Creating Accessible Presentations in Microsoft PowerPoint
Kutztown University Disability Services Office (DSO)

Microsoft PowerPoint is commonly used to create slideshow presentations to convey information in a visual format that can include a combination of text, tables, images, charts, and graphics. For users of assistive technology, screen readers and Braille devices can convey content in a PowerPoint presentation if the author follows some basic steps to implement accessibility.

Step 1: Use Built-in Slide Templates

Built-in slide layout templates are designed so the reading order is the same for people with vision and for people who use assistive technology, such as screen readers. They also contain all the formatting, such as theme colors, fonts, and effects.

Avoid adding extra textboxes. If there are additional textboxes placed in a slide, they may be read out of order by a screen reader. Instead, use a pre-set layout from the New Slide drop-down selection options; select the layout that best fits your needs.

Step 2: Use Unique Slide Titles

Individuals who use a screen reader skim slide titles to navigate; they can quickly scan through a list of slide titles and go right to the slide they want. Using unique slide titles allows them to clearly understand which slide they are on. Avoid using the same title for slides that have spill-over information; instead, consider adding information such as "Slide Title 1 of 2"

Step 3: Use Meaningful Hyperlinks

Adding meaningful hyperlinks in PowerPoint can be simple. Include language in your document that conveys relevant information about the destination of the link, highlight that text, right click, and select *Hyperlink*. Include the URL in the Address field and select *OK*. For example:
- Accessible: Disability Services Office Forms
- Not accessible: https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/disability-services-(dso)/forms.html

Step 4: Add Alternate Text for Images

For screen reader users, alternative text helps to communicate what is important in images and other visuals. Alt text provides a textual alternative to non-text content. In most versions of PowerPoint, you can enter alternate text by right clicking an image and selecting *Edit Alt Text*. In the dialog box that appears, enter information in the description field.

Step 5: Use Tables Wisely

To keep track of their location in a table, screen readers count table cells and use header information to identify rows and columns. If a table is overly complex, or uses split or merged cells, the screen reader loses count and can't provide useful information about the table.

For simple tables, the only step necessary for accessibility is to identify which row contains the column headers. To do this in PowerPoint, select the appropriate row by clicking and dragging the cursor to highlight the row, then right click on the row and select *Table Properties*. In this dialog, click the *Row* tab and check the checkbox that says, "Repeat as header row at the top of each page."

Additionally, when creating a table, two new tabs will appear in the ribbon. Selecting the *Design* tab will reveal the *Table Styles Options* group where you can define your Header Row.

Step 6: Set Reading Order of Slide Contents

Screen readers read the elements of a slide in the order they were added to the slide, which might be very different from the order in which things appear. To make sure everyone reads the content in the order you intend, it's important to check the reading order by using the Reading Order Pane. From here, you can drag and drop to adjust the reading order of the contents on the slide.

To find the Reading Order Pane, select the Review tab and click the drop-down menu arrow next to the Check Accessibility button.

Step 7: Use the Accessibility Checker

Microsoft products have a built-in accessibility checker which can help the document author test the overall accessibility of the document. The checker provides Inspection Results, feedback about the importance of each item, and tips on how to repair issues. The tool can be accessed in the *Review* tab by clicking *Check Accessibility*.

Creating Accessible PDFs from Microsoft PowerPoint

If all the steps were followed to create an accessible PowerPoint presentation, exporting to PDF properly will ensure heading structure and other accessibility information will remain intact.

However, users of PowerPoint for Mac should be cautioned that exporting to PDF will not yield an accessible, tagged PDF document. It must be remediated using Adobe Acrobat Pro.