



Making Accessible Slides

Revised: May 2019

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I. General Considerations

A. Styles

Slides can be structured with styles to make the layout easier to navigate for users with disabilities. You cannot add headings to slides. However, you can use one of the predefined Slide Layouts from the Home Tab.

B. Alternate Text for Images:

All images that convey meaning need to have alternate text applied so the purpose being communicated is conveyed to users of assistive technology. Consider the following when creating alternate text:

- The textual descriptions need to be short and concise while still being meaningful and informative.
- The alternate text should stand alone and act as an equivalent for the image if the image were removed.
- Text should not include the words "figure", "picture" or "image" unless it is significant to point out a particular type of image such as a photograph or painting.

If an image is decorative or described elsewhere, an empty space should be entered into the alternate text description field.

To add alternate text:

1. Select the image
2. Activate the context menu or press SHIFT+F10
3. Select "Format Picture" and the "Format Picture" dialog should appear
4. Select the Alt Text tab from the options on the left
5. Enter appropriate alternate text for the image in the Description field.

Note: Do not place alternate text in the Title field. The Title field is not read by screen readers.

Note on Master Slide Content: Master slide content that conveys meaning must be conveyed to the user in an accessible manner on each slide as well. However, this information is in the background and is not available to screen reader users. In order to correct this, do one of the following:

- Option 1: Move any information in the Master Slide that conveys meaning to the normal presentation slide.
- Option 2: For logos, copyright information, or revision dates that appear on all slides, ensure that equivalent information is presented in an accessible manner on the first normal presentation slide (it does not need to be repeated on all pages).

B. Making Links Accessible

Providing meaningful link text is important when creating links. The text needs to describe the content behind the link or the action that will occur by activating the link. Generic terms – such as “click here” or “read more” – do not provide adequate information on where the link will lead the user and should be avoided. In addition, “click here” implies users are using a mouse. In slide files, screen readers will not instruct the user that a link is actionable. As a result, all links should have the URL included or an indication that the link is a link, such as [Find Out More About Macmillan Learning \(Link\)](#)

Link Process: Type the link address, and then select the link and right click to open the application menu and select hyperlink. Also select the “ScreenTip” button and add a screen reader only ScreenTip.

C. Tables

Data Cell Formatting:

Data tables should be formatted utilizing built-in table features. Data from multiple rows should not be combined in one row as assistive technology users will be unable to identify what the data is associated with.

Table Summaries:

Captions can be used to add table summaries which can be helpful in describing the purpose of a table. A summary of the table can be a description in surrounding text or near the table. For complex tables, it can benefit the user to have a brief description to identify the purpose of the table. However, for simple tables this is not required.

Embedded Tables:

Embedded tables in a slide presentation are not accessible to users of assistive technology and should be avoided. For example, an embedded Excel file with a table will not be keyboard accessible to users of screen reading software and only the file name will be read.

Complex Tables:

Complex tables in slides can be extremely challenging to navigate for screen reader users. If you have complex tables, consider converting the document to a PDF or giving users access to the source files. (Note: This is especially important in slide documents as the text in a table is simply presented in a linear fashion and users can't navigate by individual cells.)

Table Headers:

There is no way to set a <TH> (table header) in slides. However, you can set the "Header Row" – this will set the first row as a table header as in an

accessible PDF. Access this setting by inserting a Table and then going to the Table Tools, Design Tab, and selecting Table Style Options.

Tables with Images:

If there is a table that contains images within the cells and the compositor has provided alt text for each of those images, the native slide table build cannot accommodate the insertion of those as separate images. Instead, in this one case, the entire table should be turned into an image and the slide will need alt text for the entire table – text and images included.

D. Color and Contrast

If color alone is used to convey information, people who are visually impaired or colorblind will not have access to this information. In addition, if insufficient contrast is used, people who cannot differentiate between certain color combinations or have some other visual impairment may have difficulty navigating or interpreting content that depends on the ability to identify color contrast differences.

Recommendation: Ensure that color contrast meets the WCAG 2.1 Level A and AA guideline which is 4.5:1 for standard text and 3:1 for large text (14 point bold or 18 point or above text). Note: You can test the color contrast of your documents with the [Colour Contrast Analyser](https://www.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/) (<https://www.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/>).

E. Patterned Backgrounds

Avoid using patterned backgrounds and watermarks as these can interfere with the contrast of the documents and obscure text. In addition, the watermarks are not accessible to screen reader users.

Although, the Microsoft Word 2010 watermark doesn't strictly conform to this definition, it is still an incredibly useful feature to communicate the nature and constraints of a document; the most common examples being to mark a document as confidential, private or draft. As Word 2010 also allows you to use pictures as a watermark, you can take a company logo or signature picture to help readers know the originator and owner of a document.

Here's how you use Word 2010 to place a watermark on every page in a document.

1. Open the document you wish to put a watermark on
2. Click on the Page Layout tab
3. In the ribbon, click on Watermark. A vertical scroll list of six watermarks will appear (Confidential, Do Not Copy, Draft, Sample, ASAP and Urgent)
4. Select the watermark that you wish to use.

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To Create a Customised Textual Watermark

1. Open the document you wish to put a watermark on
2. Click on Page Layout tab
3. In the ribbon, click on Watermark. A vertical scroll list of six watermarks will appear with a
3. Select the watermark that you wish to use.

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Figure 3: Screen shot of a watermark

F. Reading Order

By default, the reading order of a slide is the order in which objects are added to the slide. This means that users of assistive technology will read the slide in the order text, images, charts, etc. were added to the slide – not the order that is visually indicated in the slide. When reading order is set correctly, people using assistive technology can read the information on a slide in the order in which it is meant to be read. Screen readers may have difficulty identifying complex layouts in the proper sequence if the reading order is not correct, and the meaning and relationship of the content may not be easily understood by users of assistive technology.

Use the Selection Pane option under the Format ribbon to visually see and arrange the order of images, placeholders, WordArt and other content. Use the selection pane to arrange the content of the slide to match the visual reading order of the slide (top to bottom, left to right, or the order in which the content is intended to be read).

Setting the Reading Order

- Navigate to the toolbar and select the **Home Tab**
- Select **Arrange** in the **Drawing Group** Locate the Arrange pane.

- Select the **Selection Pane**
- Use the Re-order buttons to set the reading order from bottom (read first) to top (read last).
- Verify the Reading Order by placing your cursor at the top left of the document and pressing the tab key. The Reading Order should follow the Tab Order as you press the Tab key on the slide.

G. Shapes and Text Boxes

Even though alternate text can be added to Shapes inserted in slides, screen readers can't access this information. However, screen readers can access the text boxes inserted OVER Shapes. Based on this, the recommendation is that Shapes not be used as the sole means of communicating meaning in presentations. *Avoid the use of SmartArt whenever possible.*

H. Animations embedded in PPT

When an animation is pedagogically necessary within a slide deck, alt text for the animation can be addressed by adding an 'Easter egg' (hidden image) to the slide. Create an empty image that can't be seen by users but has alt text describing the end goal of the animation (rather than a step by step breakdown of the animation). Note: When adding animations, flashing, blinking or continuously playing animations be sure they do not flash more than three times a second in accordance with WCAG 2.0 2.3.1.

I. Math Content

Ensure that Math has not been entered using MS Word's Equation Editor as this is not accessible to all assistive technology. The best practice is to enter equations using MathType. Note: Screen reader users may still have to take additional steps to access the math content.

J. Videos

Ensure videos have captions and descriptive text transcripts. Also ensure that the video controls are labeled and accessible.

H. Accessibility Checkers

Most slide creators have an accessibility checker available to help ensure your file is accessible. These can be accessed from the File menu under the Info option: File>Info>Check for Issues>Check Accessibility. The accessibility checker will prompt you through the process of correcting most of the accessibility issues in the document as well as provide instructions. Note: The accessibility checkers are not able to test for color and other considerations that need to be manually tested.

II. Conclusion

Creating an accessible slide deck is readily achievable by following the guidelines above. It is also always a great idea to have a screen reader user test your document for accessibility to ensure that the document is fully accessible.

Due to accessibility limitations, it is strongly recommended that documents with extensive use of tables be converted to a more accessible format such as HTML or PDF where additional accessibility settings can be made.