

Creating Accessible Digital Content and Presentations

Webinar Handout – March 2026

This handout builds on the information provided in [Creating Accessible Documents – The Basics \(Part 1\) from May 19, 2026](https://tinyurl.com/fhf3edpx), <https://tinyurl.com/fhf3edpx>.

Information Must Be Understandable

- Know your audience.
- Shorter sentences, smaller words.

Color Contrast

Everybody sees color differently, so we can't rely on our eyes to know if something has enough color contrast. Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) set has a minimum contrast ratio 4.5:1.

- [WebAIM.org](https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/), <https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/>
- [TPG Colour Contrast Analyser](https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/), <https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/>
- [Accessible Web WCAG Color Contrast Checker](https://tinyurl.com/49c8htm4), <https://tinyurl.com/49c8htm4>

Keep it Simple

For slides or presentations, consider how the audience will be viewing the content. If it is in-person, can the person at the back of the room read the content? Use a minimum 28 point font for slides. Will it be printed in black and white or color? Check your contrast in the printed document.

Navigation

Tufts University video, [How a Screen Reader Works](https://tinyurl.com/4s2tesmn), (tinyurl.com/4s2tesmn). It's crucial to have structural elements built into your content - as underlying code for people who are using assistive technology to access your content. In a document, these navigation or structural tools are called Headings and in presentations they are called Reading Order. A common mistake is to indicate a heading by making it bold. Changing the font style creates a visual structure but does not provide a navigation structure for assistive technology users.

Reading Order - PowerPoint

Review Menu > Check Accessibility icon, select drop down menu > Selection Pane

The selection pane pops up on the right-hand side and shows the structural elements on your slide. On a Mac iOS, the reading order used by a screen reader starts at the bottom and moves upward through the list.

Review the Reading Order after moving elements around on your slide ([WebAIM tip](https://tinyurl.com/2d7865nj), <https://tinyurl.com/2d7865nj>). On a Mac you can also view the Reading Order in a 3-D view of the slide elements. In this view, the reading order used by a screen reader is left to right. PowerPoint main menu: Arrange > Reorder Object.

Use Your Tools - Microsoft Word

Use the built-in tools to format your document and make sure it's accessible presented in [Creating Accessible Documents – The Basics \(Part 1\) from May 19, 2026](#) and [Work Smarter, Not Harder: Creating Documents Using Built-in Features – June 4, 2025](#), <https://mainecite.org/training/>.

Inserting Tables

Insert Menu > Table

You can select the size table you want by dragging your mouse across the grid, or use the insert table option and type in the number of rows and columns.

Table Design

Table Design menu > Check the box 'Header Row' under 'Table Style Options'.

Use the Table Layout menu to add formatting elements to change the look of the table. It is best practice to avoid merging cells in a table.

Lists

Do not use the Tab key to create a list. Utilize the built-in tools.

Home Menu > 'Paragraph' options have bullets or numbered list options.

Inserting Columns

Layout Menu > Columns -located in the Page Setup tools

A dropdown box will ask you how many columns you want to insert, usually 1,2, or 3. There is also the option 'More Columns' where you can specify the size and spacing of the columns.

Alt-Text Best Practice

Alt Text is a description of a visual element that makes the digital content accessible to people who are using assistive technology. Alt text should refer to relevant content provided by the image, rather than simply describing how the image looks.

“[Screen Reader Test, images with and without alt attribute](#)” video: <https://tinyurl.com/mry6bupu>.

A screen reader or assistive technology user needs to get the same benefit of that image or illustration, so all images need alt text or be marked as decorative.

Add Alt Text: Right-click on the image > Select View Alt-Text, and add the description, or mark as decorative.

Using Videos

If you are using videos in a presentation, make sure captions are available. Most editing platforms/software have this capability. Free platforms, such as YouTube, allow you to upload your video and create or load captions to it. There is also the option to auto-generate captions. While this can save some time, these captions should be reviewed closely and corrected as needed. There are also third-party vendors you can pay to caption content.

If the video does not belong to you, contact the creator to ask for a captioned version or request they caption the content. If this request is not fulfilled, you can supply a transcript of the video. This should be used only as a last resort as it is not very functional.

Audio Description

Audio descriptions describe important visuals and actions someone with a vision impairment may miss. The content is an additional audio track on a video. Audio descriptions are provided between the video's dialogue. While required, this is not heavily enforced. There are limited third-party vendors who can supply this service. An alternate approach to using a separate audio description track, would be to verbalize your actions and important visual details as you create and record video content.

Audio description examples:

- [Universal Studios example](https://tinyurl.com/56eznz3s), <https://tinyurl.com/56eznz3s>
- [Lion King audio description](https://tinyurl.com/ms79yd8a), <https://tinyurl.com/ms79yd8a>

Accessibility Checker

In PowerPoint: Review Menu > Check Accessibility

The checker will produce a menu of accessibility issues under the headers: Color Contrast, Media and illustrations, Tables, Document Structure, and Document Access. Under each heading there will be specific accessibility items to check or verify.

Be advised: no accessibility checker is perfect, and you should always review your content in addition to using one.

Resources

Accessibility

[W3.org](http://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/), www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/

[Webaim.org](https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/), <https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/>

Microsoft:

[Accessibility Training Essentials](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility) www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility

[Accessibility Fundamentals](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/fundamentals), www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/fundamentals

[Microsoft training courses](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/training) www.microsoft.com/en-us/training

[Microsoft short video tutorials](https://tinyurl.com/ypjvey2c), <https://tinyurl.com/ypjvey2c>

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