



FACULTY GUIDE:

Microsoft PowerPoint Best Practices for Accessibility

SUNY Broome Community College

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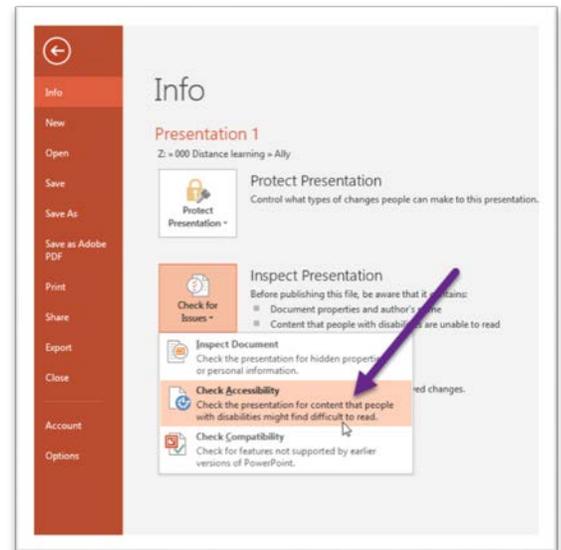
Microsoft PowerPoint makes it easy to create presentations that are both visually appealing and accessible! This Faculty Guide will introduce you to many of the built-in tools that Microsoft PowerPoint has to offer and teach you the best practices to keep in mind when creating new presentations or editing existing ones to be more accessible. The guide begins with an overview of the Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint and how it can be used to improve the overall accessibility of your presentations for display on the web or in your online course. It will then take a closer look at common accessibility pitfalls and the steps you can take up front as you create new presentations in the future.

MICROSOFT POWERPOINT ACCESSIBILITY CHECKER

Microsoft PowerPoint has a built-in tool to scan a document for accessibility issues. Using the tool, you can see which elements of your presentation need attention and receive guidance in fixing the items it found.

To check a presentation for accessibility, first open the document in Microsoft PowerPoint.

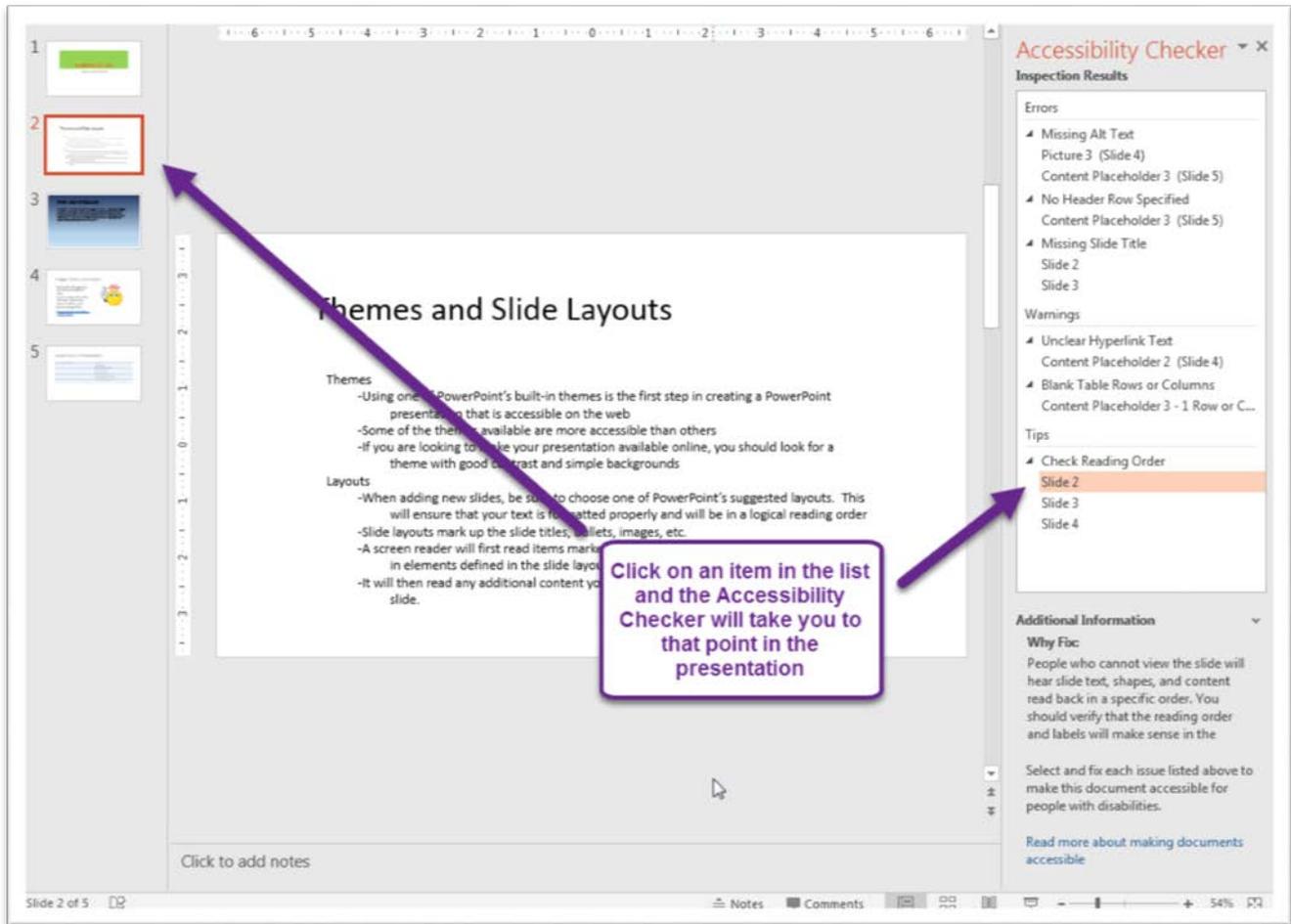
1. Click on the **“File”** menu in the upper left of the window, then click on the **“Check for Issues”** button. A drop-down menu will appear from which you will select **“Check Accessibility”**
2. The Accessibility Checker panel will open on the right side of the screen. As you can see from the screenshot on the next page, several issues with the example presentation were identified.



The issues found in the example file include:

- Missing Alt Text for an image and table
- No Header Row specified for the table
- Missing Slide Titles
- Unclear Hyperlink Text
- Blank Table Rows or Columns

There are other issues with the presentation that require a manual check such as color contrast and reading order. We will be looking at what these issues mean and how to format your presentation to make it accessible from the start in the remainder of this guide.



Inspection results are divided into three categories:

Errors: Content that makes the presentation difficult or impossible to read and understand for people with disabilities

Warnings: Content that in most (but not all) cases makes the presentation difficult to understand for people with disabilities

Tips: Content that people with disabilities can understand but that could be presented in a different way to improve the user's experience

Note: To quickly see the area of the presentation where PowerPoint found an issue, click on it in the Accessibility Checker and the location in the presentation will become highlighted!

Also pay attention to the "Why Fix:" area of the Accessibility Checker. It explains why that item is a concern for the purposes of accessibility.

We will now take a look at common issues found by the Microsoft PowerPoint Accessibility Checker and will begin with those involving the Slide Theme and Layout. We will then move on to Images (Alt Text), tables, hyperlinks, and reading order. The guide will conclude with additional tips and best practices for formatting slides and design considerations with accessibility in mind.

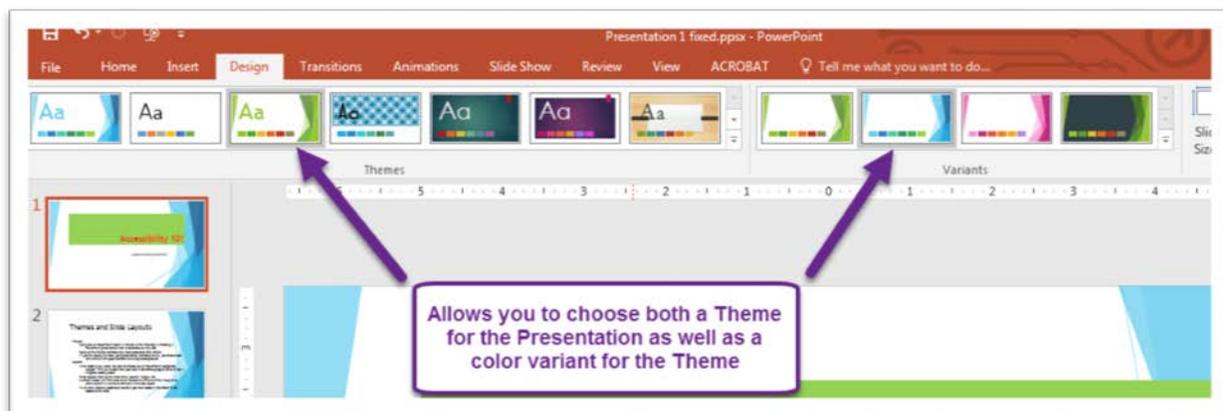
PRESENTATION THEME AND SLIDE LAYOUT

Presentation Theme

Using one of PowerPoint's built-in themes (templates) is the first step in creating a PowerPoint presentation that is accessible on the web. The Design tab in PowerPoint provides access to many built-in themes to choose from. When choosing a theme for a presentation that will be available on the web or within an online course, be sure to choose a theme with good color contrast and simple backgrounds.

To apply a theme to a presentation:

1. Click on the **"Design"** tab within PowerPoint.
2. Select the Theme that you would like to use.
3. For many of the built-in Themes, you can also choose a different color in the **"Variants"** portion of the toolbar ribbon. The theme and color variant will be applied to the entire presentation.



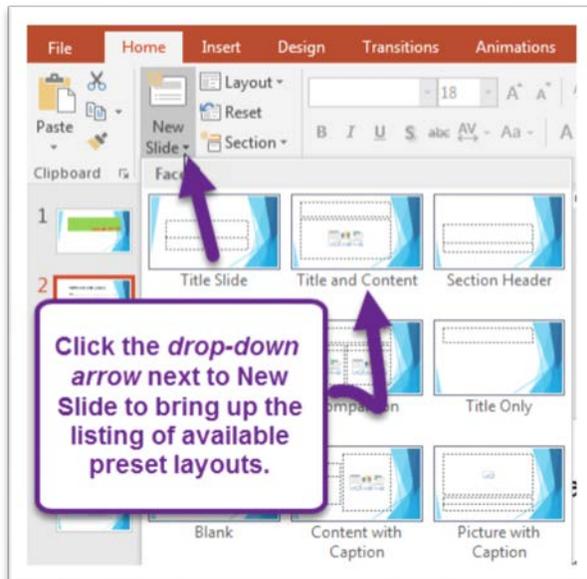
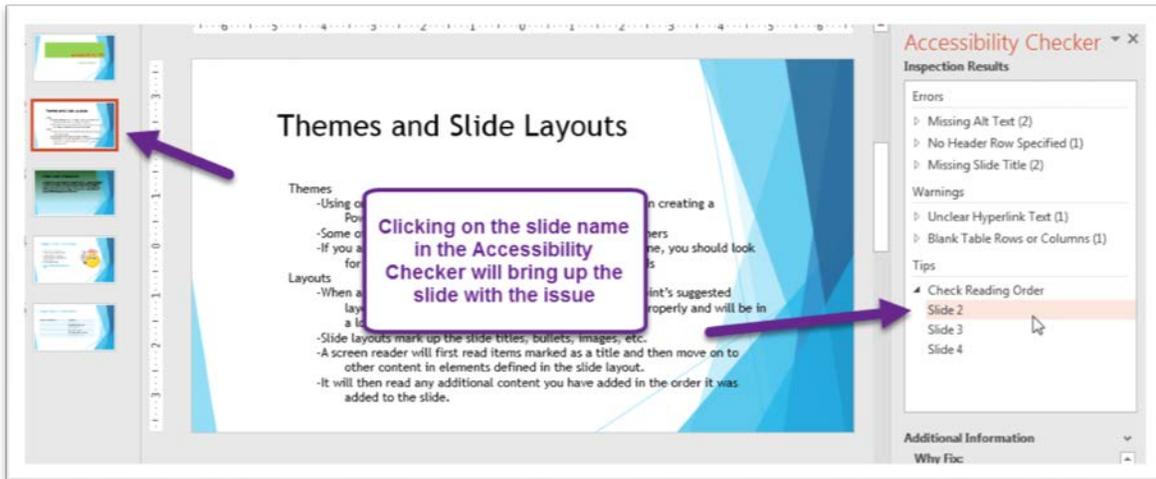
Slide Layout

Properly using PowerPoint's Slide Layouts is the most important step in creating an accessible PowerPoint. Using a built-in layout will ensure that the slides are presented properly to a screen reader and will contain the correct heading structure and reading order it needs to accurately convey the information in the presentation. For example, most slide layouts contain a field for a slide **"Title"** appearing at the top of the slide. They also contain place holder areas where you can add other content, such as bulleted lists, charts, images, etc. Using these pre-formatted fields on a slide will assist the screen reader in determining the importance and the order of the items on the slide. If items are added manually without the use of the slide layout, it will read the items in the order that they were added to the slide, which may not be the logical Reading Order for the information you are trying to present.

It is best to use the preset slide layouts from the beginning, when you first start out creating your PowerPoint presentation, but if you are working with a presentation with no layout it can be fixed. You will just need to apply a layout to each slide and then cut and paste each of the manually entered content items into the appropriate place holder. The Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint will display issues with the layout of your slides in the **"Tips"** section of the Inspection Results pane, under **"Check Reading Order."**

To fix slides that do not have a preset layout:

1. Click on the slide for which you would like to apply the Slide Layout (or select it from the Accessibility Checker Inspection Results Pane).

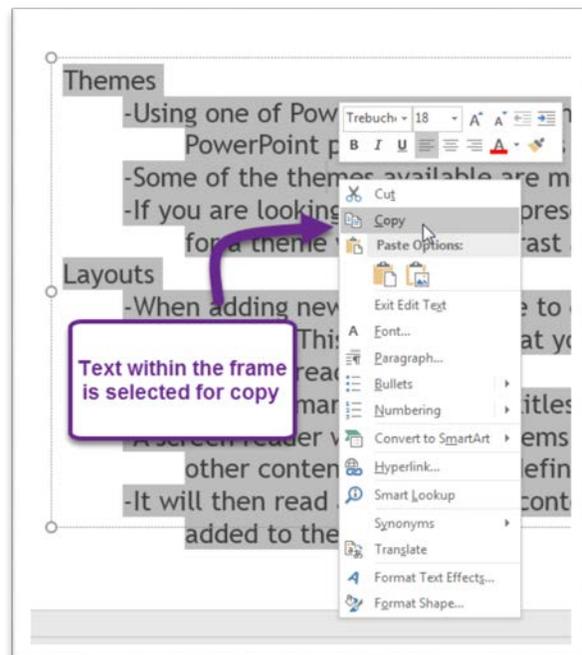


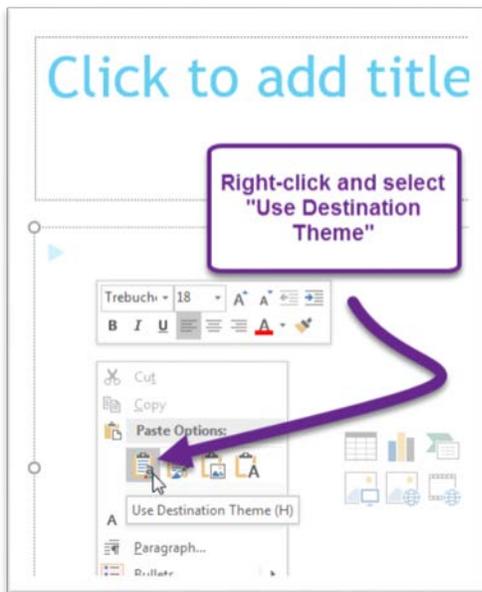
2. From the Home Tab Select the “**Home**” Tab and click on the drop-down arrow next to the “**New Slide**” button. This will bring up the listing of preset layouts to choose from. Choose the preset layout that is appropriate for the content on your slide.

Note: Do not simply click the “New Slide” button without selecting a preset layout or the new slide will be unfomatted just like the one that precedes it! If you accidentally do this, you will need to change the slide’s layout before adding content to it.

3. You will now see the preset layout and its place holders added to the new slide. You will now need to return to the original slide, **select the text** or other item, and select **copy**.

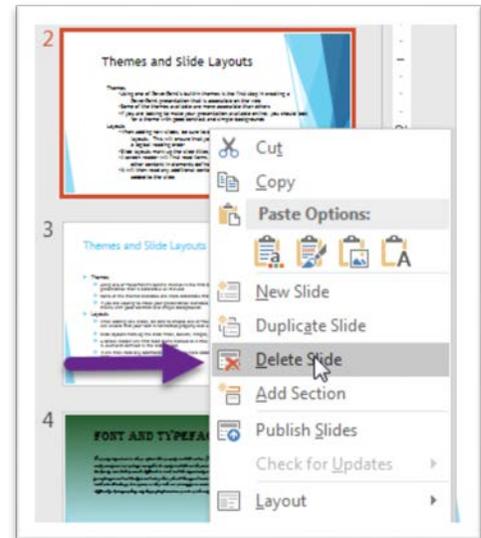
Note: When copying text from one slide to another, be sure to only copy the text that appears within the frame, not the box surrounding the text as well.





- Return to the new slide and **right-click** within the place holder that is appropriate for your content. Select **“Use Destination Theme”** under the Paste Options. If done correctly, the layout styles will apply automatically (Ex: bullets). You will need to repeat this process for each content item on the original slide.
- You may also need to make other slight modifications to the text on the slide, particularly in getting the bullets to appear in the proper hierarchal order.

- When you are finished, you should see two slides with the same content listed in the pane on the left side of the screen. You can now delete the one that did not use the proper layout by **right-clicking** on it and selecting **Delete Slide**.
- Repeat the entire process until all slides in the presentation are using preset layouts and there are no additional messages regarding Reading Order in the Accessibility Checker window.

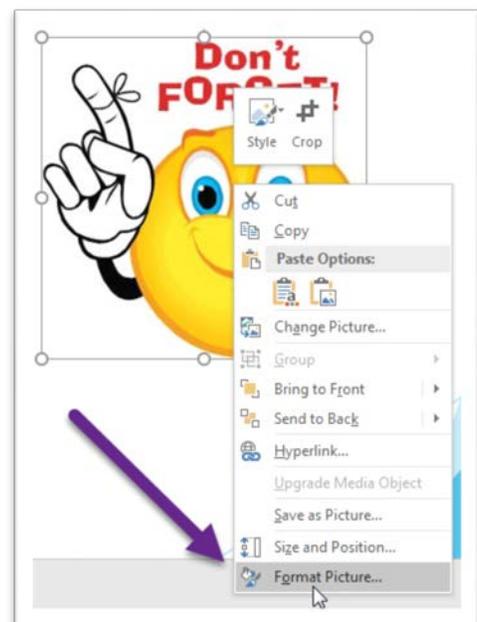


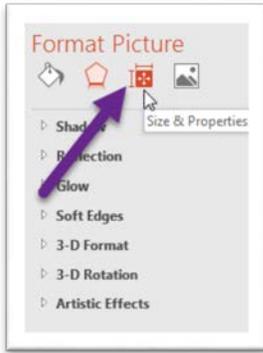
ALTERNATIVE TEXT FOR IMAGES, TABLES AND OTHER VISUAL ITEMS

Images and Tables are used extensively in presentations and within online courses. While they are often very beneficial and necessary to convey information, they can also be a barrier to those with a disability when not used or formatted in an accessible manner.

Alternative text (Alt Text) is text contained within the settings of an image or table that describes its appearance or function to those who are unable to see it. A screen reader for a visually impaired user will read the alternative text to them out loud so that they have a better understanding of its content. Microsoft PowerPoint makes it easy to add alternative text to images, tables, shapes, SmartArt, and charts. To do this:

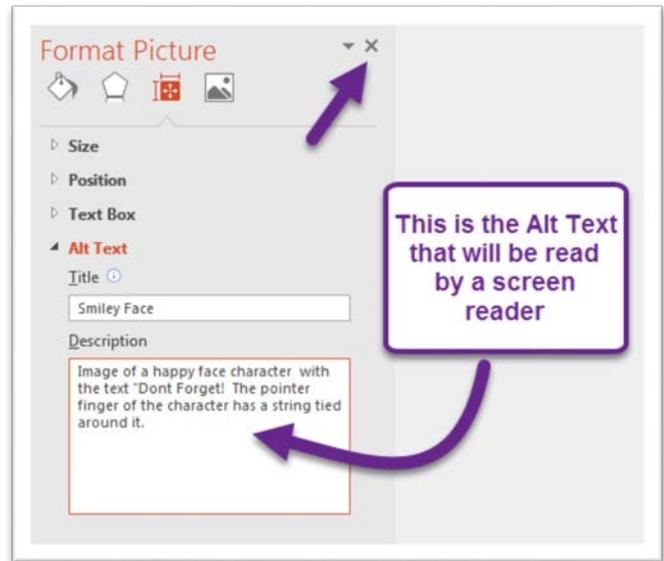
- Right Click on the image and select **“Format Picture”** (or if it is a Table, you would right-click and select “Format Shape”)





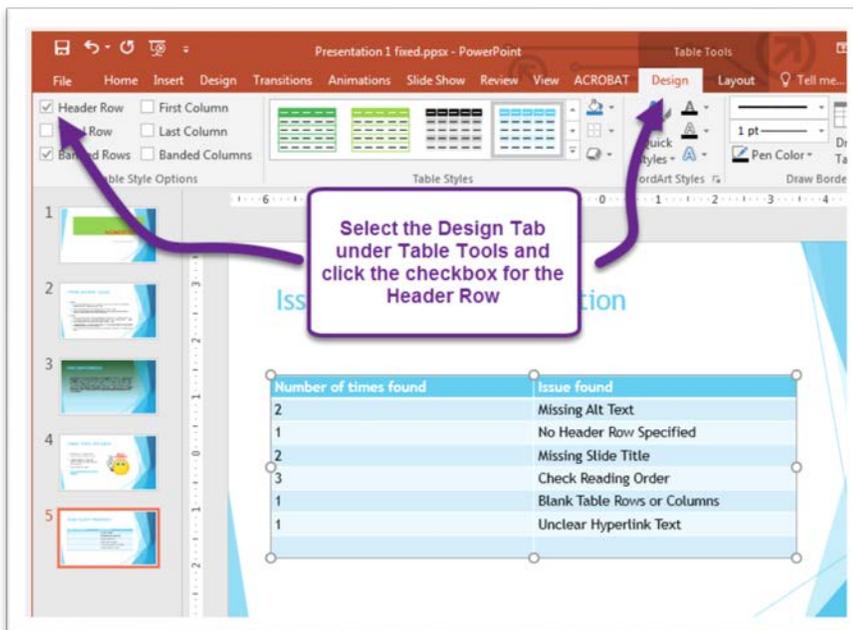
2. The Task Pane will appear on the right side of the PowerPoint menu. From it, select the option for **“Size & Properties”**

3. Expand the area for **“Alt Text”** and enter text that describes the image in the **Description** field. The Alt Text should be descriptive, specific, and should provide context. Use the **Title** area to give the image a very brief description.
4. When finished, click the **“X”** in the upper right corner to close the Format Picture Task Pane



TABLES

The use of tables should be limited to organize data that have logical relationships in grids. When they are used, they need to be marked up properly for accessibility. In addition to having associated **Alt Text** (as we saw above), tables must also **not contain any blank rows or columns** and must have a **Header Row specified** so that they are accessible. To specify the Header Row:



1. Make sure that your table contains labels text in the first row that would be appropriate for a header. If it does not, insert a row at the top of the table and type in appropriate labels.
2. With the table selected, click on the **Design Tab** under the **Table Tools** area in the menu at the top of the PowerPoint window.

Note: When a table is selected, PowerPoint will display two Design Tabs. For our purposes here, we want the one toward the right, under “Table Tools.”

3. Click **“Header Row”** on the left of the ribbon to designate the first row of the table as a Header Row. The look of the first row will change slightly as it is now specified as the Header Row.

HYPERLINKS

For individuals who use assistive technology, links within presentations should convey clear information about the destination. Rather than displaying the URL as the hyperlink text or linking through text labeled “click here,” you should include descriptive text around the link to explain its destination.

Example of an inaccessible link:

“For more information [click here.](#)”

Example of a more accessible version:

For more information on web accessibility, visit the [Online@SUNY Broome webpage](#). (if the document is meant to be posted online)

Or

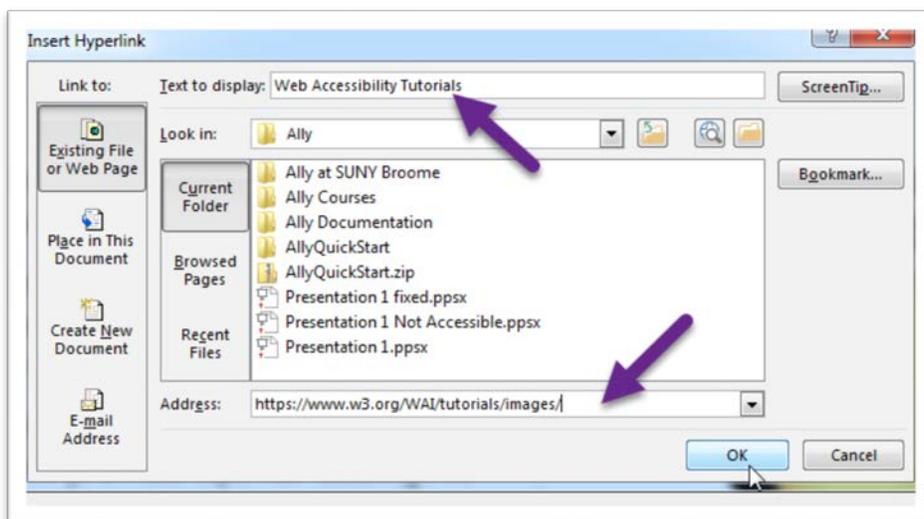
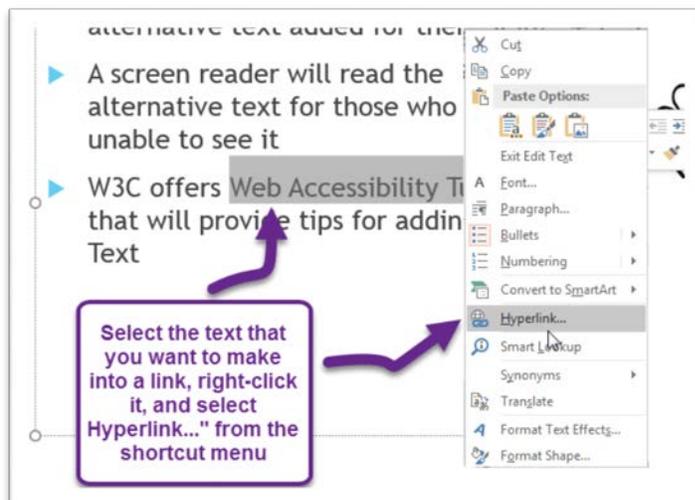
For more information on web accessibility, visit the Online@SUNY Broome webpage at <http://www.sunybroome.edu/online>. (if the document is meant to be printed)

Or

For more information on web accessibility, visit the [Online@SUNY Broome webpage](#) (<http://www.sunybroome.edu/online>). (for a combination of web viewing and print)

To add or edit a hyperlink on a presentation slide:

1. Type the text which will contain the hyperlink and select the text that will become the portion that links to the website.
2. Right-click on the selected text and select “**Hyperlink...**”
3. You should see the text that you have selected in the “**Text to display:**” field. In the “**Address:**” field, type (or paste from the web) the address of the website you would like to link to.



4. When finished, click the **OK** button.

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to the guidelines we have discussed so far, there are several other best practices you should keep in mind when creating or editing a document in Microsoft PowerPoint.

Bullets and Numbered Lists

Bulleted and numbered lists should be used not only to organize information into meaningful chunks or present sequencing so that they can be easily scanned by sighted users, they also provide the hierarchy and coding necessary for assistive technologies to interpret properly. When creating bullets or numbered lists in Microsoft PowerPoint **always** use the built-in functionality (through the Slide Layout). **Never** create lists manually by simply typing numbers, characters, images or other symbols before list items.

You should also always avoid putting too much text on a single slide. Bullet points should contain just enough information to get the point across in a logical way without overwhelming the person viewing the presentation. This rule applies for the benefit of all, not just for those with disabilities!

Transitions and Animations

Slide Transitions and Animations on slides should be simple. Not only can complex transitions and animations become distracting, they may also cause errors in assistive technology that cause slides to repeat or not advance properly. Automatic slide transition may not give a user enough time to read and process the content contained on the slide.

Audio and Video

Transcripts must be provided for all embedded audio and videos included on slides must be captioned.

Structure and Consistency

Keeping the slides within your presentation consistent will make them more accessible to everyone. Using the same style and common layouts will not only improve the flow of the presentation, but will also facilitate navigation and comprehension for individuals with cognitive disabilities or those who require the use of assistive technologies.

Font Formatting

Font Typeface and Size

Stick to simple, **sans-serif fonts** that are **at least 24 points** in size for bullets and content text. Titles should be **at least 40 pts**. Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, and Verdana are good choices, particularly for content that will be displayed on the web. They are all examples of sans-serif font, a grouping of typeface that does not have small decorative lines as part of the characters. **Times New Roman** is an example of a serif font. Notice the added decorative shapes that form the letters. These shapes (serifs) can make the text appear more crowded and less readable to individuals with certain disabilities such as dyslexia.

Flashing or Blinking Text

Content that flashes or blinks on the screen **should be avoided** as it can trigger seizures in susceptible individuals. It can also be very distracting for those with cognitive disabilities and also for those with no disability at all.

Use of Color

When formatting text in a presentation, there are a few guidelines to keep in mind with respect to the use of color. Below are the several of the most common design tips for creating accessible text and using color.

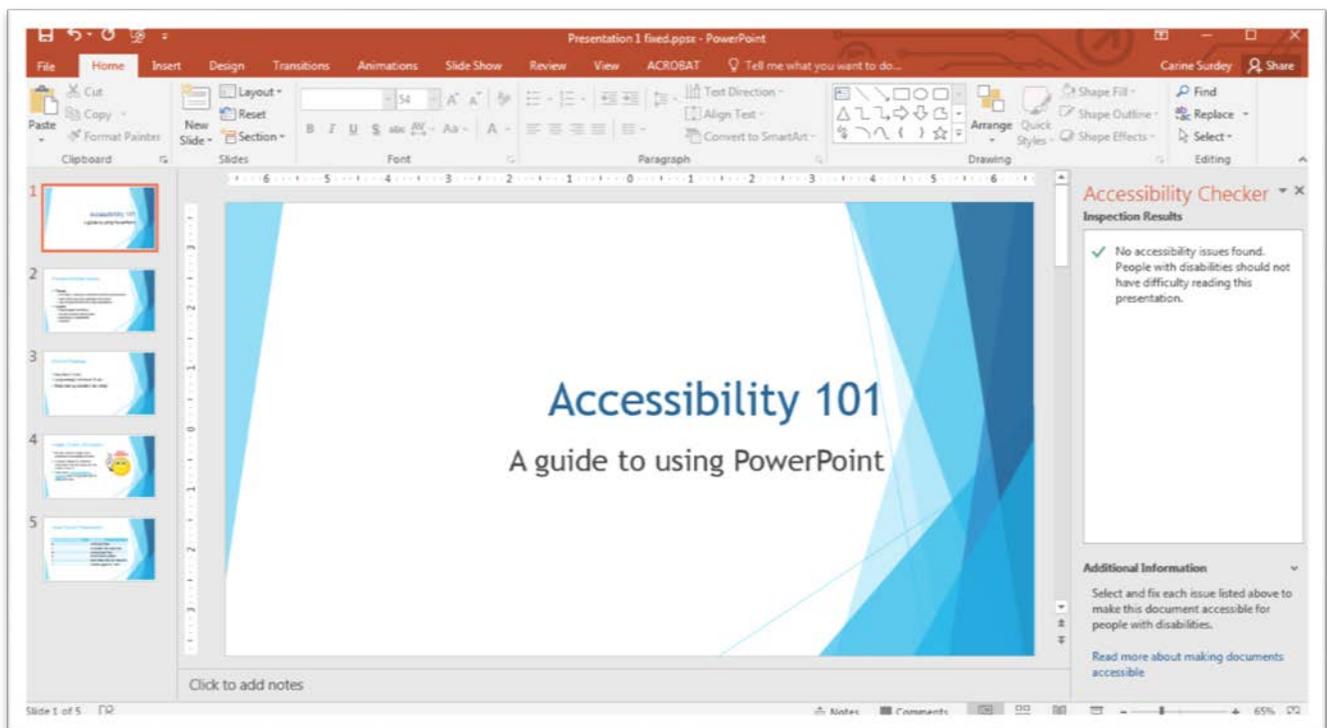
- **Never use color alone to show emphasis** – Individuals with color blindness, low-vision, or those who are simply viewing your content in black and white or in bright sunlight, would have difficulty distinguishing emphasis of information if color is its only cue. If you would like to use color for emphasis, be sure to pair it with another formatting option, such as bold, italics, or text size. In charts and graphs, color should be paired with a pattern.
- **Make sure your foreground and background have strong contrast between them** – Web Accessibility Guidelines require specific contrast ratios based on the size of the text. If you are

unsure whether your *particular* choice of colors fall within these ratios, you can visit the [WebAim color contrast checker](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/) (https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/). Also pay particular attention to text that is overlaid on a background image, as some or all of the image may not have sufficient contrast in relation to the text.

- **Avoid certain color combinations** – In addition to contrast, there are certain color combinations that should be avoided whenever possible. These include: green/red, green/brown, blue/purple, green/blue, light-green/yellow, blue/grey, green/grey, green/black. Individuals with color blindness are often unable to distinguish between these color pairs, particularly green and red.
- **Avoid using color for coding** – We’ve all seen this done, particularly in email. (“Please see my answers typed in purple...”). Formatting text this way in a document, particularly one that will be viewed on a webpage, presents a challenge to those with colorblindness or a visual impairment that relies on a screen reader. As screen readers do not allow for a way to search on text color, another form of emphasis should be used in addition to the color (such as italics).

SUMMARY

Applying a few basic guidelines will make your content more accessible to all learners. In conclusion, we have made all of the changes suggested in this document and re-ran the Microsoft PowerPoint Accessibility Checker. As you can see No accessibility issues are now found, so it is good to go!



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Please visit the [Online@SUNYBroome website](http://www.sunybroome.edu/online) (www.sunybroome.edu/online) for additional information pertaining to distance education. The site contains information for Students, Faculty and Chairs. A repository of informational/instructional documentation is included on the site as well as a listing of training opportunities and frequently asked questions.

