

Tips for Making PowerPoint More Accessible to All

PowerPoint presentations tend to be highly visual, and people who are blind or have low vision can understand them more easily if you create your slides with accessibility in mind. Some tips to start:

A) Visual accessibility

- Simple fonts at least 18 points or higher
- High contrast (light/dark) between text and background.
- Never use color alone to convey information (Accessibility Checker will not catch this).
- When choosing a template, search for “accessible”.

B) Alternative text

- Screen readers speak the alt text to describe images, charts, etc., that users can't see.
- Non-text slide objects need text descriptions. A picture of text is not text.
- Do not add words like “image of” or “photo of” before your description
- Alt text for a chart or infographic needs to describe the information conveyed, or high-level takeaway, not the type of chart.
- If an object conveys no information, mark it **Decorative** so the screen reader ignores it.
- If an object has auto-generated alt text, verify and edit it.

C) Slide and section titles

- Every slide needs a unique title
- Section header titles should be meaningful.
- You can hide a title, by using color, size and placement to make it invisible.
- Add invisible numbers to title if you really need visible slide titles to repeat

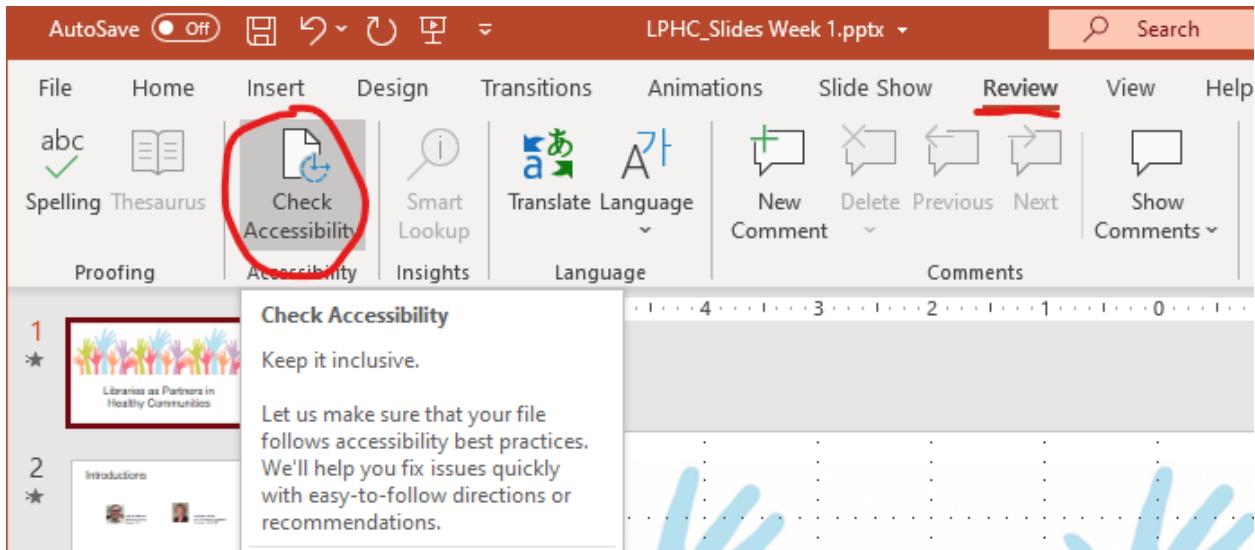
D) Reading order

- Screen readers read the objects in a slide in the order they were added to the slide (or the layout dictates).
- Check that the reading order makes sense for the content.
- Slide title must be in a title field
- Uncheck object in reading order to mark decorative and ignored by screen reader (Microsoft 356 or later)
- It can help to use the provided slide layouts as they are pre-ordered.
- If creating custom layouts, will almost always need to manually correct order.
- Changing reading order also changes visual layering – check the slide afterwards.

Accessibility Checker

MS Office applications have an Accessibility Checker that makes improving accessibility much quicker and easier. The rules and options are different for the different applications.

To run the **accessibility checker**, select the Review menu and click on **Check Accessibility**.



PowerPoint will generate a report from its inspection like this:

Accessibility

Inspection Results

Errors

- > Missing alternative text (13)
- > Missing slide title (22)

Warnings

- > Hard-to-read text contrast (3)
- > Check reading order (7)

Tips

- > Duplicate slide title (1)

Intelligent Services

- > Suggested alternative text (3)

Opens to:

Accessibility

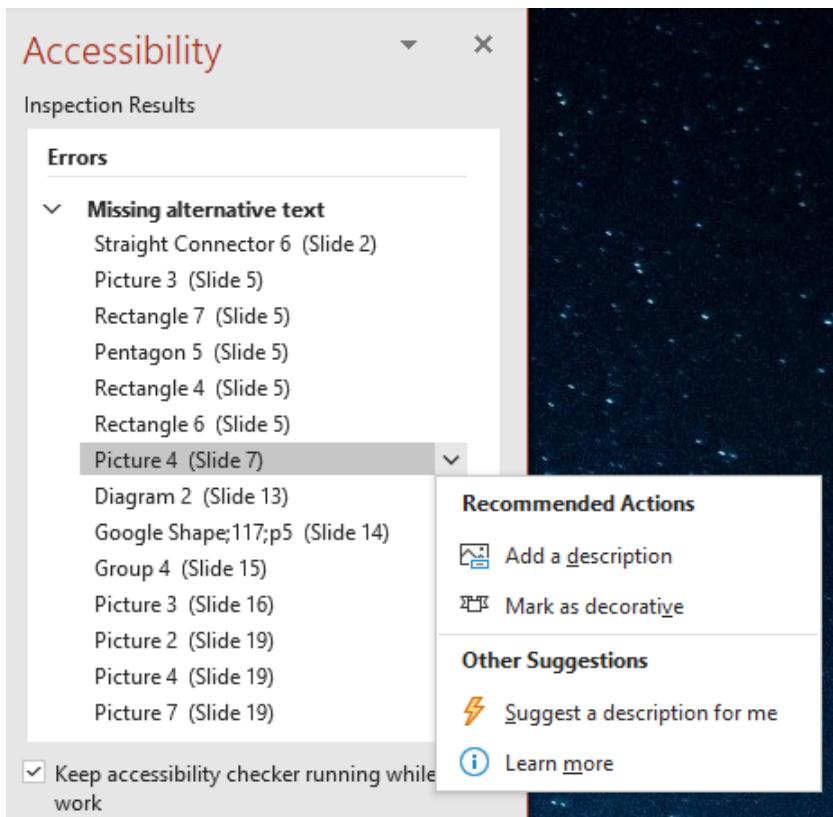
Inspection Results

Errors

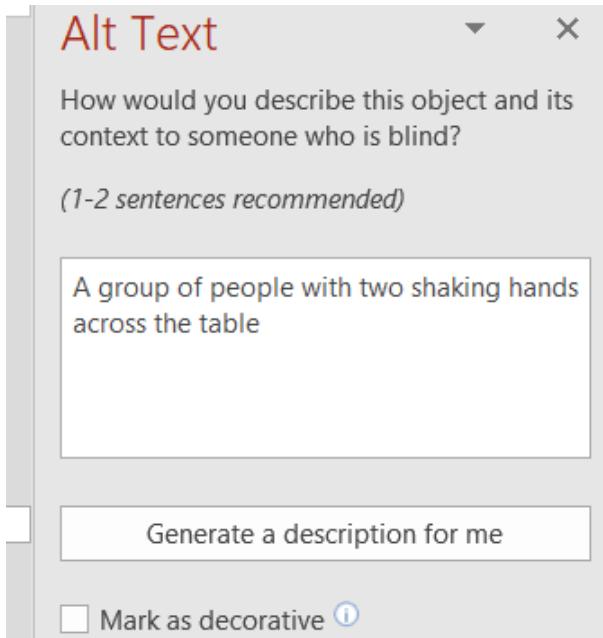
- > Missing alternative text
 - Straight Connector 6 (Slide 2)
 - Picture 3 (Slide 5)
 - Rectangle 7 (Slide 5)
 - Pentagon 5 (Slide 5)
 - Rectangle 4 (Slide 5)
 - Rectangle 6 (Slide 5)
 - Picture 4 (Slide 7)
 - Diagram 2 (Slide 13)
 - Google Shape;117;p5 (Slide 14)
 - Group 4 (Slide 15)
 - Picture 3 (Slide 16)
 - Picture 2 (Slide 19)
 - Picture 4 (Slide 19)
 - Picture 7 (Slide 19)

Alternative Text

To add alt text, select the object/chart and choose Add a description. .



You will see a screen like this to enter or autogenerate a description.

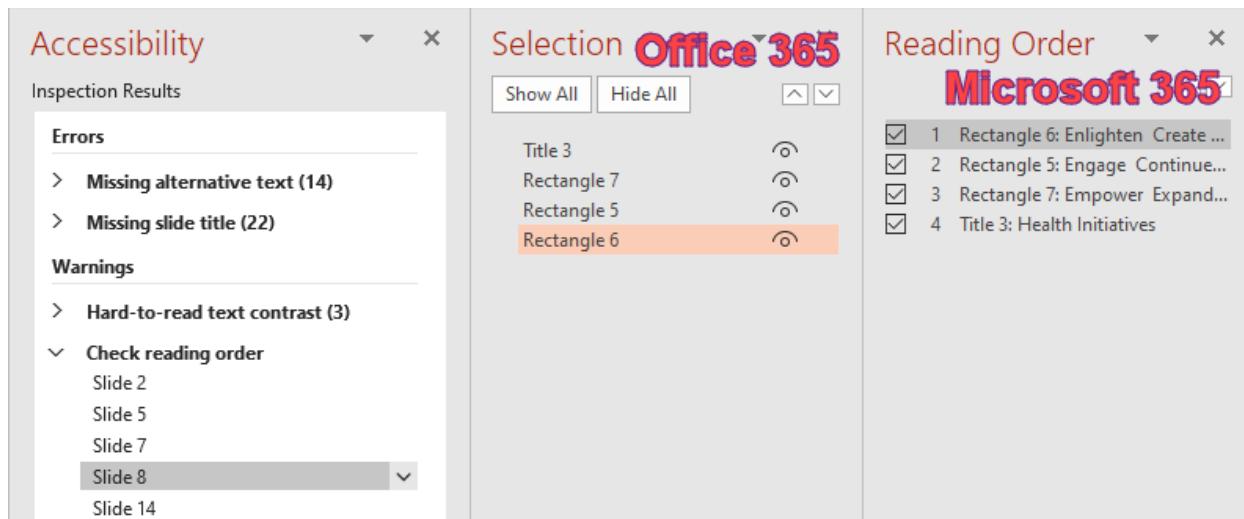


Reading Order

For Office versions up through Office 365, screen reader reading order is managed through the Selection panel. In the latest version called Microsoft 365, a dedicated Reading Order has been added, which works better for this purpose.

Office 365 using Selection Pane

- Reading order goes bottom to top
- Order also controls visual layering (first = on top)
- Hiding an object makes it invisible visually and to screen readers



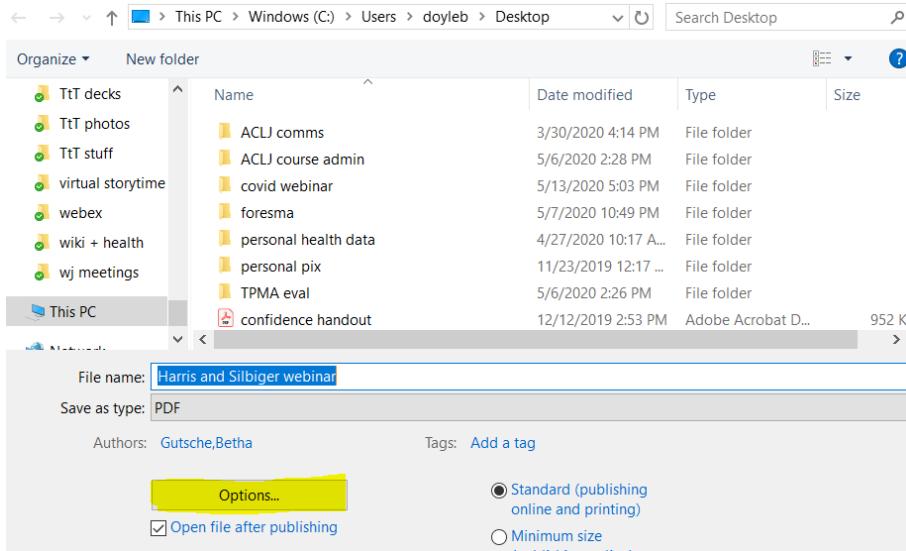
Microsoft 365 using Reading Order Pane

- Number order = reading order
- Number order controls visual layers (first = on bottom)
- Unchecking an object hides it from screen reader only

Saving as an Accessible PDF

Adding accessibility tags when saving as PDF makes it easier for screen readers and other assistive technologies to read and navigate a document, with Tables of Contents, hyperlinks, bookmarks, alt text, and so on. Accessibility tags also make it possible to read the information on different devices, such as large type displays and mobile phones.

- Click **File > Save As** and choose where you want the file to be saved.
- In the **Save As** dialog box, choose **PDF** in the **Save as type** list.
- Click **Options**



Check **Document structure tags for accessibility**, and then click **OK**.

