

Guide to Making Accessible PowerPoint Presentations, Part 1

Description

This guide was made to provide the resources (i.e. links and tutorial videos) to help AIC presenters make accessible PowerPoint slides. PowerPoint was chosen because it is the most widely used presentation software.

Ten key features of an accessible PowerPoint Presentation are outlined in the guide. The guide has been split in two parts, one on basics (Part 1) and another on advanced topics (Part 2). This guide focuses on five basic features of PowerPoint software.

Please keep in mind that this guide was made for PowerPoints versions available in April of 2020: **2016**, **2019**, **Microsoft 365** and **online** versions. Alternatives may be available for **2010** and **2013** versions. Also, there may be slight variations between PowerPoint versions for MacOS and Windows.

The PowerPoint program is constantly being updated, so some functions may no longer be available or have been upgraded. Also, this guide is targeted to English version users.

Please use **“Ctrl” + Click** on a link to follow it.

5 Basic Topics

I. Accessible Slide Designs

Please use default slide templates and layouts whenever possible. The built-in slide designs not only permit for inclusive reading order for screen reader users but also help Assistive Technology (AT) users navigate the different elements (e.g. text boxes, graphics) within slides.

Instructions to finding and using slide layouts can be found on [WebAim's Templates and Slide Layouts](#).

If you want to choose the optimal design, samples can be downloaded at [Accessible PowerPoint template sampler](#).

II. Color Contrast

Careful color choices are beneficial to not only people with low vision or color-blindness but also everyone. We all know how important color combinations and schemes are in our field when painting the reproduced areas of loss.

There is a web content accessibility standard for color contrast, and it is mentioned in [W3C Recommendations 11 December 2008](#) (updated?).

According to WCAG 2.0, there are two compliance standards for color contrast:

1. **Level AA:** The ratio of the foreground (e.g. text) and background colors is at least 4.5:1 for normal text (at least 12pt) and 3:1 for a large text (at least 18 pt).
2. **Level AAA** (ideal): The ratio of the foreground and background colors is at least 7:1 for normal text (at least 12pt) and 4.5:1 for a large text (at least 18 pt).

There are two free tools available online to check the color contrast:

- [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)
- [Colour Contrast Analyzer \(CCA\) for MacOS and Windows](#)

III. Alt Texts for Visuals

Alt texts are short descriptions that appear in place of an image to help screen readers describe images to visually impaired audience members. There are 3 types of images:

1. **Informative** – images that convey CONTEXT
2. **Decorative** – images added for AESTHETIC purposes
3. **Complex** – contains substantial INFORMATION (e.g. graphs, charts)

Please only use alt texts for informative and complex images; alt texts should be left out for decorative images. Also, good alt texts are specific and simple, just like **good condition reports!** Some alt texts can be automatically generated.

- [Alt texts for PowerPoint 2019](#)
- [Alt texts for PowerPoint 2013 and 2016](#)
- [Alt texts for PowerPoint 2010](#)
- [Alt texts for PowerPoint Microsoft 365](#)

IV. Closed Captions or Subtitles

Live, automatic captioning is only available with two PowerPoint versions: **Microsoft 365** and **online**. The instructions on how to provide live captioning and edit font sizes, colors and positions are available below:

- [Live captioning for PowerPoint Microsoft 365 \(Windows, Mac\)](#)
- [Live captioning for PowerPoint online version](#)

A tutorial video can be found below:

- [Chris Menard's PowerPoint: use live subtitles in your presentation](#)

In addition to the live captioning, captions have to be provided for any video or audio content in the PowerPoint Presentations for accessibility.

Captions for a Video (NOT possible for audio files)

A separate text-based caption file **.vtt** extension has to be made and inserted manually. The **.vtt** file can be made with several free tools or subtitling platforms available for download: [Amara Editor](#) and [VTTCreator](#).

Another option to creating the file is to use *TextEdit* (on MacOS) and *Notepad* (on Windows) to type in captions and time stamps. Instructions are available on the following link: [3PlayMedia's How to create your own WebVTT file for MacOS and Windows](#)

Once the closed caption files are ready, they can be added to a video in the presentation:

- [Add closed captions or subtitles to media in PowerPoint 2016, 2019 and Microsoft 365 versions](#)
- [Add closed captions or subtitles to media in PowerPoint 2010 and 2013](#)

Captions for an Audio File (also possible for videos)

STAMP plugin is needed to import and export files with **.TTML** extension. It is not automatically included with PowerPoint, so STAMP has to be downloaded and installed from [SourceForge's STAMP: Subtitling Add-in](#). It is only available for PowerPoint **2010**, **2013** and **2016** versions, as of April of 2020. Please make sure you choose the correct version.

Upon installing STAMP, you will be able to edit and create new captions with *Captions Editor* within STAMP. Instructions are available on [Create new captions using the Captions Editor](#).

A tutorial video is available here: [Jisc TechDis' Microsoft PowerPoint 2010 – Adding Captions to Videos](#)

V. Accessibility Checker

Last but not the least, it is possible to have the PowerPoint's built-in accessibility checker analyze your presentation slides for any accessibility issues. The checker can be kept running while you work on the presentations. The instructions are found in [Improve Accessibility with the Accessibility Checker \(Windows, MacOS, and online\)](#). This function is not available on pre-2013 PowerPoint versions.

- [Accessibility Checker on Windows](#)
- [Accessibility Checker on MacOS](#)
- [Accessibility Checker on Microsoft 365 and online versions](#)

The built-in checker also provides solutions to fixing the accessibility issues. But, please remember that the automatic checker has its own limitations, as outlined in [Accessibility Checker Limitations](#).

Conclusion

This guide was made to help raise awareness on accessibility issues with PowerPoint presentations and to provide solutions and alternatives to the addressed issues for the AIC presenters. *University of Illinois* offers a nice summary on how to make PowerPoint accessible in [MS PowerPoint: Accessibility Best Practices \(PDF\)](#).

Majority of the resources for this guide comes from *Microsoft Support* and *WebAim*. I would recommend contacting them directly for any accessibility-related question or information. I am still learning how to do captioning.

- [Microsoft Office](#) – Live Chat, Phone Calls, ASL Video Calls and Be-my-Eyes Video Calls are available.
- [WebAim](#) – E-mail and Phone Calls are available.

However, if you experience problems with the guide (e.g. invalid links), please do not hesitate to contact me. Also, I would appreciate any information and feedback that could help contribute to this list. I can be reached by e-mail: sgkim@williamstownart.org.

This guideline was made possible thanks to encouragement from EIC. Sally G. Kim would also like to thank EIC for reviewing and providing feedbacks.