Faculty Guide – Creating Accessible Microsoft PowerPoint Presentations

Microsoft PowerPoint is one of the most popular tools to use when creating presentations and lectures. Since PowerPoint is highly visual, users who may rely on assistive technology (i.e. screen readers, Braille devices, etc.) will need a way to access the content. The following information includes best practices to ensure your presentation is keeping accessibility in mind.

Using Templates and Themes

It is recommended to use Seattle University branded PowerPoint presentation themes, which can be found on the MarCom website. An alternative is to use the built-in themes in PowerPoint since the slides are designed with reading order structures that can be interpreted by assistive technology.

### "This is an accessible template"

To ensure the built-in theme you select is accessible look for, "This is an accessible template" in the description of the theme. When in doubt, a simple white background with black text is a great alternative.

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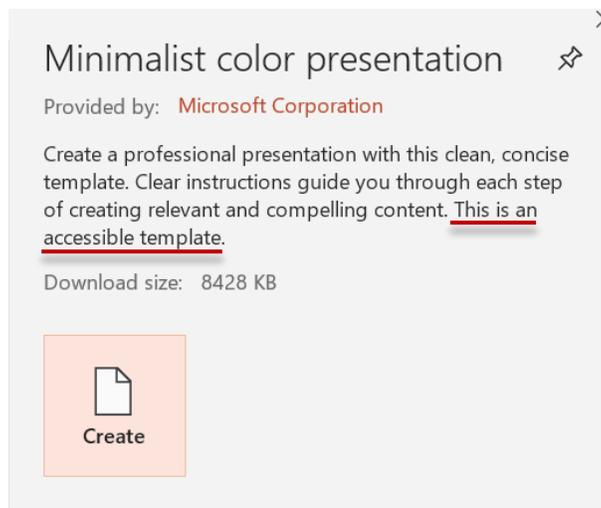
Selecting Slide Layouts

When adding a new slide to your presentation, it is best practice to use an existing layout. For the same reasons as choosing a themed PowerPoint, slide layouts are built with correct heading structure and reading order, making it easier for screen readers to read.

1. Under the **Home** tab select **New Slide**.
2. A drop down should appear with different slide layouts.
3. Select the layout you would like to use.

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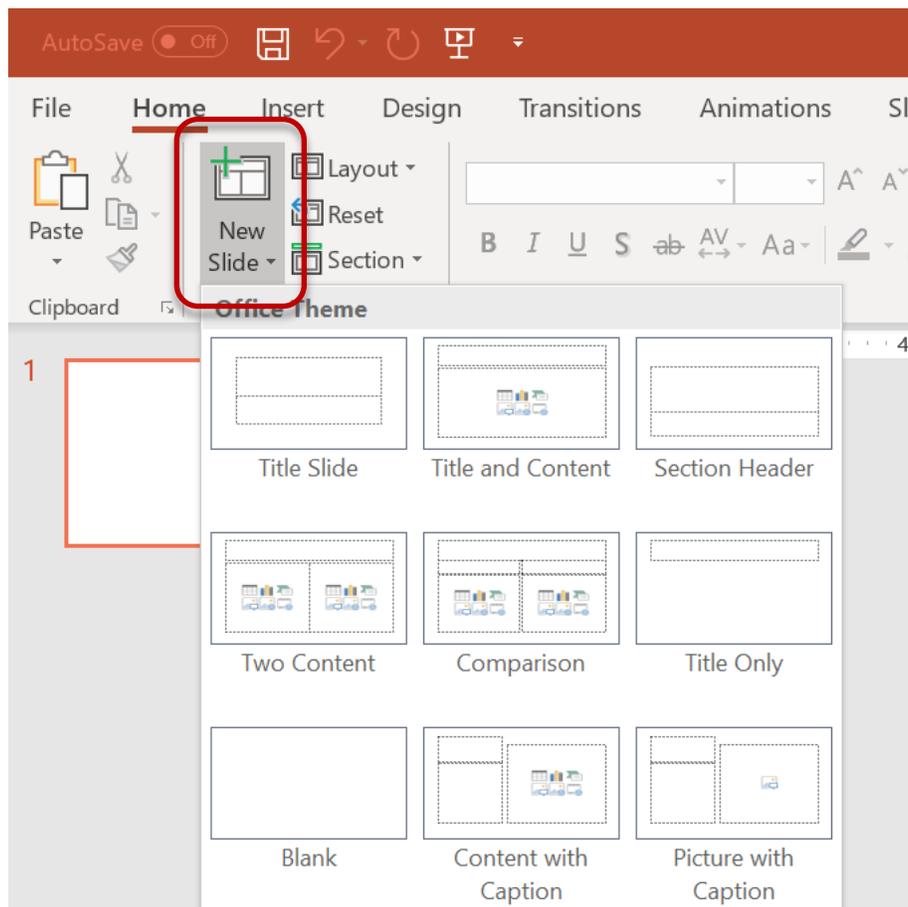
Adding Alternative Text to Images

Images require alternative text so that screen readers can read a description of what the content is.

PowerPoint 365 and 2019

1. Add image to slide.
2. Right click on image and select **Edit Alt Text**.
3. Describe what the image is.
4. If it is a decorative image check the **Mark as decorative** box. Screen readers will skip over an image if it is decorative.
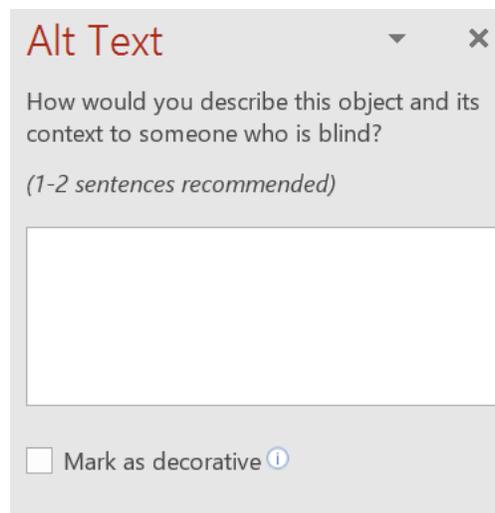

"Generate a description for me" button

In PowerPoint 365 and 2019 there is an option to allow PowerPoint to auto generate alt text if you are using Windows. Do not select this option. Most of the auto-generated descriptions are of poor quality and do not accurately describe the image.

PowerPoint 2016 or older

1. Add image to slide.
2. Right click on image and select **Format Picture**.
3. Select **Size & Properties** in the Format Picture sidebar and choose **Alt Text**.
4. Describe what the image is in the Description field only (leave Title field blank).
5. Images that are decorative cannot be marked as such in PowerPoint 2016 or older (unless it is part of the slide background).
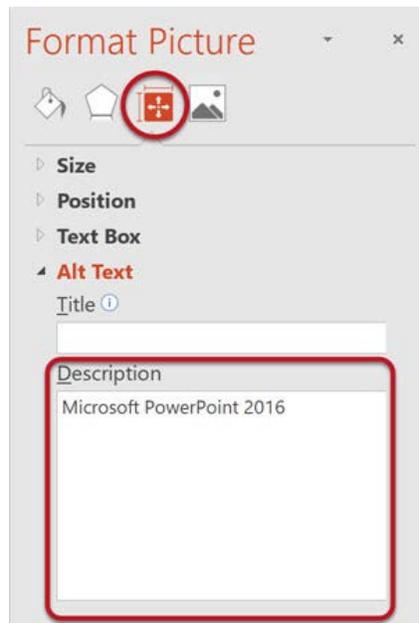
Creating Accessible Tables

Tables need to have properly labeled headers and rows in order for screen readers to keep track of where a user is within the table.

1. Create a table and click on it.
2. The **Table Tools** (365 and 2019)/**Table Design** (2016 or older) ribbon should appear at the top of the menu bar. Select **Design**.
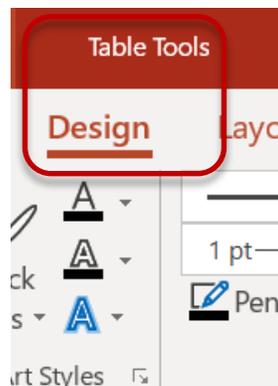
3. If the top row and/or first column of the table contains headers, make sure the Header Row and/or First Column checkboxes are checked.
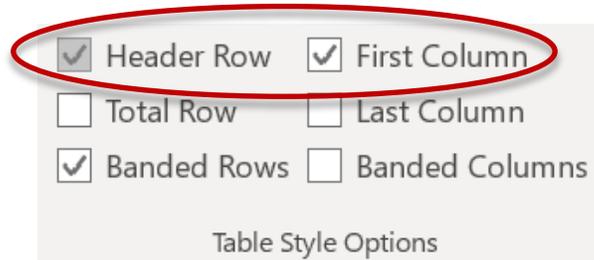
Merge, Split, and Blank Cells

Keep tables as accessible as possible by not merging cells together, splitting them, or leaving cells blank. These types of actions on tables can actually confuse a screen reader and cause a user to miss information or have it read to them incorrectly.

Other Tips

Below are a few other tips to help keep your presentation accessible.

Color Contrast

Use strong color contrast between text and background (i.e. black background/white text or white background/black text). This helps users with low vision or colorblindness see content clearly. Additionally, color should not be the only way to convey information. If using color to emphasis content, include another identifier such as bolding text or adding an asterisk.

Inaccessible: Words in red are important.

Accessible: Words marked with * are important*.

Hyperlinks

Make sure links are properly titled by including descriptive information in the link name. Avoid copying and pasting a raw URL link or using generic terms such as "click here".

Inaccessible:
https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/
Click here for PowerPoint techniques.

Accessible: PowerPoint Accessibility

Images of Text/Charts

Images should not consist of text or charts. These types of images will not be properly read by a screen reader and require extra work to provide descriptions. If you have an image of text or charts, best practice is to re-create that information directly from PowerPoint.

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Inaccessible:

The five core emotions run left to right across the top of the table. Manifestations of each emotion based upon the intensity felt are described down each of the columns in the table.

Accessible:

Intensity of Feelings	Happy	Sad	Angry	Afraid	Ashamed
High	Elated Excited Overjoyed Thrilled Exuberant Ecstatic Fired up Passionate	Depressed Agonized Alone Hurt Dejected Hopeless Sorrowful Miserable	Furious Enraged Outraged Boiling Irate Seething Loathsome Betrayed	Terrified Horrified Scared stiff Petrified Fearful Panicky Frantic Shocked	Sorrowful Remorseful Defamed Worthless Disgraced Dishonored Mortified Admonished
Medium	Cheerful Gratified Good Relieved Satisfied Glowing	Heartbroken Somber Lost Distressed Let down Melancholy	Upset Mad Defended Frustrated Agitated Disgusted	Apprehensive Frightened Threatened Insecure Uneasy Intimidated	Apologetic Unworthy Sneaky Guilty Embarrassed Secretive
Low	Glad Contented Pleasant Tender Pleased Mellow	Unhappy Moody Blue Upset Disappointed Dissatisfied	Perturbed Annoyed Uptight Resistant Irritated Touchy	Cautious Nervous Worried Timid Unsure Anxious	Bashful Ridiculous Regretful Uncomfortable Pitied Silly

Adapted from and reproduced by permission from Julia West. The five core emotions run left to right across the top of the table. Manifestations of each emotion based upon the intensity felt are described down each of the columns in the table.

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Reading Order

The order in which slide contents are added can affect the way screen readers read these elements (even if the order in which they appear is different). You can check the reading order of each slide to make sure users read the content in the order you intend.

1. In the **Home** tab choose **Select** then **Selection Pane**. (PowerPoint 365 and 2019).
   a. For PowerPoint 2016 and older: go to the **Home** tab and select **Arrange** then **Selection Pane**
2. The reading order for the current slide will appear. Check to see if it is in proper order.
3. Reading order is arranged from bottom to top. Whatever information to be read first will be at the bottom.
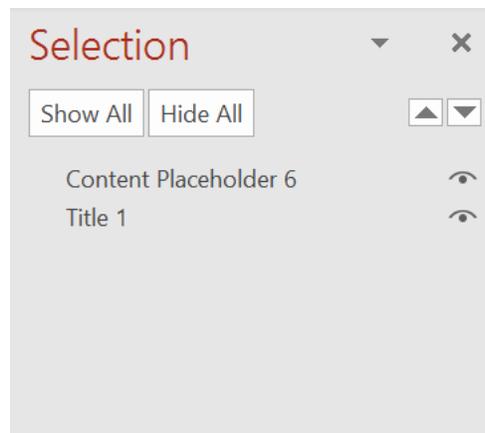

Unique Slide Titles

Different titles for each slide let users with screen readers navigate and skim through the content quickly. Unique slide titles also provide a clear understanding of which slide they're on. As a tip, do not use the same title for multiple slides if there is continued information. Instead, include helpful information like, Slide Title 1 of 2.

Accessibility Checker

Even after using all the tips and best practices mentioned in this guide, it is recommended to use the accessibility checker built into PowerPoint. The accessibility checker can help you identify content in your presentation that is inaccessible as well as offer additional tips on how to fix remaining issues. Go to the **Review** tab and select **Check Accessibility**.
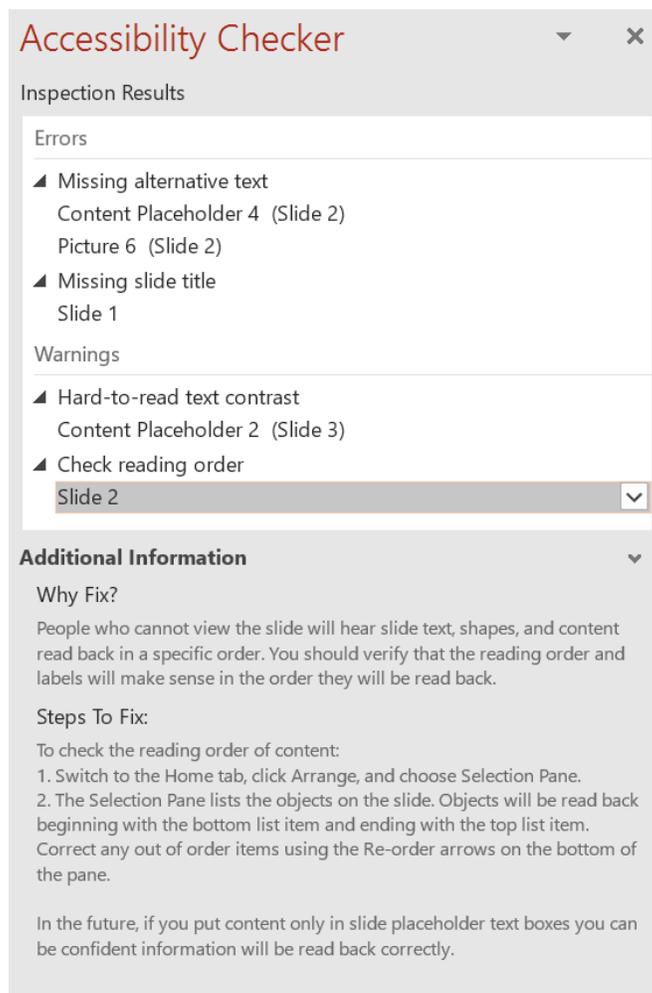
Export to PDF

The best way to share your PowerPoint presentation is by exporting it as a PDF. When a presentation is exported as a PDF, the accessible structures created in PowerPoint will carry over into the document. This means all heading structures, alt text, and tables/charts will be accessible by PDF as well.

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Revision History

Version	Date	Description of change	Author
1.0	7/26/19	Initial version	M. Fabroquez