Document

# Intro

There are steps that you can take to make your document as accessible as possible. One way to start is to use the Check Accessibility tool to determine accessibility issues with your Document and follow the prompts to fix issues. The Check Accessibility tool is located under File, Info, and Check for Issues in Microsoft Word 2016 and under Review in Office 365.

# Title

Adding a title to your document gives assistive technology, like screen readers, more information about the document. You can set a title by going under File and selecting Properties. Click on Advanced Properties and, under Summary, add a title property. The title should describe the document’s content, and it may be the same as the filename.

# Language

Set your document’s language to signal assistive technology about how the document should be read. Some screen readers adjust accents according to the document’s programmatically identified language. If your document is in a language other than English, select Review. Under Language, choose Language Preferences. Set the editing language and, if necessary, the display and help languages.

# Heading Styles

Use predefined heading styles instead of bold, italics, or underline to set apart headings. This programmatically indicates to a screen reader that this text is different from surrounding paragraph text. Using character styles, like bold, italics, and underline, does not signal a screen reader with the same information as using heading styles does. To set a heading, select text using the cursor. In your document, under Styles, select the heading level you would like your text to be. Use heading styles to determine heading levels for your document. If you’re unsure how to determine a heading’s appropriate tag, follow this rule of thumb: Typically, the bigger and bolder the heading is, the higher the heading level. A large, bold font is likely to be a heading level 1, while a smaller font is likely to be a heading level 2 or 3. To change a heading style’s appearance, select the heading style you would like to change and right click on it. Select modify, change the style, and save. To apply a heading style to all similarly styled text, choose Select and click Select all text with similar formatting. Click on the desired heading style.

# Modify Styles

Avoid hitting Enter or Return to create extra space after a heading or a paragraph. Instead, modify the style. Select the text after which you want the space and right click. Choose Paragraph and increase the space after the paragraph. Hit OK to save changes. Alternatively, select the text and choose Layout. In the Paragraph section, increase Spacing after text.

# Hyperlinks

Give your hyperlinks meaningful link text. For example, instead of saying Click here to learn more, your link might say Learn more about this quote. Link text should describe the link’s target. In the example, the link text lets the user know that the target is an article about the quote. This is helpful for all users, and especially helpful for screen reader users. To add a link, under Insert, select Links. Click on Hyperlink, and add the desired URL.

# Alt Text

Set alternate text for all images. For users who are unable to see images, alternate text, or, alt text, provides a textual description of the image that a screen reader can then interpret. To set alt text, right click on any image in your document and select format picture. Under the Size and Properties tab, choose Alt Text. Enter your alt text for the image.

Write good alt text can seem challenging. A good rule of thumb is to describe the image as you would describe it aloud. Think about what the audience is supposed to gain from the image, based on the surrounding content. Also, consider what the surrounding content says. If the image is described in detail in the text, as may happen with a chart, simple alt text is sufficient. If the image is not described and is critical to the user’s understanding, you will need to provide more substantive alt text.

# Alt Text-Charts and Graphs

Set alt text for all charts and graphs. Click on the chart or graph, and under Format, select Format selection. Under the Size and Properties tab, choose Alt text and enter your alt text. Similarly to writing alt text for images, consider what information the audience is supposed to get from the chart or graph. Also, consider if the information can be presented in a table or in list format, supplementing or replacing the chart or graph. Tables and lists are more accessible than charts and graphs, and they can display information equally as effectively.

# Tables

If you use a table in your Document, set your table headers. To do this, click on the table. Under Design, check off Header Row and/or First Column. Use the Header row setting if headings are over columns and the first column if headings are by row. To help your document export to PDF accessibly, right click on your table and select Table Properties. Check the box for Repeat as header row at the top of each page.

# Media

If you use media, such as audio, include a transcript. For visual media, like a video without sound, include textual descriptions of the media. Caption all multimedia, such as videos with sound. Captions must be synchronized with sound and must be accurate.

# Font

Using a readable font also increases your document’s accessibility. Fonts with serifs, like Times New Roman, can be difficult to read for people with low vision or learning disabilities. Fonts like Arial and Calibri, which are sans serifs, are easier to read. Be sure to use a font size of at least 11 pt. as well.

# Color

Check your document for color dependence. Ask yourself if your document uses color only to convey meaning. An example of color dependence is “All red items show skewed data”. To make this not color dependent, you could change it to “All red, italicized items show skewed data”.

Finally, check your document’s color contrast using Color Contrast Analyser or Color Contrast Pal. The links for these tools are on this webpage. Color contrast between foreground and background should be a ratio of 4.5 to 1. Adjust colors as necessary if your foreground to background ratio does not meet this standard. Also, put text on solid background. Keeping text on solid background makes it easier to read for users who have low vision or learning disabilities. It can also help to keep attention on the text, which is valuable for those with attention difficulties.

# Conclusion

Following these steps helps make your PowerPoint as accessible as possible for individuals with disabilities.