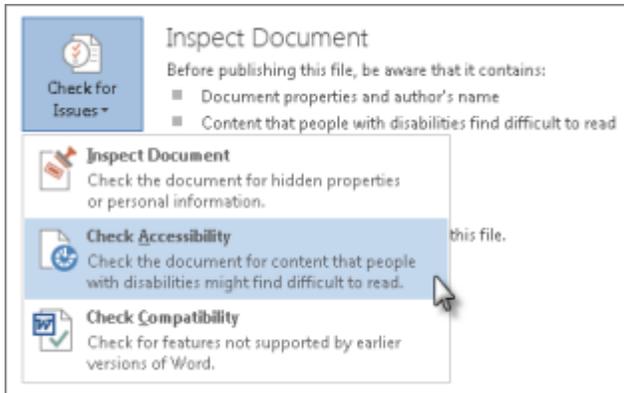
Check for Accessibility Issues

Microsoft Office 2010 and later has the built-in Accessibility checker that can be used to check the document for issues pertaining to accessibility. In order to run the Accessibility Checker, follow the following steps –

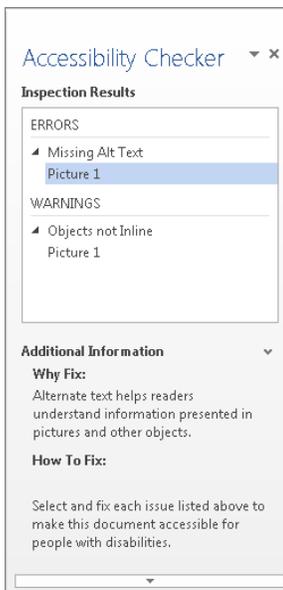
1. Click **File > Info**
2. If the Accessibility Checker sees any potential issues, you will see a message next to the **Check for Issues** button



3. To view and repair the issues in your file, click **Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**



Your file reappears, and the **Accessibility Checker** task pane shows the inspection results



4. Click a specific issue to see **Additional Information** and steps you can take to change the content

Best Practices

- Use predefined **layouts**
- Use predefined **text styles** for Heading, Titles, and Body text
- Use **color and contrast** properly
- Use **simple fonts** – Arial, Verdana, Sans Serif
- Provide content in **multiple formats**
- Provide **Alternative text** for Images, hyperlinks, tables, and charts
- Provide **transcript/CC** for audio/video content
- **Check your work with the Accessibility Checker**