

Creating Accessible PowerPoint Documents

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This quick guide covers general guidelines on how to make your PowerPoint documents more accessible for everyone, but particularly for those who have visual impairments and use a screen reader to access information in documents. Screen readers read aloud everything on the page and can jump between headings (or titles) and links if the document is correctly formatted.

Most versions of PowerPoint offer highly-accessible slide layouts (or “Themes”). Using these templates will ensure that PowerPoint documents have correctly-structured headings and lists, proper reading order, etc.

1. Fonts

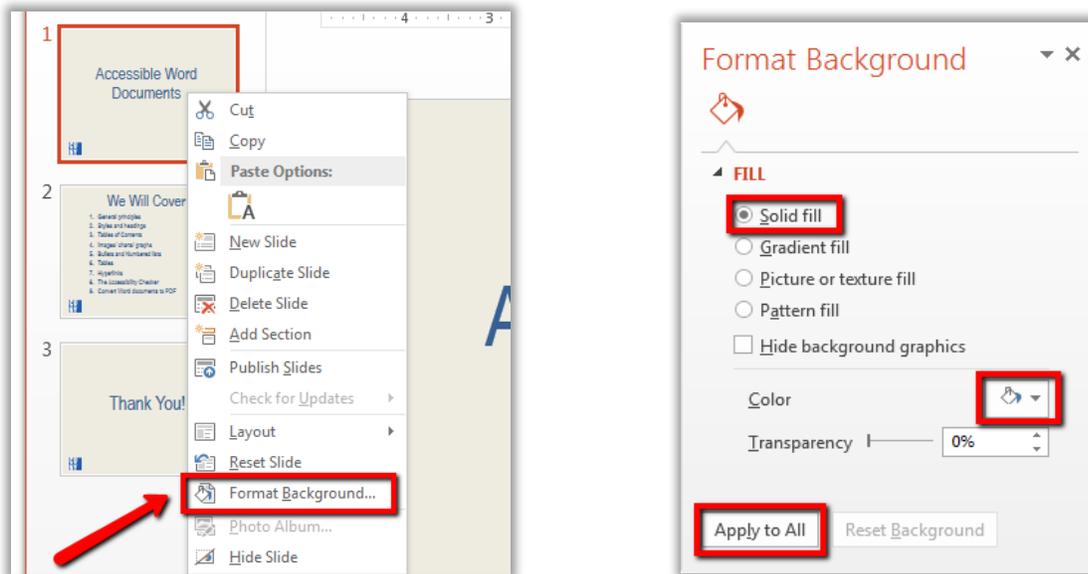
When choosing fonts for your PowerPoint presentation, keep a few things in mind:

- Choose a simple, easy to read font (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman, Book Antiqua, Georgia, Tahoma, Verdana, etc.)
- Use the same font consistently throughout your presentation.
- Use at least 20 point font.
- Limit the use of font variations such as **bold**, *italics*, and ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.
- Don't use the appearance of the font (color, shape, font variation, placement, etc.) as the only way to convey meaning.
- Avoid blinking or moving text.
- Avoid red and green colors (which people who are color blind cannot recognize).

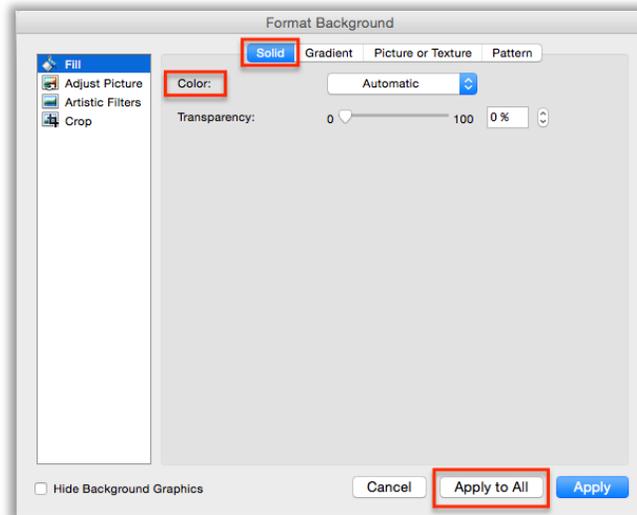
2. Backgrounds

To ensure your readers or viewers can easily understand your slides, choose a simple background with high contrast to the font and other images in the foreground. Avoid busy backgrounds and background graphics whenever possible.

To change the background of your slide in **PowerPoint 2013**, right click anywhere on the slide pane to the left and select “Format Background” from the list. On the panel to the right, select “Solid fill” and choose a background color that will be in high contrast to your font color. Click “Apply to All” to change the backgrounds of all your slides at once.



In **older versions of PowerPoint or PowerPoint for Mac**, right click anywhere on the slide pane to the left and select “Format Background” from the list. In the pop-up window, under the “Solid” tab, choose a background color that will be in high contrast to your font color. Click “Apply to All” to change the backgrounds of all your slides at once.



3. Spacing

To ensure that viewers are able to take in all the information in your presentation, keep each slide as short and concise as possible. Do not overload your slides with information. If you have a lot of information to get across, break it up over several slides. Limit bullet points on each slide to 6.

4. Transitions and Animations

Transitions and animations allow you to introduce each slide in a stylized manner when presenting your PowerPoint, but they can be distracting and make it difficult for screen reader users to access your presentation. Avoid them whenever possible. To make sure you remove any existing transitions or animations from your presentation, click on the “Transitions” tab and then click “None.” Then click on the “Animations” tab and click “None.”



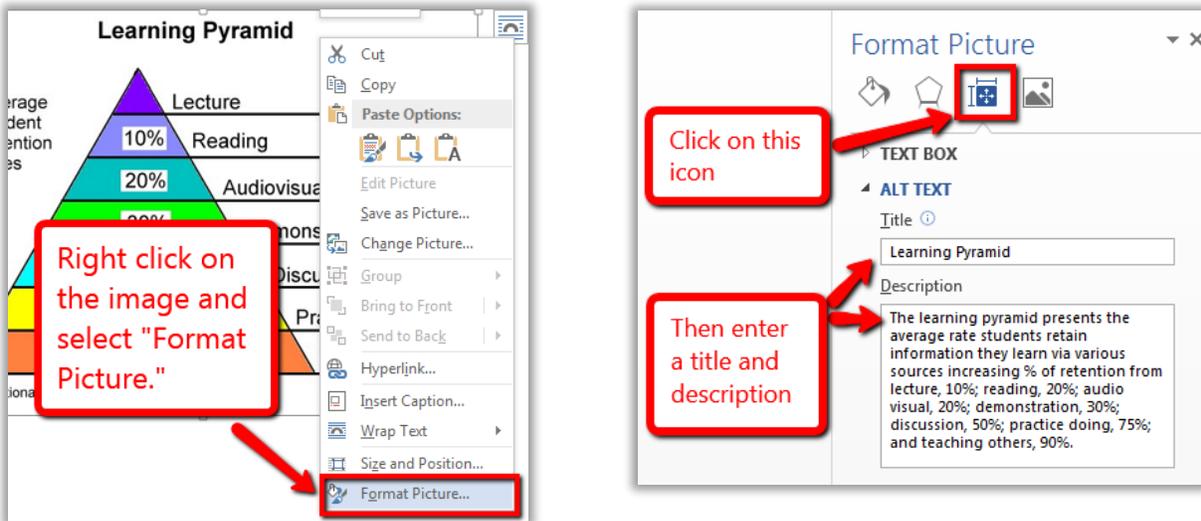
5. Visuals and Tables

When including visuals such as graphs, images, or clip art in your presentation, it is important not to overcrowd a slide. Generally, we recommend you include a maximum of two visuals per slide. Also, ensure that your visuals are large enough to be easily understood.

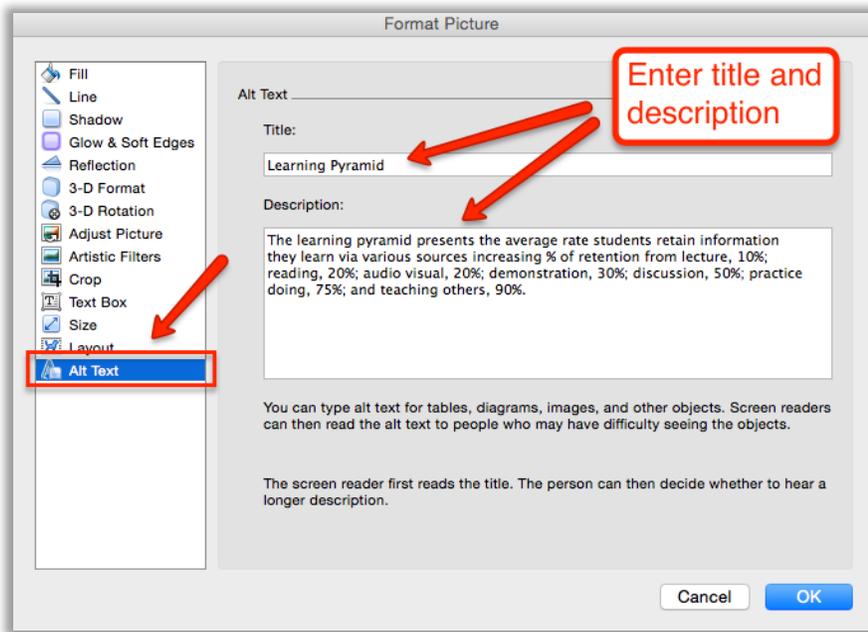
It is important to include Alt Text for visuals that carry important information so that screen reader users can access the content. Note that you do not need to include Alt Text for visuals that are purely decorative.

When including a table, avoid blank spaces if possible, as they can be confusing to someone using a screen reader to access your table. Also, as with other visuals, include Alt Text so that screen reader users can easily understand what information is displayed in the table.

To add Alt Text to visuals or a table in **PowerPoint 2013**, right click on the image / table and select “Format Picture” (or “Format Shape”) from the list. Click on the “Size and Properties” icon in the sidebar to the right, and select “Alt Text.” Enter a meaningful title; i.e. a short description of the image / table. In the description field, include all information you want readers to get from the image or table.



In older PowerPoint versions and PowerPoint on Macs, right click on the image / table and select “Format Picture” (or “Format Shape”) from the list. Enter a meaningful title; i.e. a short description of the image / table. In the description field, include all information you want readers to get from the image or graph.

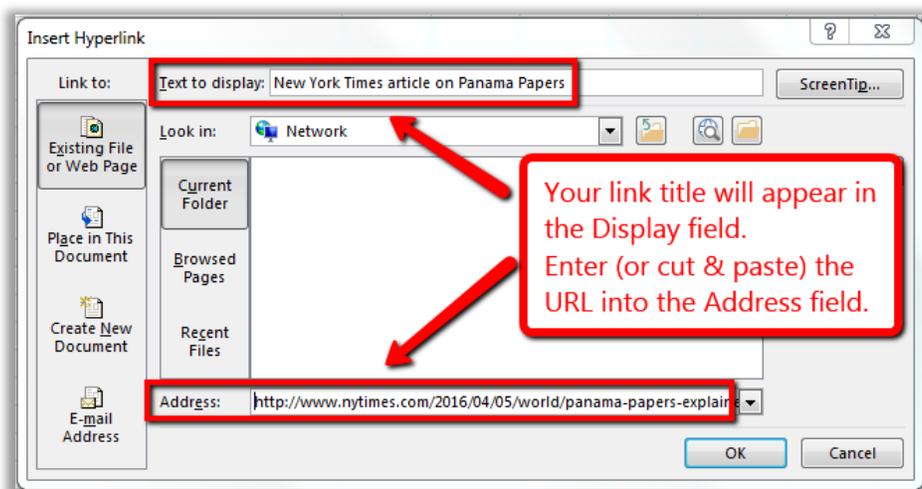


6. Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks allow you to direct your readers to a webpage from within your PowerPoint presentation. The text that you use to create a hyperlink should provide your readers with a clear description of where they will go once they click on the link. Meaningful titles for your hyperlinks will also ensure that screen reader users can more easily understand them.

Because screen readers will read every letter, avoid using the entire web address as your hyperlink text (i.e. do not say: fill out this user survey online here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/SAMPLE/>). Instead, include text that describes the website to which you are linking (i.e. please fill out the [online user survey](#)).

To add a clickable hyperlink to text in your document, highlight the text with your mouse, right click and select “Hyperlink.” In the pop-up window, your link title will be listed in the “Text to display” field. Enter (or cut & paste) the link’s web address into the “Address” field, and click OK to save.



7. Audio / Video

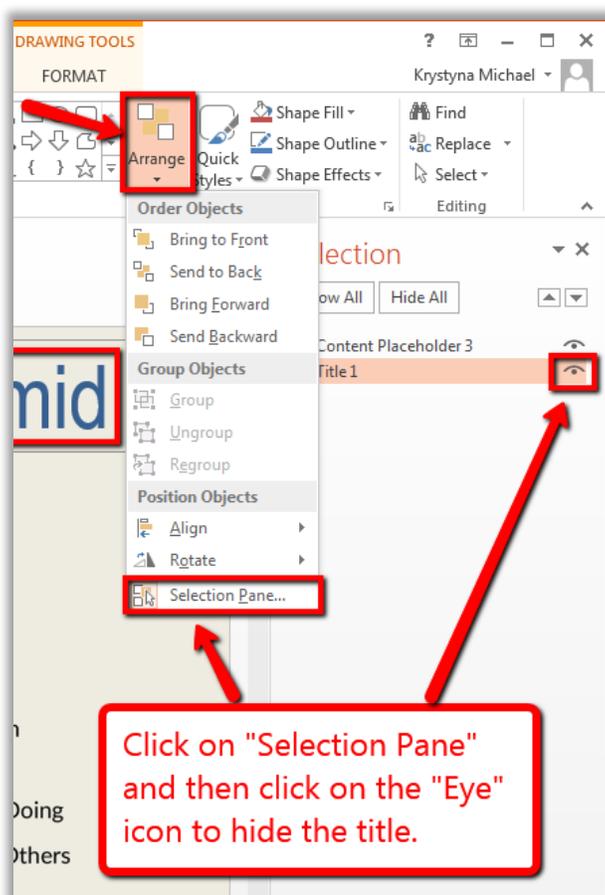
Whenever you include additional audio or video components in a PowerPoint presentation, ensure that the content is available in alternative formats as well, such as closed captions for videos, and transcripts for audio and video content.

8. Slide Titles

Including unique titles for each slide in your presentation helps screen reader users to navigate your PowerPoint document more easily. Most slide templates include a text box for the title, so just enter in the title for the slide there.

If there are particular slides where you do not wish to have a title displayed, you can still add a title and set it to be invisible.

To make a slide title invisible, on the “Home” tab, click on “Arrange” (listed in the “Drawing” section). Click “Selection Pane” from the dropdown menu and then click on the eye icon next to “Title” to hide it from view.

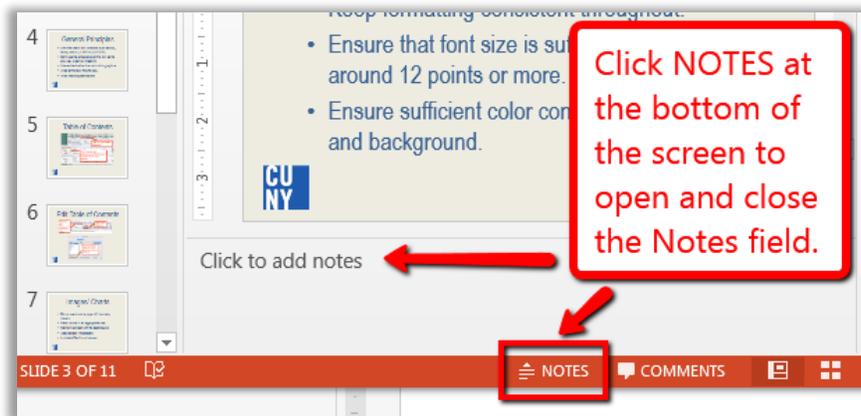


Note: The option to hide slide titles is not available in older PowerPoint version, or PowerPoint for Mac.

9. Lecture Notes

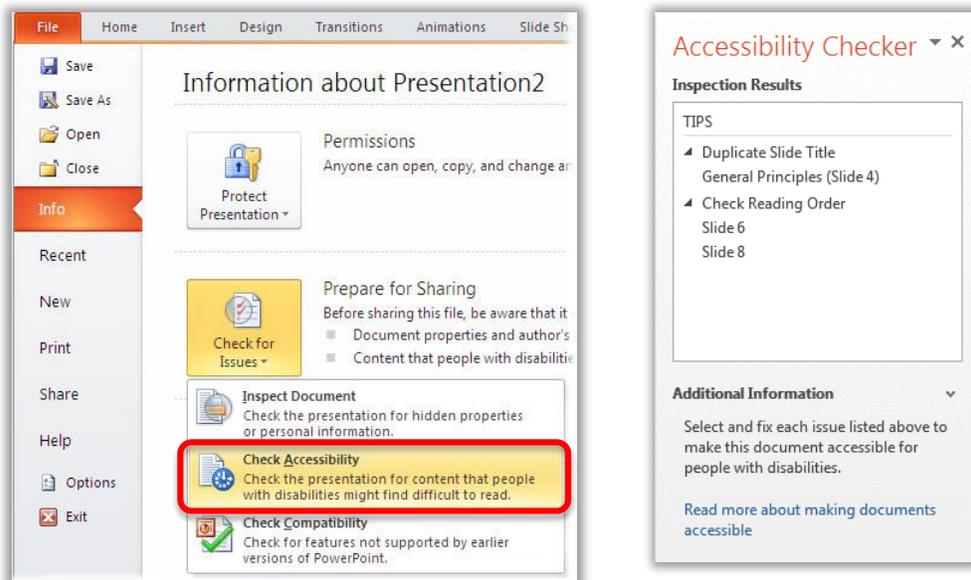
When sharing your PowerPoint document as a file, consider including lecture notes (or your presentation script) in the Notes field for each slide. This way, users can view your presentation with the accompanying notes. This will allow someone using a screen reader to access the content of your presentation more easily, and it also makes a great study aid for all students.

To enter in lecture notes, click on the “Notes” tab at the bottom of each slide. Enter the text you’d like to display in the box that opens up.



10. Accessibility Checker

PowerPoint 2011 and later includes an accessibility checker that allows you to check for accessibility problems in your document. To run the accessibility checker, select the “File” tab, click “Info,” then “Check for Issues.” Select “Check Accessibility” from the drop-down list.



The checker presents accessibility errors (e.g., images with no alternative text), warnings (e.g., unclear link text) and tips (e.g., slide reading order). Feedback about the importance of each item, as well as tips on how to repair it, are included. Selecting an item in the report will select the corresponding item in the file.

11. Converting PowerPoint Documents to PDF

The accessible features of your PowerPoint document, including slide title, clickable hyperlinks, and Alt Text will be maintained when converting your document to PDF.

To save your PowerPoint document as an accessible PDF, click on “File” and then “Save As.” Choose the location where you’d like your document to be saved. Click the box next to “Save as type” and select “PDF.” Then, click on “Options.” In the pop-up window, make sure that the box next to “Document structure tags for accessibility” are checked. Click OK, then Save.

