Microsoft PowerPoint Presentations - Fixing Accessibility Issues

- Checking PowerPoint Presentations for Accessibility
- Fixing Accessibility Issues
  - Title Property Should Match the Presentation Title
  - Images, Objects and Charts Should Have Alternative Text (Alt Text)
  - Reading Order for Slides Should be Logical
  - Use Slide Notes to Increase Understanding of Content
  - Increase visibility for Colorblind Viewers
  - Include Closed Captions for any Audio or Video
  - All Slides Should have Unique Titles

Microsoft PowerPoint presentations need to be created so that they are accessible to users with disabilities. It is not all that hard to do, but it is better to include these steps in the document creation process.

The State of Texas has created a couple of online videos that shows you how to make PowerPoint presentations accessible. These include the following:

- Creating Accessible Microsoft PowerPoint 2010 Presentations - Make a Presentation Accessible
- Creating Accessible Microsoft PowerPoint 2010 Presentations: Adding Tables, Charts, Images and Shapes

In general, the following need to be done to make your PowerPoint presentation accessible:

- Add alternative text to images, objects, and charts
- Ensure that all slides have unique titles
- Ensure that the reading order of each slide is logical
- Avoid using red or green for text (colorblind)

There are other things you can do, but these are the basics.

There is a document from Microsoft that provides some guidance on how to make sure that your PowerPoint presentations are accessible:

- Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations

A couple US Government agencies have put together some guidance and checklists for PowerPoint presentations. One of the better ones is from the Social Security Administration

- SSA - Microsoft PowerPoint 2010 - 508 Accessibility Checklist

Additionally, there is another good resource from the GSA - General Services Administration:

- Authoring Techniques for Accessible Office Documents: Microsoft PowerPoint 2010

Checking PowerPoint Presentations for Accessibility

Microsoft Office 2010 includes a new tool - Accessibility Checker - that allows you to check for accessibility issues in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents.

To use the Accessibility Checker, do the following

1. Click File – Info
2. Next to Prepare for Sharing, Click on Check for Issues
3. Click Check Accessibility
Your PowerPoint presentation reappears, and the **Accessibility Checker** task pane is shown next to it with the inspection results.

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

The following guidance provides step-by-step procedures for making sure that your PowerPoint presentations can be used by everybody, including those with disabilities. This information also helps you fix the issues that you may have found when you ran the Accessibility Checker within PowerPoint 2010.

**Title Property Should Match the Presentation Title**

Screen readers such as JAWS read the Title from the Presentation Properties when opening a PowerPoint presentation. Therefore you should make sure that the Document Property Title matches the name of the presentation.

- Press ALT - F (File)
- Click on Info

The Properties will be shown on the right panel within PowerPoint 2010
Make sure that **Title Field** matches the Title of the presentation or accurately describes the presentation.

**Images, Objects and Charts Should Have Alternative Text (Alt Text)**

All images, objects and charts within a PowerPoint presentation should have Alternative Text (Alt Text) that will be read by a screen readers instead of the name of the image, such as "Picture 4". That allows those with visual or certain cognitive disabilities to understand the content and function of the image and puts it into context.

Decorative images and shapes should not have alternative text.

- Highlight a given image or object on a slide
- Bring up its Context Menu (Shift + F10), or press Right Click.
In the format dialog box, arrow down and select **Alt Text**. In the Description field, enter the appropriate text that describes the image or object.

*Press Format Picture (O)*

Be careful NOT to include text or additional objects (such as an arrow) embedded within an image or it will make it harder to make the image accessible even with good Alternative Text descriptions. A good example of this is show below where both the text and arrow in red are embedded within the image and cannot be viewed or heard by a screen reader user. Even though they can be explained with alternative text, it would be smarter to add such features to the image so that would make more sense to everyone.

**NB** - Other objects, such as arrows that are used within a PowerPoint presentation also need to have Alternative Text added to give them context within the slide.
Important Points to Remember:

- Try to answer the question "what information is the image conveying?"
- Alternative text should be fairly short, usually a sentence or two.

Reading Order for Slides Should be Logical

People who are using a screen readers such as JAWS to view the slide will hear the text, shapes and content on the slide read back in a specific order. If you are using objects that are not part of the slide template, or where they are added later on, it is important to be sure that they will be read by a screen reader in a logical order that you intend, and not skip around the slide. The order that content is navigated sequentially is called the "Tab Order" because often the "Tab" key is used to navigate from one "floating" object to the next.

- Press Alt + H (Home) to Go to the Home View or Panel
- Select the Drawing Arrange (G) and Selection Panel (P)

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. The Up Arrow brings the object Forward (toward the top) and the Down Arrow Sends the object Backward (toward the bottom).
Important Points to Remember:

- The slide’s main heading should be first in the tab order.
- Headings should be placed in the tab order immediately before the items (text, diagrams, etc.) for which they are acting as a heading.
- Labels should be in the reading order placed immediately before the objects that they label.

Use Slide Notes to Increase Understanding of Content

You can add notes to slides in a PowerPoint presentation, which can be read by assistive technologies. You can use slide notes to explain and expand on the contents of slides in text format.

- Press Alt + W (View) to Go to the View Panel
- In the Presentation Views section, select Normal to ensure that the notes panel is in view
- Press Alt + H (Home) to Go to the Home View or Panel
- The Notes Pane can be found at the bottom of the window, below the slide
- Type and format your notes within the Notes Pane below each slide
Increase visibility for Colorblind Viewers

Colorblindness affects a significant number of people, most often as an inability to distinguish between red and green, or seeing red and green differently. When creating presentations, it’s important to choose elements that increase visual contrast so viewers who cannot rely on color distinction can still understand what they’re seeing. Color should not be used as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.

Some things you can do when building a slide deck include:

- Avoid using orange, red, and green in your template and text.
- Use texture in graphs, instead of color, to highlight points of interest.
- Circle or use animation to highlight information, rather than relying on laser pointers or color.

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 and/or transcripts.

If you’re using PowerPoint 2010, you can download and install the Sub-titling text add-in for Microsoft PowerPoint (STAMP), which lets you easily create closed captions for video and audio in your presentations. If you work with captioned video and audio files that already have Timed Text Markup (TTML) files associated with them, this add-in lets you import them directly into your presentation. If you don’t have a TTML file, you can add captions directly in your presentation.

Important Points to Remember:

- Video with audio tracks should have synchronized captioning
- Video should have an audio description
- Audio recordings should have a transcript of the audio track available

All Slides Should have Unique Titles

Slide titles are used for navigation and selection by people who are not able to view the slide. Therefore, each slide in a PowerPoint presentation should have a unique title.