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Creating Accessible PowerPoint Files



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Office of Administration

FHWA-HAD-21-003

October 06, 2022, Updated June 2024



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Creating Accessible PowerPoint Files

The items discussed below help create an accessible PowerPoint (PPT) file. Content owners are expected to incorporate these basics into their documents.

Using this information is a first step in making accessible files. These tips do not address every way to make a PPT accessible or Section 508 conformant. See [GSA's Microsoft PowerPoint 2016 Authoring and Testing Guide](#) and [How to Author and Test Microsoft PowerPoint Presentations for Accessibility Videos](#) for expanded discussion on many of the items listed below. The more accessible the source document, the easier it is to finalize the Section 508 conformant version. This is not a step-by-step documentation on how to use PowerPoint. See <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint> for more information.

Properties

Title and Author

Go to the "File" tab. Navigate to "Info," then the "Properties" drop down. From the drop down select "Advanced Properties." On the "Summary" tab:

- Enter the full, proper document title in the "Title" field.
- Set the "Author" to FHWA.

Language

Go to the "File" tab and select "Options" then "Language." Confirm the default human language is correct for the document.

Screen readers read with an accent. For the content to be understandable to people using screen readers, the language needs to match the natural language of the content.

When the document has content in more than one language, set the default to that of the majority of the content. Then, set specific content language to match its natural language. See the "[Language of Parts](#)" section for discussion on setting the language for specific words or parts of the document.

Saving

Save as a .pptx to retain accessibility features. Go to the "File" tab and select "Save," "Save As," or "Save a Copy" (as available). After naming the file, select "PowerPoint Presentation (*.pptx)" from the drop down then select the "Save" button.

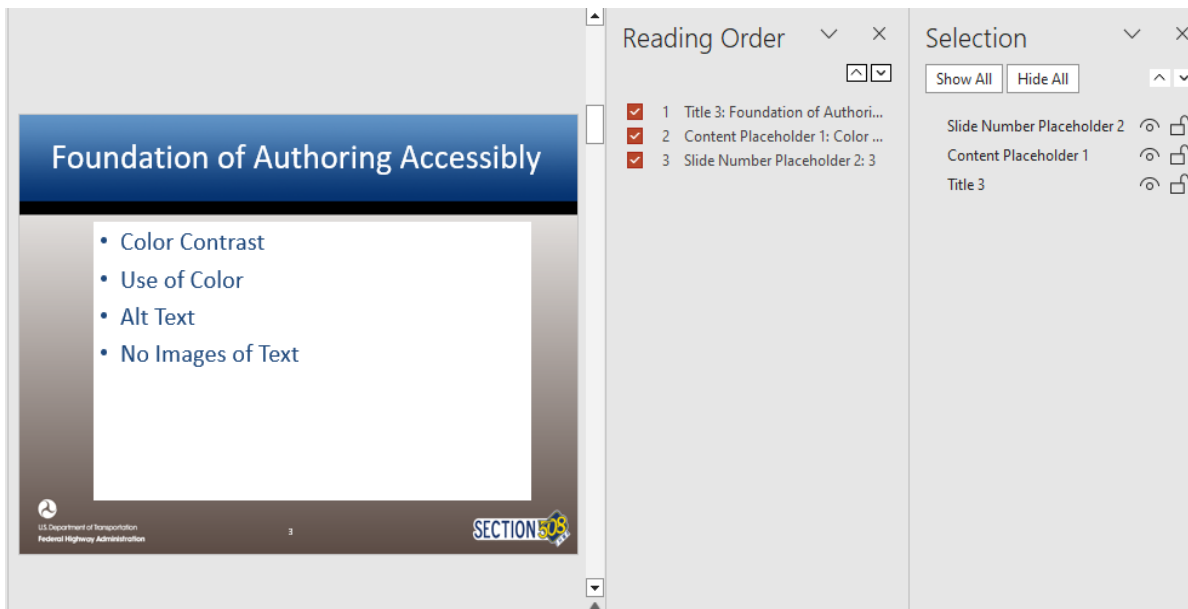
Structure

Slides

- Use prebuilt layouts. On the "Home" tab, go to the "Slides" group, then select "Layout." Select the "Layout" option needed.
- Avoid background patterns and content that can be distracting.

- Ensure each slide title is descriptive of the slide and unique to the slide deck.
- Make sure tab (reading) order is logical. Go to the “Review” tab then from the “Accessibility” group select the “Check Accessibility” drop down then select “Reading Order Pane.” Alternatively, go to the “Home” tab, then from the “Drawing” group select “Arrange,” and from the drop down select “Selection Pane.” The objects on the slide are listed in the “Reading Order” or “Selection” pane.

As shown below, on the “Reading Order” pane, the reading order starts at the top of the list and goes to the bottom. On the “Selection” pane, the reading order starts at the bottom of the list and reads to the top.



Other Considerations

- **Lists.** Create lists by selecting the appropriate list option from the “Home” tab on the “Paragraph” group. Do not add a “-” or another symbol in front of a paragraph.
- **Spacing.** Style all spacing between elements instead of adding a blank paragraph (pressing return). To adjust the spacing before and after the element, on the “Home” tab, go to the “Paragraph” group, then select the “Line Spacing” option.
- **Links.** Ensure the linked words are unique and descriptive of the link destination function or purpose. Do not use vague link words such as “click here,” “read more,” etc. Ensure the link is discernable from surrounding text.
- **Symbols.** Insert symbols as proper symbols. Avoid adding them as an image. Do not create a “≤” or “≥” by underlining a “<” or “>.” Do not create a ° (degree) by making the letter “o” superscript. Insert symbols by going to the “Insert” tab and using the “Symbol” option found in the “Symbols” group.
- **Columns.** Format columns as proper columns. Select the text to put in columns. On the Home tab, go to the “Paragraph” group and select the “Add or Remove Columns” drop down. From the drop down, select the number of columns needed.

Text as Text

Render text as text, not an image. This includes content copied from another source.

This *does not* apply to:

- Logos.
- Incidental text. Incidental text includes purely decorative images or parts of an image that contain significant other visual content such as a sign in the background of a photograph.
- Images replacing text to maintain a certain look such as an infographic, flowchart, or equation.

Background Information

Background information includes watermarks, content in headers or footers, and content in the slide master that may not be available to assistive technologies.

- When adding footers, enable headers and footers by going to the “Insert” tab, then under the “Text” group, select the “Header & Footer” option. On the “Header and Footer” dialog box, under the “Slide” tab, check the “Footer” checkbox and add the vital information to the input box, then select “Apply to All.”
- Ensure vital information is listed on the “Reading Order or “Selection” pane as described in the [“Slides”](#) section of this document.

Graphics

- When a graphic is created using multiple individual graphics, “Group” them to create a single graphic. “Group” by selecting all the parts of the individual graphics. Once selected, go to the “Picture Format,” “Shape Format,” or “Object Format” (as available) tab and on the “Arrange” group, go to the “Group” drop down and select “Group.”
- Provide a description (alt text) for all graphics conveying meaningful information. This description is a text equivalent, do not add extra information or skip anything relevant.
- Add the alt text by selecting the image, then go to the “Picture Format,” “Shape Format,” or “Object Format” (as available) and on the “Accessibility” group, select “Alt Text.” Add the alt text to the available field.
- Describe the meaning of the image fully in as few words as possible.
- Only graphics providing meaningful information need alt text. Do not add alt text to decorative images or redundant images such as logos on every slide. Set decorative images to not read by selecting the “Mark as decorative” check box on the “Alt Text” pane. If it is not available, add “” the alt text field.
- Ensure alt text does not repeat the caption or other surrounding text.
- Ensure alt text does not start with “this is an image of” or the like.

Sensory Characteristics

Avoid references to content solely by shape, size, sound, color, or location.

Use of Color

Information cannot be conveyed by color alone. This applies to content including text, links, and graphs/charts.

- **Text:** When changing the font color or the background color to convey information, such as using a color-coded table, indicating updates are in a certain color font, or highlighting content, there needs to be another way to uniquely, visually convey this information
- **Graphs/Charts:** If the document has charts or graphs, ensure that each line or segment has a non-color visual indicator. For line graphs, the visual indicator can be a unique marker, line style, or name of the line pointing to the line. For charts, the visual indicator can be unique pattern on each segment or the name of each segment near the segment. Note: putting the values of a point on a line or of a segment does not satisfy this criterion.
- **Links:** It is recommended to reserve underlines for only links. If not, ensure the links pass minimum contrast against both the background and surrounding font and have another visual indicator available when the link is selected.

Color contrast

All text color combinations meet WCAG 2.0 AA minimum color contrast requirements. This requirement includes images of text where allowed, such as an infographic. This does not apply to logos or images where the text is incidental to a graphic.

Tables

Use a table only to present data. Avoid using tables for layout.

Format tables as proper tables. **Do not use** tabs or columns to create tables. Do not hit return to add a new row. To create a table, go to the “Insert” tab and from the “Tables” group, on the “Table” drop down, select the table size from “Insert Table.”

To add new rows or columns, select the table and go to the “Layout” tab. From the “Rows and Columns” group, select the appropriate choice. To delete rows or columns, go to the “Layout” tab and select the “Delete” drop down then select the appropriate choice.

Do not leave any column or row header blank. Ensure **all** the data in a row or column is associated with that header. Assign headers to every column and row by going to the “Table Design” tab, go to the “Table Style Options” group and ensure “Header Row” (column headers) and “First Column” (row headers) are checked as needed.

Do not format complex tables by visually grouping rows with a row spanning all columns. Keep tables separate. Do not put two tables side-by-side or one after the other to save space. Do not wrap long tables.

Ensure tables are regular. That is, each row has the same number of columns, and each column has the same number of rows (including row and column spans). Keep the table rectangular.

If a table is absolutely necessary for layout, confirm that the tab order corresponds to the logical reading order.

Zoom

Except for captions and images of text, text is resizable and readable when zoomed to 200% without assistive technology.

Movement

The document is free from any content that blinks or flashes.

Language of Parts

When using a word or phrase from a language different from the default human language, set the language of that part to the correct human language. Highlight the text that is in a different language. Go to the “Review” tab. In the “Language” group, select the “Language” drop down, then select “Set Proofing Language.” Select the correct language from the dialog box.

Forms and Macros

Forms and documents with macros are beyond the scope of this documentation. Contact the [FHWA Section 508 Program Manager](#) for more information.

Embedded Media

See “[Creating Section 508 Conformant Multimedia.](#)”

Creating the PDF

Save as a tagged PDF by going to the “File” tab, select “Save As Adobe PDF.”

References and Resources

- <https://www.section508.gov/create/presentations/aed-cop-pptx00/>
- <https://www.section508.gov/sites/default/files/MS%20PowerPoint%202016%20Basic%20Autho ring%20and%20Testing%20Guide-AED%20COP.docx>