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PowerPoint Accessibility Checklist

Use this checklist to make PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities. It combines guidance from multiple expert sources on accessibility standards. Refer to the references for more details.

Microsoft Accessibility Checker

☐ Fix all issues flagged by the Accessibility Checker.
Microsoft labels items as errors, warnings, or tips—but in practice, all of them impact accessibility and should be fixed.

Design and File Setup

☐ Use Microsoft templates with built-in accessible slide layouts, placeholders, and logical reading order. Check theme colors for accessible contrast.

☐ Custom templates include a slide master with layouts made of placeholder content in correct reading order, using accessible color palettes.

☐ Each slide includes one title placeholder.

☐ All essential content is placed in content placeholders.

Text Size and Font Type

☐ Text is at least 18 points for screen viewing (e.g., online meetings, webinars, or post-event distribution).

☐ Text is at least 24 points when presenting on a projector or large screen.

☐ Main content is formatted with an easy-to-read font such as Arial, Verdana, Calibri, or a similar font.

Text Formatting

☐ Images of text are not used for slide titles or to display essential information.

☐ Essential information is not placed in regular text boxes. Use placeholder text areas instead.

☐ Lists are formatted with built-in bullet or numbered options.
Columns are formatted with built-in text options.

☐ Italics are only for words or phrases. Do not format entire paragraphs in italics.

☐ All caps are only for acronyms and specific terms. Do not format entire paragraphs in all caps.

☐ Underline is only used for links.

☐ Full justification is not used to format text.

☐ Line spacing is at least 1/2 the height of the text.

☐ Paragraph spacing is 1 1/2 the height of the line spacing.

☐ Text effects are not used. (They are inaccessible when converted to PDF.)

allyNOTES — PowerPoint Accessibility Checklist

Color Contrast and Use of Color

- ☐ Text 18 points or larger has a 3:1 contrast ratio with the background color.
- ☐ Text smaller than 18 points has a 4.5:1 contrast ratio with the background color.
- ☐ Slide background does not reduce contrast with main content text.
- ☐ Color is not the only method used to convey meaning; a text label is provided.
- ☐ Graphic elements (e.g., shapes and icons) have at least a 3:1 contrast ratio with the background color.
- ☐ All essential content is placed in content placeholders.

Links

- ☐ Hyperlinks include descriptive text and screen tips that clearly indicate the destination or purpose.
- ☐ URLs are only used as link text for citations or shortcut links. Screen tips describe the destination or purpose.
- ☐ Color is not the only visual indicator for links; text links are underlined unless they meet contrast requirements (3:1 to surrounding text, 4.5:1 to background) and change appearance on hover.
- ☐ Linked images and objects have descriptive alt text indicating the destination or purpose.
- ☐ Links, linked images, and objects are at least 44 pixels high by 44 pixels wide.

Pictures, Shapes, and Icons

- ☐ Meaningful pictures, shapes, and icons have accurate alt text.
- ☐ AI-generated alt text is reviewed and updated for accuracy.
- ☐ Decorative pictures, shapes, and icons are marked as decorative.
- ☐ If alt text exceeds 200 characters, the graphic is marked decorative and a full description is placed on a hidden layer in the Selection Pane.

Charts, Graphs, and Smart Art

- ☐ Alt text is applied to the whole SmartArt group object.
- ☐ Alt text is applied to the specific chart/graph group within the object.
- ☐ Links to original data are provided for charts and graphs. (If available.)
- ☐ Charts, Graphs, and SmartArt with long alt text, over 200 characters, have long descriptions on a hidden placeholder.
- ☐ Images with captions are marked as decorative.

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ally NOTES   **PowerPoint Accessibility Checklist**

Tables

- ☐ Tables include a marked header row and/or first column.
- ☐ Table cells are not merged.
- ☐ Tables are not used for visual layout or content alignment.

Titles and File Names

- ☐ The file name clearly identifies the presentation topic.
- ☐ The first slide includes the presentation title in a title placeholder.
- ☐ The document title matches the title on the title slide.
- ☐ Slides with the same title include a sequence number
  (e.g., "Title – 1 of 3", "Title – Part 1", or "Title – 1").

Reading Order

- ☐ All text content appears in the Outline View.
- ☐ Content appears in a logical order that matches the visual layout.
- ☐ Layers in the Selection Pane follow a bottom-to-top reading order.
- ☐ The Title Placeholder is visually at the top of the slide but appears at the bottom of the Selection Pane layer stack.

Readability and Content

- ☐ Plain language and web-friendly writing techniques are used; reading level is approximately grade 9 or lower.
- ☐ Slides contain a limited amount of text (approximately 6 to 8 lines per slide).
- ☐ Paragraphs are broken into bulleted or numbered lists when possible.
- ☐ Text block width is approximately 80 characters.
- ☐ Content language matches the document's Proofing Language setting.
- ☐ Shape, size, color, or visual location are not the only methods used to convey information.

Slide Animations, Transitions, and Timing

- ☐ Animations and transitions are not disruptive to users.
- ☐ Slide animations and transitions do not autoplay; they are triggered on click.
- ☐ Animations do not include fast-moving, blinking, scrolling, or flashing content.
- ☐ Moving or updating content (e.g., carousels, marquees, animations) does not run for longer than 5 seconds.

ally NOTES
PowerPoint Accessibility Checklist

Audio and Video

☐ Embedded media includes alt text that describes the media type and content or title.

☐ Captions (.vtt file) are included for embedded audio-only content.

☐ Videos include both captions and audio descriptions in .vtt format.

☐ Online videos include captions in the source.

☐ A link to the original video is included for online media.

☐ Text descriptions are provided for video-only content.

☐ Videos do not contain fast-moving, blinking, or flashing content.

☐ Audio and video do not autoplay; playback is triggered on click.
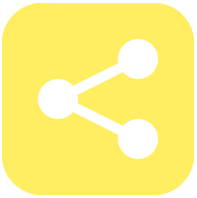
Distribution

☐ Audio does not automatically play for more than 3 seconds unless a pause or stop button is provided.

☐ Video does not automatically play for more than 5 seconds unless a pause or stop button is provided.

☐ Presentations with animations or timed transitions are exported as PDF for distribution.

References

☐ Microsoft: Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities

☐ WebAim: PowerPoint Accessibility

☐ WebAim: Word and PowerPoint Accessibility Evaluation Guide

☐ Section508.gov: Presentations Authoring Guides

☐ Perkins: How to Create Accessible PowerPoints

☐ CSUN: PowerPoint Accessibility