Making PowerPoint Presentations Accessible

Basic Formatting

Layout of content

- Use built-in slide layouts to format and organize reading order.
- Contain less than seven points per slide.

Language used

- Use language appropriate to your target audience.
- If using abbreviations or acronyms, make sure to provide the fully expanded definition the first time you use them in a document.

Font type

- Stick to using standard fonts that are available on the end user's device.
- Use at least **30-point font size** or above.
- Slides with only one, or only a few font faces are usually easier to read. Using too many font faces can create a confusing visual layout which is bad for all users but may be especially difficult for users with reading disorders, learning disabilities, or attention deficit disorders.
- When in doubt, use **Verdana**. It has a simple, straightforward design, and the characters are not easily confused. For example, the upper-case "I" and the lower-case "L" have unique shapes, unlike Arial, in which the two characters may be easily confused

Text color

- Some users cannot perceive certain colors (green and red). Therefore, do not rely on color alone to bring out text in a document.
- Underline or bold text that you wish to emphasize.

Contrast

- Use a high contrast between text and background colors.
- Use dark text on light backgrounds and light text on dark backgrounds.

Standard Slide Layouts

PowerPoint has many **pre-defined slide layouts** from which to choose. These layouts contain placeholders for things like titles, subtitles, text boxes, tables, and other types of media. Slide layouts help standardize formatting, making a **clean and consistent presentation**. Using them also helps ensure that content is properly added to the presentation outline.

Using standard slide layouts helps increase the likelihood that your slide will be read by screen-reading software (like JAWS) in the order you intended.

Think of standard slide layouts like PowerPoint's version of Styles in Word. They serve as a way to define your content and make your formatting as consistent as possible across devices and other software programs.

Reviewing Reading Order

Reading order is the order in which screen-reading software like JAWS will voice the content on your slide.

Why should we review reading order?

If you use a Standard Slide Layout, you're probably safe in assuming the reading order of your content will follow a logical progression.

However, if you decide to use a blank slide, or if you **delete or rearrange placeholders on a Standard Slide Layout**, JAWS may read your content in a jumbled-up way. Imagine how confusing this might be for a student who is depending on JAWS to transmit the information you worked so hard to create.

Play it safe and check the reading order!

Images

Besides text, many PowerPoint presentations also contain images. The overall purpose of including images in your presentation should be to help the audience comprehend the purpose and/or meaning of the content. Some of the most common images used within presentations are:

- Descriptive or informative images
- Decorative images such as icons or logos
- Charts/graphs to represent information from a data table

Why are accessible images necessary?

Screen-reading software can only read text, not images or non-text graphics. Therefore, a reader who cannot see your presentation will only learn that there is an image there, not what the image is or what function it serves in the presentation.

Adding an alternative text description, also known as alt text, to the image alerts the screen-reading software that there is text to read aloud. When the screen reader passes over the visual element, it will read the alt text.

Alt text also makes web pages more accessible to anyone who is browsing on a weak internet connection or a small portable device like a smart phone. The alt text labels become visible while images are loading.

Alt text should not repeat what is already stated in captions or other presentation text. Think of it as a secret code that only screen reader users will be aware of. It will not appear to the naked eye, but rather is part of the presentation's code.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are elements within a document that link to another section in the document or to another source, such as a webpage, another document, a presentation, spreadsheet, etc. They are often preceded by "www" (e.g. www.solano.edu).

Why are accessible hyperlinks necessary?

Just think of it from the perspective of someone listening to your document, instead of reading it. Ambiguous labels like "Click here" can confuse the listener as it is not clear where the link will take them once they click. Plus, JAWS may not read the link in order that the author intended, causing further confusion.

Accessible hyperlinks have a text description that will become the active link to the website or other document. Only listing the URL to a website (http://www.solano.edu) as a link is not sufficient. Instead, a descriptive text label (i.e. Solano Community College website) is required.

It's fine to list a URL to a website at the side of a descriptive text label for a link. For example, "Disability Services Program at Solano Community College website (www.solano.edu/dsp/)."

Tables

Tables can be great ways to organize information so it is clearer and more easily digestible. The reader's eyes can scan across and down rows and columns quickly, instead of reading a paragraph. Simple tables (tables with

one row of headings or one column of headings or both) are usually the easiest for screen reading software (like JAWS) to decipher.

Why are accessible tables necessary?

Assistive technology, such as screen readers (JAWS), read tables in a **linear** form. For example, the screen reader begins reading from the first row of the table and then progresses left to right across the columns. When the row ends, it continues to the start of the second row, and so forth.

Also, screen readers always assume that the first row and column of a table contain heading information. Use Styles to designate which row(s) and column(s) are your headers. For help with using Styles, visit Module 2, Lesson 2: Styles.

If the table continues on to another page, make sure to turn on the "Repeat Header Rows" function. See below for instructions on how to do this.

Charts and Graphs

Just like with images, if your presentation includes charts or graphs you must add alternate text (alt text) to explain their meaning or provide a link to a longer description.

Color Contrast

Perceiving color contrast refers to the ability to distinguish between two colors which appear next to each other. Colors which appear directly opposite each other on the color wheel have the highest degree of contrast. For example, purple has a high contrast with yellow, and blue has a high contrast with orange (see the color wheel below). Conversely, colors which appear next to or near each other on the color wheel have a lower degree of contrast.

Why is it necessary to check color contrast?

Some students with visual impairments or color deficiencies may have a harder time distinguishing between colors that have a lower degree of contrast. Federal regulations mandate that sufficient color contrast be employed in online content, with a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text (large text being defined as 14 point **and** bold or larger, or 18 point or larger).

Use the accessibility checker

PowerPoint has an accessibility checker built in that can be used to verify that the presentation is accessible to people with disabilities. If an issue is found, PowerPoint will tell the user how to fix it, typically in less than a minute.

Information above was adapted from Diablo Valley College's Online Accessibility page at https://www.dvc.edu/faculty-staff/online-accessibility/index.html