

The Basics of Accessible PowerPoint Presentations



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Introduction

This tutorial is for subscription versions of Office 365, not stand-alone versions. Some of the new accessibility features are not available in the older stand-alone versions.

I've left white space at the bottom of some of the pages in case you want to print this tutorial and make notes.

An accessible PowerPoint presentation includes:

- Correct reading order of placeholders/objects on slides.
- Decorative images in background on Slide Master.
- Text or Content Placeholders NOT text boxes
- Tables are inserted not drawn.
 - Use Insert Ribbon to define the table.
- Use of Themes so that if someone can't use the colours you've chosen they can use their own or a different Theme.
- Create a template of your own!
- Good colour contrast and simple design.

A common misconception is in the belief that PowerPoint is a word processor. Slides are for brief speaker prompts not essays. Think of them as tools that replace the old index cards you used to use when speaking to remind yourself of the order of speaking points. Slides are the digital version of speaker "reminders."

One of the new trends in putting presentations together is to only put one point on a slide. Having sat through a few of these presentations, it is dizzying, and one can't focus on the points on a slide because the point flies past you once the presenter has identified it.

There has to be a balance between putting too much information on a slide and putting too little.

I tend to put text-based information on slides when I know that someone will only have access to the tagged PDF of the presentation once I've given it. I often will create a handout based on what I'll be talking about using text instead of just images. If I'm doing a webinar and know that both a video/audio track and the slides will travel together, I will often only use images on slides or a combination of images and text. However, most of my presentations are on how to create accessible digital content. My slides contain images of a user interface, dialogs, processes and finished products. You will need to examine your own presentations to determine the type of content you put on slides.

Don't be afraid to use more slides. For example, I remediated a presentation of a study with 12 key findings. All 12 were put on a single slide along with brief descriptions of each finding. The print was tiny, and the presenter stayed on that one slide for most of the presentation. A better way of presenting the information would have been to either use a Section break slide layout called "Key Findings" and put a single finding and its description

on a single slide; or to create Section Breaks for each finding and then use 2 or 3 slides to describe and/or illustrate the finding. The findings would mean more to the audience, the slides would change, thus holding the interest of the audience and the finding would have been clearer to audience members.

On the other hand, there is a new feature in Word on the Web that lets you export a Word document to PowerPoint. Unfortunately there are two problems with this, one is practical and the other is a huge accessibility barrier. The practical problem is that if you have a 150 page document, for example, all that content is going to be put on slides. This is a massive number of slides! The accessibility barrier is that inaccessible designs from PowerPoint Designer are used and most of the content is put into SmartArt graphics.^{ba}

As with Word documents, part of accessible document design is the word “design” and we need to think about the content we will be presenting before we start flinging content on a slide.

A common misconception is in thinking that all of the slide designs and templates available in PowerPoint or on the Microsoft [PowerPoint Templates and Themes](https://templates.office.com/en-us/Themes)¹ web page are inherently accessible. They are not.

As a document author, you still have to know about accessible document design so that you can spot these violations of best practices.

Turning off the PowerPoint Start Screen

If you want to turn off the Start Screen, which shows each time you open PowerPoint 2016, press Alt + F, T for File/Backstage area, Word Options.

In the General category, press Alt + H to uncheck the check box to Show the Start Screen. This is a toggle that will move you to that check box and either check or uncheck it. This option is checked by default.

¹ Microsoft PowerPoint Themes and Templates page: <https://templates.office.com/en-us/Themes>

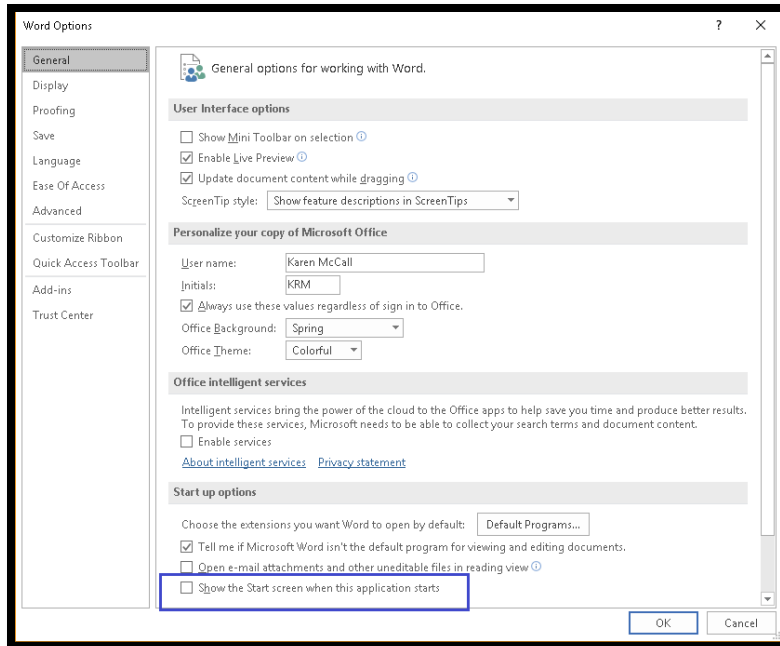


Figure 1 PowerPoint Options dialog, General category, turn off Start Screen.

Slide Sizing

With PowerPoint 2013 Microsoft introduced a new “widescreen” slide size. This is to accommodate the larger, wider monitors.



Figure 2 Two slide widths, Standard (left) and Widescreen (right).

If you have an older presentation and want to bring it into the widescreen size, you can do this. You can also take the widescreen size and make it smaller.

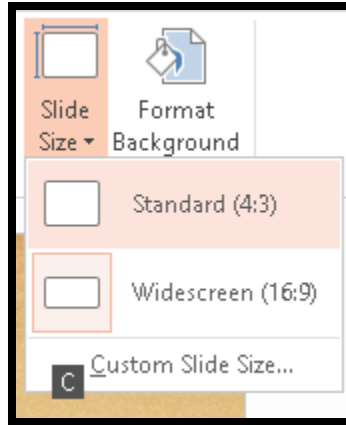


Figure 3 Design Ribbon, Size sub-menu.

Press Alt + G, S for the Design Ribbon, Size.

The sub-menu will open, and your choices are Standard, which is the old size, or Widescreen, which is the new size.

If you are using a Widescreen size and decide you want to change it to a Standard size, you will be asked how you want to implement the sizing.

A dialog opens, and your choices are Maximize which will maximize the slide area for that sizing; or, Ensure Fit, which will adjust the sizing to ensure a good fit for content. I would choose that one!

When the dialog opens focus is on the buttons for either Maximize Fit or Ensure Fit. You can press Alt + M to choose Maximize Fit or Alt + E to choose Ensure Fit.

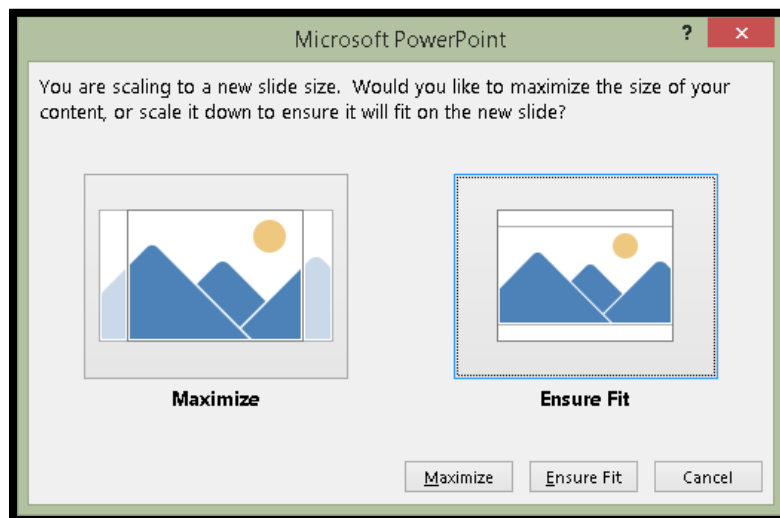


Figure 4 Adjust Standard size dialog.

If you are using the mouse, you may have to click OK to complete the process. If you are using the keyboard you don't. Your instructions are carried out immediately.



Figure 5 Presentation on left changed to Widescreen, presentation on right changed to Standard.

Once you change the slide size, you will have to make some adjustments in the placeholders to fit the new size. You may also need to create another slide if you are downsizing from a widescreen to the old slide size.in

Decisions that Affect What goes on a Slide

There are some decisions that you will need to make before you begin adding content to a slide or presentation. For example, if you want to embed objects on slides, you will need to distribute the presentation in Normal slide layout or PPTX format in order for those of us who use adaptive technology to access them. Once you choose to distribute the presentation as a Slide show, these embedded objects are no longer accessible. Once you decide to distribute the presentations as a PDF, these embedded objects are no longer accessible. This is also true for videos or other multimedia.

If you are not sure how the presentation will be distributed, do not add interactive or embedded objects to slides.

Creating a Presentation in Word

It is easy to create your presentation in Word and then send the content to PowerPoint. This is helpful for those of us who spend 1 hour on content and 4 hours on the “bling” or design. It is also a great tool for those of us with visual, learning or cognitive disabilities because it helps us focus on the outline of the content.

This tool is not available in the Mac version of Office.

In Word for Windows we will need to put the “Send to PowerPoint” item on the QAT or Quick Access Toolbar first. Follow the instructions for putting the ASP or Apply Styles Pane on the QAT or Quick Access Toolbar. The “Send to PowerPoint” item can be found in the “Commands not on the Ribbons” list.

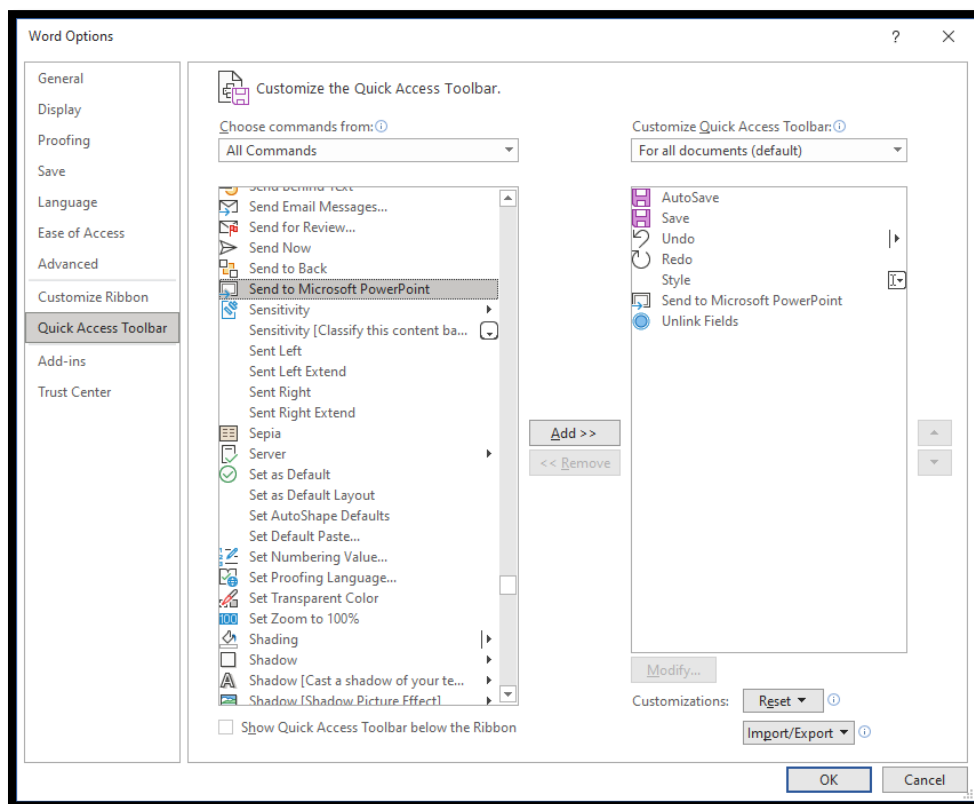


Figure 6 Customize Quick Access Toolbar showing Send to Microsoft PowerPoint tool.

I've attached a template for creating your PowerPoint content in Word to send to PowerPoint to this PDF document. Look under the attachments icon in Adobe Reader or the PDF viewer you normally use.

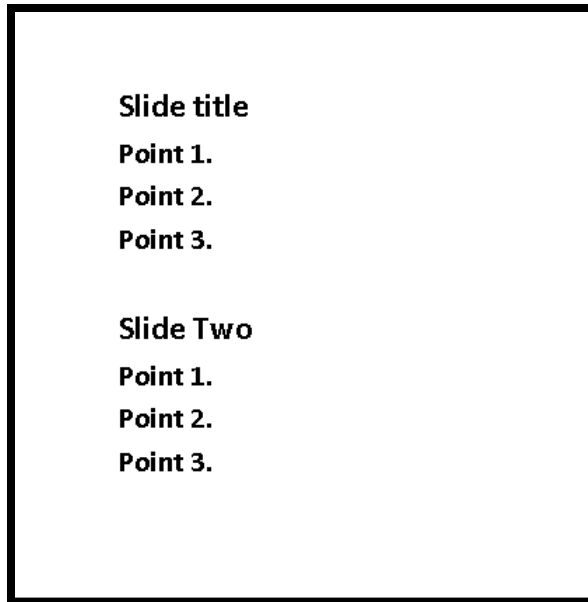


Figure 7 Sample text in a Word document for PowerPoint slides.

To create a PowerPoint presentation in Word:

1. Open a new blank document. It doesn't have to be a template; it is the underlying structure that will be converted to the slide components.
 - a. The "Send to PowerPoint" template I've included uses black text on a white background to avoid any conflicts with a slide design or Theme you might choose.
 - b. You can save it to your Custom Office Templates folder.
2. When this gets sent to PowerPoint, the text will start on the second slide. Type the text for the second slide.
 - a. We will add the title slide in PowerPoint.
3. Type the bullet points for the first slide but do not format them as bullets.
4. Select the text that you want to be the title of the second slide.
5. Press Ctrl + Alt + the number 1 to make it a heading level 1.
 - a. You can click on the Heading 1 Style in the Quick Styles Gallery on the Home Ribbon.
6. Select any bulleted items on "the slide" and make them heading level 2.
 - a. You can press Ctrl + Alt + 2 to apply a Heading 2 or click on Heading 2 in the Styles Gallery on the Home Ribbon
7. Repeat this process for each slide of the presentation: slide titles are heading level 1 while bullets are heading level 2.
8. Save your document as something meaningful to your presentation.
9. Activate the "Send to PowerPoint" item placed on the Quick Access Toolbar.

When you do this, the slide presentation is created. PowerPoint will open, the slides will be constructed, and you are ready to add images and the title slide.

This lets you work on the content of your presentation without being distracted by visual design and bling.

Finishing the Presentation in PowerPoint

Once the slide content has been sent to PowerPoint, switch to slide sorter view in PowerPoint by pressing Alt + W, letter I for View Ribbon, Slide Sorter.

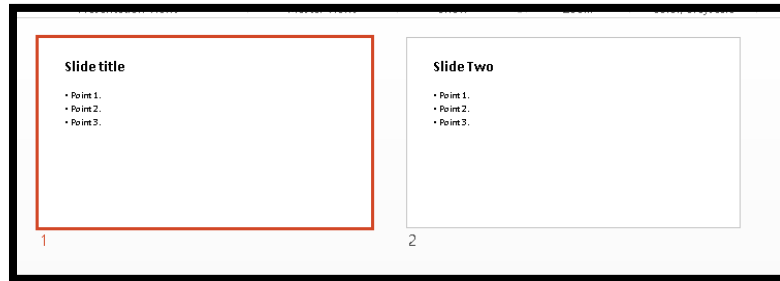


Figure 8 Slide Sorter View in PowerPoint showing text for two slides created in Word.

In Slide Sorter view use the keyboard because it is more accurate and faster to position the cursor just before the first slide.

To finish the slide presentation:

1. Press Left Arrow to take focus off of the first slide and put it just before the first slide.
2. Press Alt + H, letter I for Home Ribbon, Insert Slide Layout.
3. Locate the Title Slide and press Enter to add it to the presentation.
 - a. The reason we took focus off of the first slide and put it just before the first slide is because this is where we want the Title Slide to be added to the presentation.
 - b. If you were a bit off, you can drag the Title Slide to its position or cut and paste it there.
4. Switch to Normal view by pressing Alt + W, L for View, Normal.
5. Press Tab to move into the Title placeholder.
6. Press Enter to activate Edit mode.
7. Type in the title of the presentation.
8. Press the Escape key once to get out of Edit mode.
9. Press the Tab key to move to the Subtitle placeholder.
10. Press Enter to activate Edit mode.
11. Type in The Subtitle information.
12. Press Escape to get out of Edit mode.

13. Save your presentation and continue working on it.

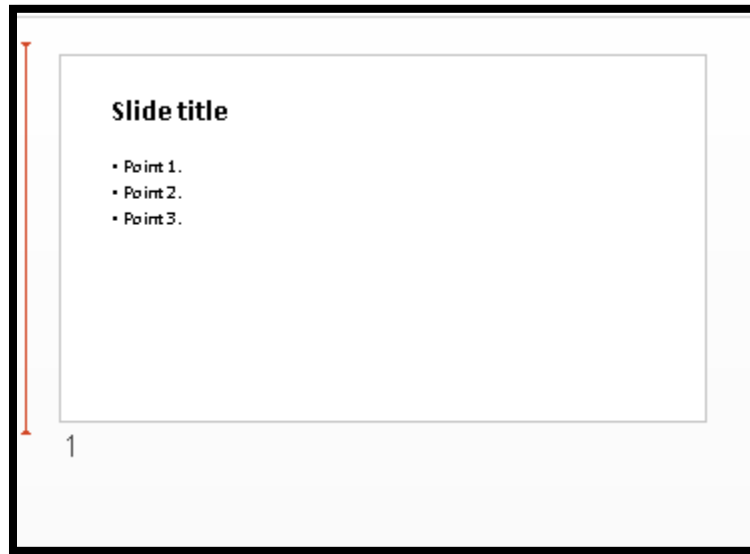


Figure 9 Focus in Slide Sorter View just before first slide.

For those who are “mouse dependent” you can click in the placeholders on a slide to enter edit mode and begin typing or editing content.

The ability to create the content of the presentation in Word and then send it to PowerPoint helps those of us who have trouble organizing our thoughts or who spend more time on the bling than on the content.



Figure 10 Slide sorter View with Title Slide added.

Adding the Design to a Presentation

The following image shows the slide presentation once a Theme was added. To add a Theme press Alt + G, H for Design Ribbon, Themes and use the arrow keys to locate the Theme you want. Press Enter on it to apply it to the current presentation.

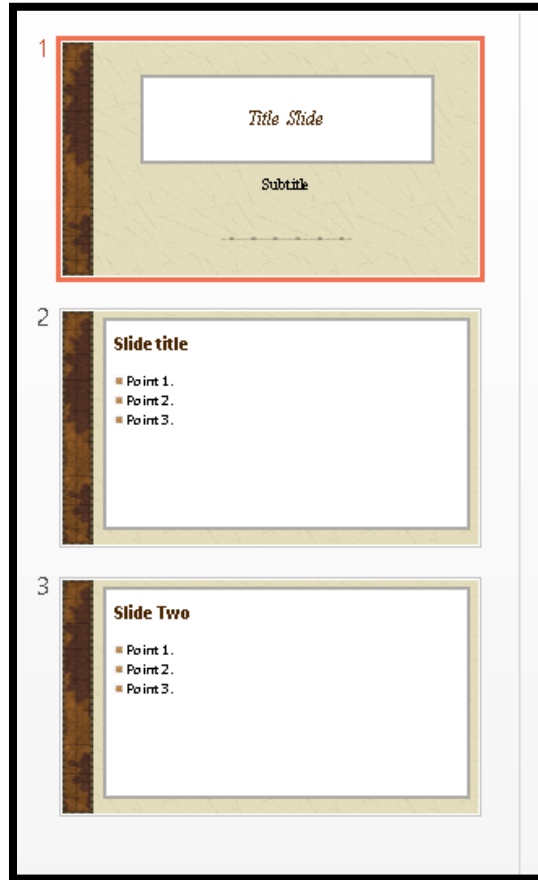


Figure 11 Finished PowerPoint presentation.

Slide Masters

It is always a good idea to create custom presentation templates and custom slide layouts for presentations. Just as we created a template in Word, we can create templates or add new slide layouts to existing templates in PowerPoint.

- To access the Slide Master press Alt + W, M.
- To return to the Normal slide view press Alt + W, L.

Slide Master view shows you all the possible slide choices for a presentation.

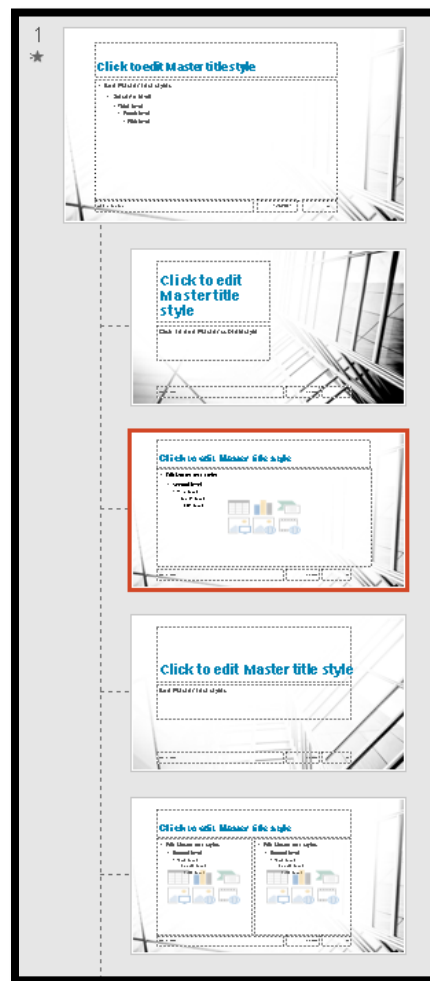


Figure 12 Slide Master view of a presentation.

Just as with Word, once you create your template, you can save it as either a template or a Theme, or you can begin the process by using the Theme you created in Word.

To use a template press Alt + F, N for the File/Backstage area, New.

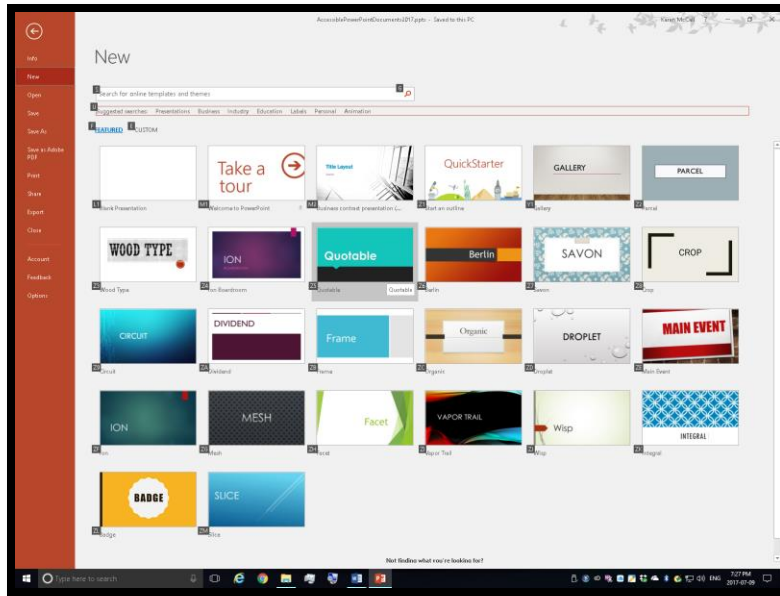


Figure 13 File/Backstage area, New, Template Gallery.

You can also start with a blank presentation by using either the blank presentation that appears when you launch PowerPoint or by pressing Ctrl + N for a new blank presentation and then pressing Alt + G, S for the Design Ribbon, Themes Gallery.

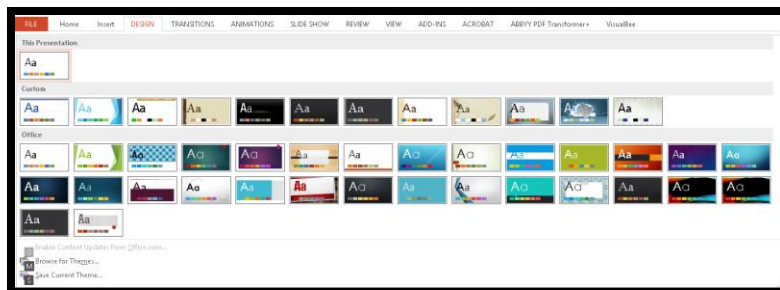


Figure 14 PowerPoint Themes from the Design Ribbon.

We then move into Slide Master view by pressing Alt + W, M for View Ribbon, Slide Master.

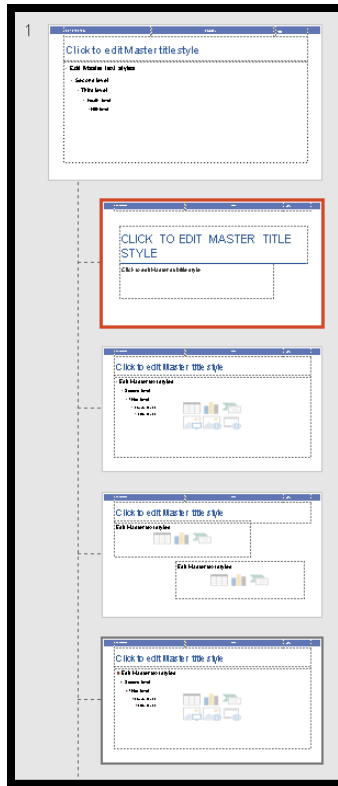


Figure 15 Slide Master view to the right of the slide layout.

Slide Master view will show the slide in focus in the current presentation and all of the existing available slides for the presentation as thumbnails to the left of the main slide. “Slide 1” is the base design for the rest of the presentation. All other slides nest under it and inherit the fonts, colours and background images from that first slide. You can change the colour for an individual slide layout by selecting it in the Slide Master view and modifying the colours.

Any additional slide layouts you create become part of the template. You can also save the Template as a Theme.

Once you have your slide template the way you want it, press F12 to open the Save As dialog and give your template a meaningful name. Press Tab to move to the Files of Type list and choose PowerPoint Template. As with Word, your custom templates will be saved in the Custom Office Templates folder on your hard drive.

If your computer doesn’t have an F12 key, press Alt + F, A, for the File/Backstage area, Save As, then:

- Number 1 to change the location/folder.
- Y, 2 to move up one level in the location.
- Y, 3 to move to the Filename edit area.

- Y,4 to move to the Files of Type list.
- Y, 6 to activate the More Options link which opens the Save As dialog.
- Y, 7 to create a New Folder in the current location/folder.



Figure 16 File/Backstage Save As area for Filename and File Type.

You can click on any of these areas to perform the task you want.

To can save your template as a Theme that can be applied to any presentation.

Press Alt + G, H, S for Design Ribbon, Themes, Save current Theme. Give your Theme a meaningful name. It will appear in the list of Themes for PowerPoint and other Office documents.

As you update the template, make sure to update the Theme.

A template will contain static slides that your organization or department would use for all presentations. For example, board members, contact information, an agenda slide and a Thank You slide.

The Theme will contain any custom slide layouts but not the static slides.

There are instructions for adding your own custom slide layouts in the attached tutorial on Accessible PowerPoint Placeholders.

Note: As a reminder, we often forget that there are other slide layouts and simply keep adding the same slide layout to our presentations. We don't have to do that!

Press Alt + H, letter I for Home Ribbon, New Slide Layout to see the Slide Layout Gallery.

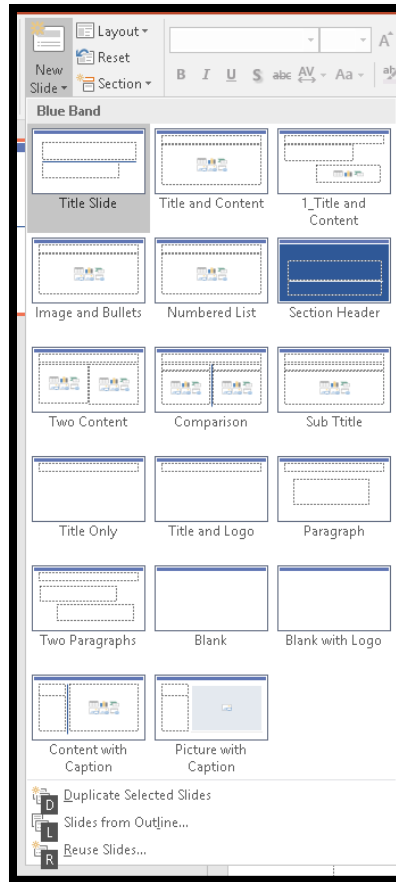


Figure 17 Slide Layout Gallery in PowerPoint Home Ribbon.

Possible Slide Layouts

The how-to booklet on Accessible PowerPoint Placeholders which is attached to this document shows how to take available slide layouts and create the layout you need. For example, some people like to have a sub-title on their slides. You can use the Comparison slide layout to create a new slide layout called Subtitle and have the content on the slide be accessible.

Part of planning your presentation is the use of Section Break slide layouts. Do you really need to have the same subtitle on EVERY slide or can you use a Section Break slide to group topics together?

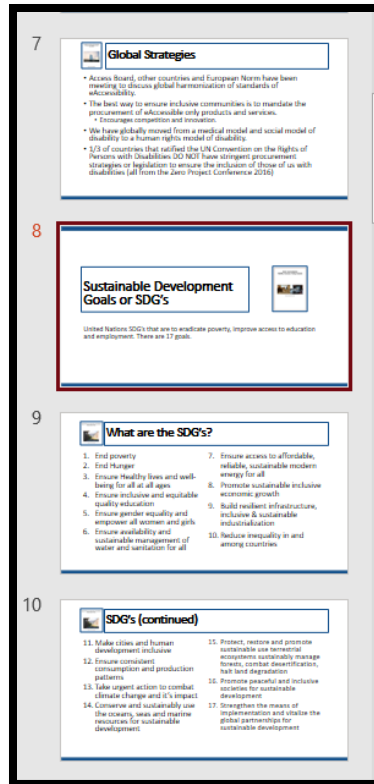


Figure 18 Section Break slide in the thumbnails view.

I mentioned creating a Subtitle slide layout. Here is what it looks like in the presentation. Keep in mind that this IS an accessible slide.

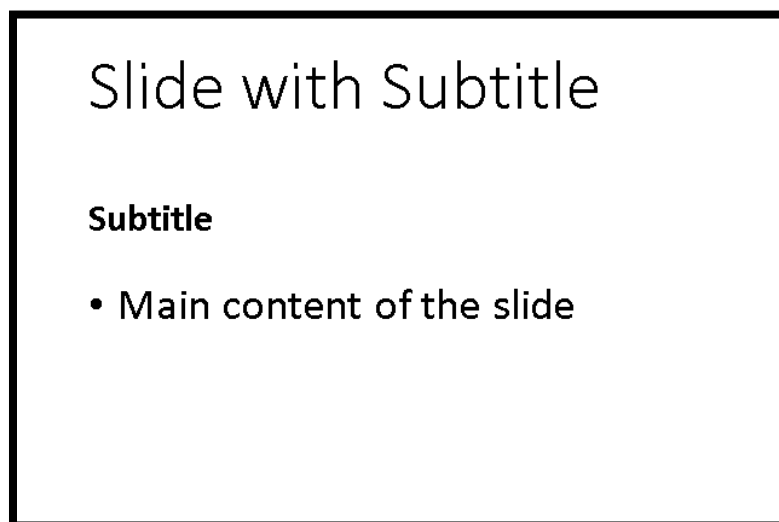


Figure 19 Subtitle slide layout.

I used the Comparison slide layout as the basis for the new slide layout. I simply removed the placeholders on the right of the slide and expanded the placeholders on the left.

If this is a slide layout you will use often in presentations, go to Slide Master (Alt + W, M),

1. select the Comparison slide and right click or press the AppKey to open the context menu.
2. Choose Duplicate.
3. A duplicate copy of the Comparison slide layout is created and it takes focus in the Slide Master view.
4. Right click or press the AppKey and choose Rename. I call this Subtitle.
5. Remove the two placeholders on the right of the slide canvas and expand the two placeholders on the left of the slide canvas to the grid lines on the right.
6. The new slide layout will be in the Slide Layout Gallery in the Home Ribbon once you save the template.

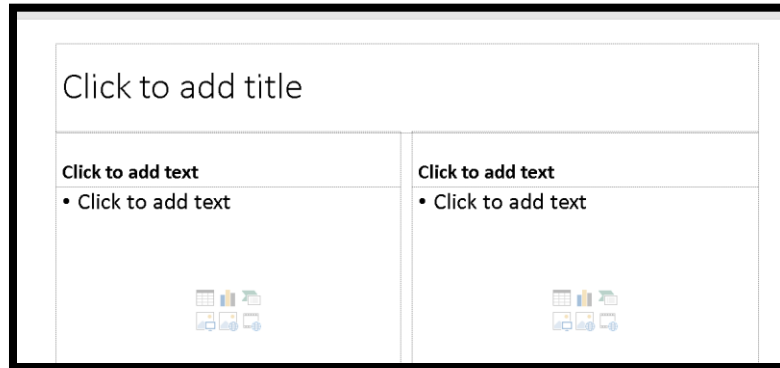


Figure 20 Comparison slide layout.

If you go into Slide Master view, you can place decorative images on slides, adjust the accessible Content Placeholders and the decorative images will be “invisible” to adaptive technology. I’ve done this for slides where I promote my books. The book cover is on the slide master, so the screen readers and Text-to-Speech tools only see the text. Someone using adaptive technology doesn’t need to hear Alt Text for something that is decorative, used as filler or used to position images with borders or special effects.

Note: Barnaby Edmund and Olivia Zane have their own fan club. I use images of them when doing training instead of looking for images. If I do search for images, I will get asked if they are OK and to use recent images of them. They seem to have their own fan club! On recent versions of tutorials (like this one) I use a photo I took in the Cave of the Mounds Wisconsin. Barnaby and Olivia are retired and enjoying retirement far too much!

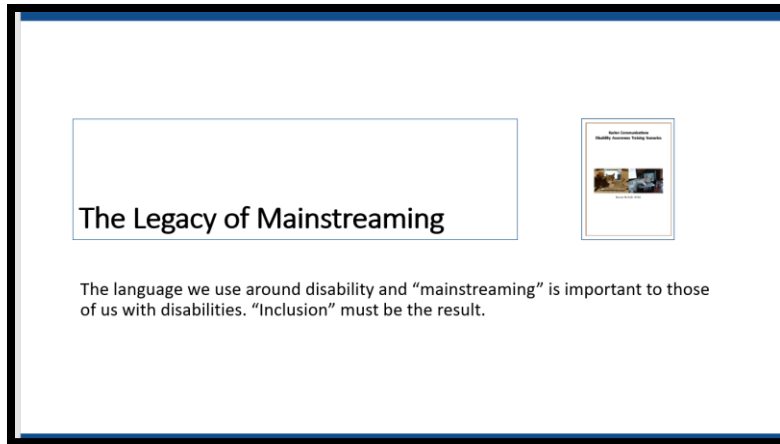


Figure 21 Contact Karen McCall slide with decorative images.

Colour Contrast and Readability

This brings us to an important accessibility and usability issue: the readability of the content on the slides.

The first step is to make sure that you don't have too much content on the slide so that those in the audience can't read it. Of equal importance is being able to read that content, ensuring that it is not unreadable due to poor colour contrast between the text and the background used on the slide. This is true whether you use a colour background or an image as a background.

In the Background options you have some fills and textures that can be applied to slides. Always test these to ensure that the content of your slides is still readable once you apply the fill or texture. Consider the following combination:

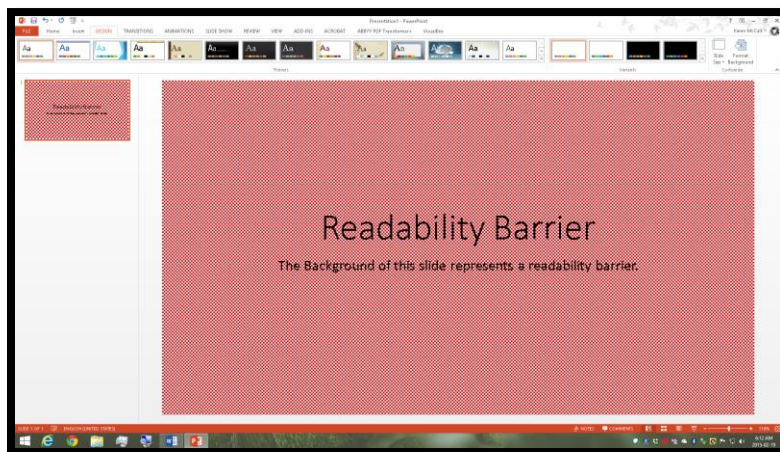


Figure 22 Slide with small red check background and black text.

Even if we chose another pattern and colour, we affect the readability of content by the choices in slide design and fonts that we use.

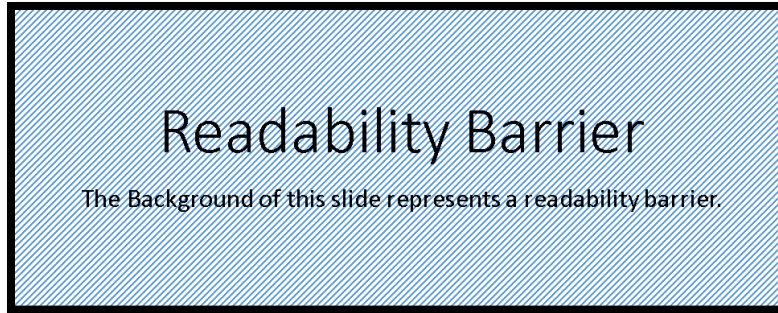


Figure 23 Light blue diagonal line background with black text.

When you go to Office online Templates, you should also be wary of the template you are choosing. Just because it is on the Templates site does not mean it is accessible.



Figure 24 Three PowerPoint Templates and Themes with readability or contrast barriers.

The preceding image shows three built-in templates and Themes with readability and/or accessibility barriers based on colour and/or fonts. They are, from left to right, “Berlin,” “Main Event” and “Basis.”

The “Berlin” template/Theme is oranges and dark browns and although the text is white, the person in the audience is overwhelmed by the amount of colour and the colour choices. When choosing a template or theme, consider how it will look “on the big screen.”

This design does not pass the Paciello Group’s [Colour Contrast Analyzer](http://www.pacielllogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/)².

² Colour Contrast Analyzer, The Paciello Group: <http://www.pacielllogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/>

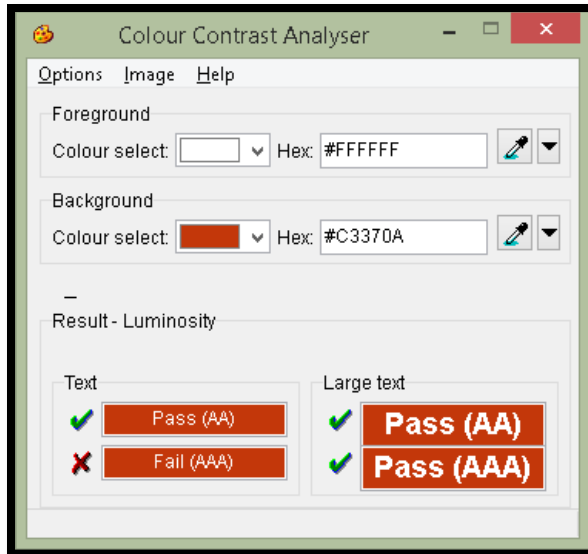


Figure 25 "Berlin" template/Theme fails the Colour Contrast Analyzer.

The "Main Event" template/Theme uses a lot of red which is a barrier to those with red/green colour blindness. Red/green colour blindness affects approximately 1/3 of the male population. The template/theme also uses all capital letters for all placeholders and a bold version of the font in the content area of all slides. It fails the Colour Contrast Analyzer on the grey text with white background.

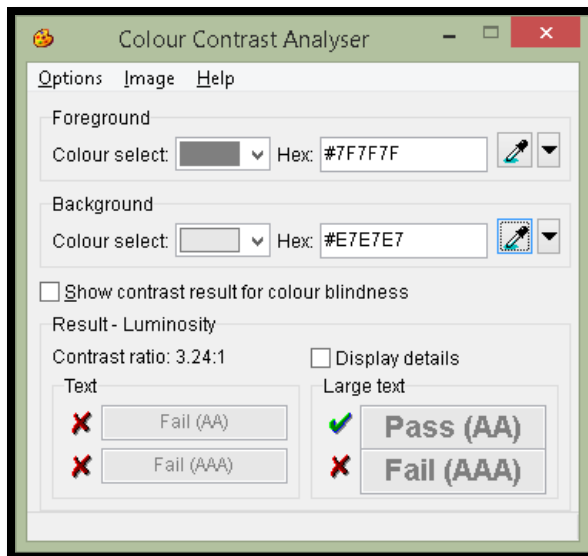


Figure 26 "Main Event" template/Theme fails Colour Contrast Analyzer.

The "Basis" template/Theme has a lime green colour with white text for the Title slide and subsequent slides have the lime green border with lime green text.

This design fails everything in the Colour Contrast Analyzer.

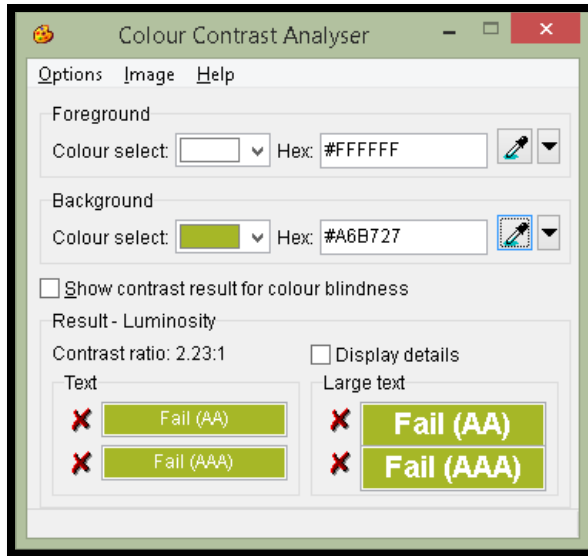


Figure 27 "Basis" template/Theme fails the Colour Contrast Analyzer.

Most of the recommendations for working with PowerPoint are to start with your own Slide Master. By creating your own Slide Master, the Slides can be synchronized with your brand. You can also choose colours and designs that compliment your presentation rather than distract from it.

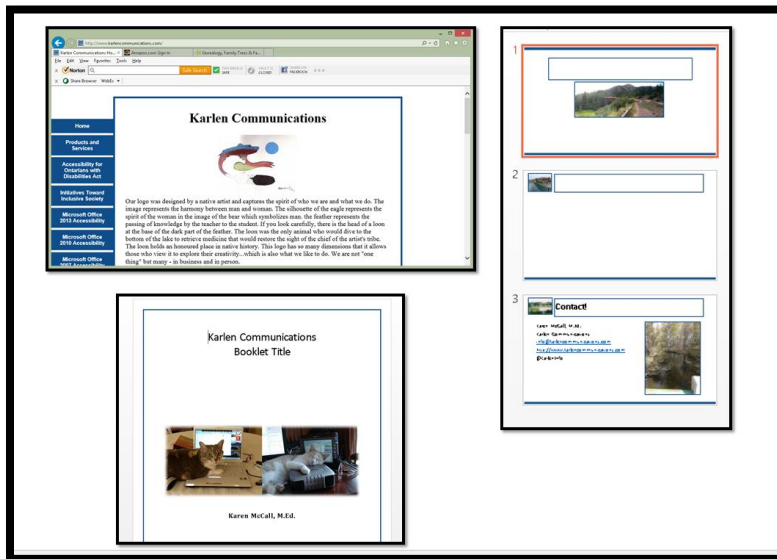


Figure 28 Karlen Communications web page, Word template and PowerPoint template.

With PowerPoint, although someone using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool might be able to avoid the eye candy, those with learning, cognitive, print or visual disabilities cannot. Colour, fonts and Reading Order (the order in which you Tab from placeholder to placeholder on a slide) are among the most significant barriers to content when working with PowerPoint.

Graphics and Colours

One of the areas of accessibility and readability to watch for is the use of graphics with some slide Themes. If you are using graphics, they should not be overwhelmed by the presentation Theme.

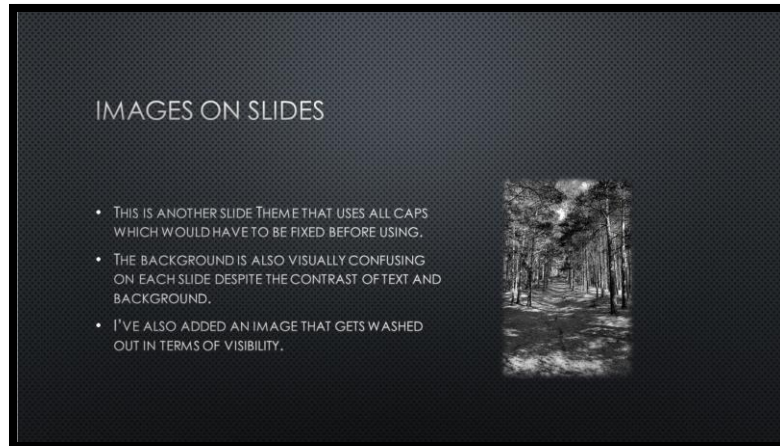


Figure 29 PowerPoint Theme with greyscale dotted background, all caps and visually busy greyscale image.

Eliminate All Caps

Some of the presentation templates used in the section on colour contrast have all caps or all capital letters on the slides. You will need to go into Slide Master View (Alt + W, M) and uncheck the check box for All Caps in the Font dialog (Ctrl + Shift + F) so that the text is readable. We know from studies that text in all capital letters is the most difficult font style/attribute to read by anyone, with or without a disability.

You may need to do this on both the slide master at the top of the Thumbnail view and individual slides. By removing all caps from the slide at the top of the Thumbnails you should remove it from all or most. Make sure to review all slides in case a Subtitle slide placeholder has all caps.

The use of all caps takes away our ability to use the shape of words in word prediction. If all letters take up the same amount of space and have no shape to them, it takes all of us longer to read that text.

If you choose a template that already has all caps, remove them. If you are designing your own template DO NOT use all caps!

Checking Link Colours

Before you get too far into formatting and adding new slide templates, check the contrast of the link colours. This is often one area that causes accessibility issues. The contrast between the link colour and the background colour or design makes the links unrecognizable.

The following image shows the presentations used to demonstrate lack of colour contrast (and use of red) with links on slides. The “Berlin” presentation the link colour makes the link text unreadable. The “Main Event” presentation which is the middle one in the picture, uses all caps and a light red link colour; and the “Basis” slide template uses a colour that also makes the link unreadable.



Figure 30 Three link samples from previous Slide Masters.

The links in all three slide templates/Themes fail the Colour Contrast Analyzer.

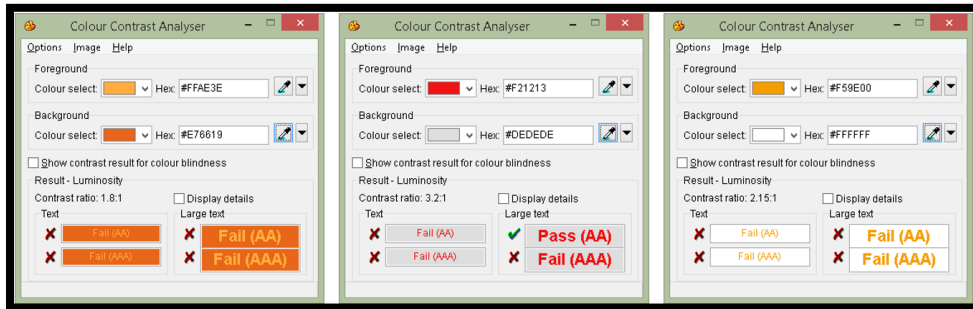


Figure 31 All 3 slide templates/Themes fail the Colour Contrast Analyzer for their links.

Even though the general accessibility and readability of content for these slide templates/Themes create barriers to the content, we are going to take one of them and demonstrate how to change the link colour and create a new Theme.

We’ll use the “Basis” template/Theme for the demonstration as there is a white background and the change will be more effective.

To change the link colour for a template or Theme:

1. In the Slide Master View press Alt + M, T, C which opens the Theme Colour Gallery.
2. Press C to choose Customize Theme Colour.
3. Open the Hyperlink colour palette and choose a good contrasting colour for links in
 - a. If you are using the keyboard, in the Custom Theme Colour dialog, press Alt + H to move to and open the colour palette for the Hyperlink colour.
4. presentations using this Theme.

- a. I generally use the blue because we have been trained to recognize it as a link in all types of documents.
5. Change the name of the colour Theme from “Custom 1” to match the name of the template.
 - a. For example, I might call this “Accessible Basis” or “Basis – Accessible” depending on how I want Themes displayed in the Theme Colour Gallery.
 - b. By keeping the original name, this set of Theme Colours will be in the list alphabetically. You would need to decide if you want all the accessible Themes you create to be grouped together in the Design Ribbon, Themes. If so, then put the word “Accessible” before the “Basis”.
6. Tab to and activate the OK button.

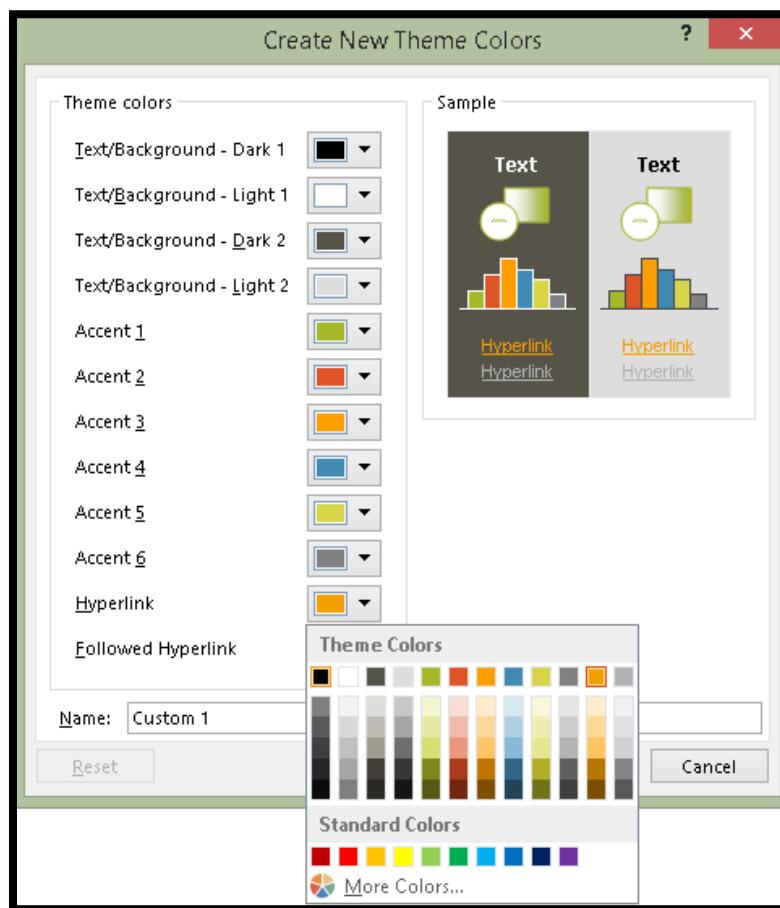


Figure 32 Create New Theme Colour dialog with Hyperlink palette open.

I’m going to choose one of the blue colours. If I wanted to use a darker colour or different colour than is shown here, I can press M for More Colours and either use the palette or RGB values to choose the colour.

I know that we depend on links being blue with underline, so I make sure that links on slides are blue with underline so that they are easy to find visually.

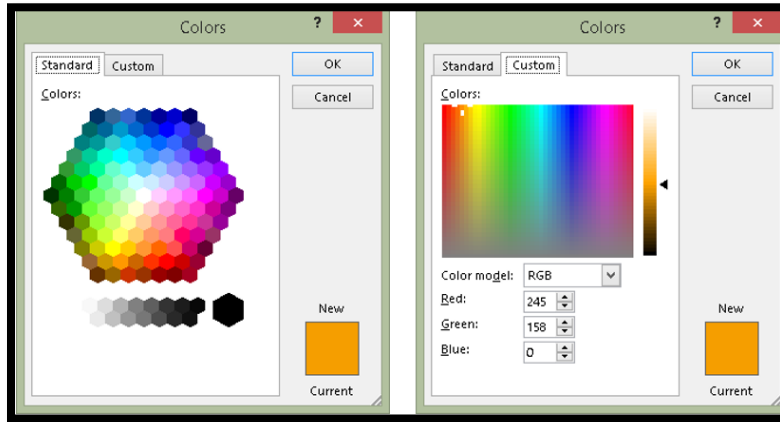


Figure 33 More Colours options for setting a Theme Colour.

Once I choose the blue colour I want and rename the Theme Colour (I called this one “Sample Hyperlink”), I can apply it to any slide presentation.

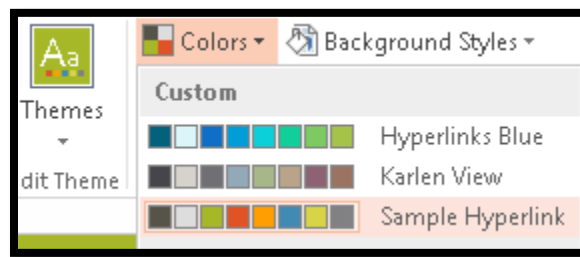


Figure 34 "Sample Hyperlink" Theme Colours in Theme Colours Gallery.

Your links for slide presentations using this Theme will now be more visible and therefore more accessible and usable. If you want to save this as a template as well, apply the Sample Hyperlink Theme Colour and then press F12, give the template a name and then choose PowerPoint Template from the Files of Type list. It will be placed in the Custom Office Templates folder on your computer.

If you don't have an F12 key, click on File, Save As, More Options or press Alt + F, A, Y, 7 to open the Save As dialog.

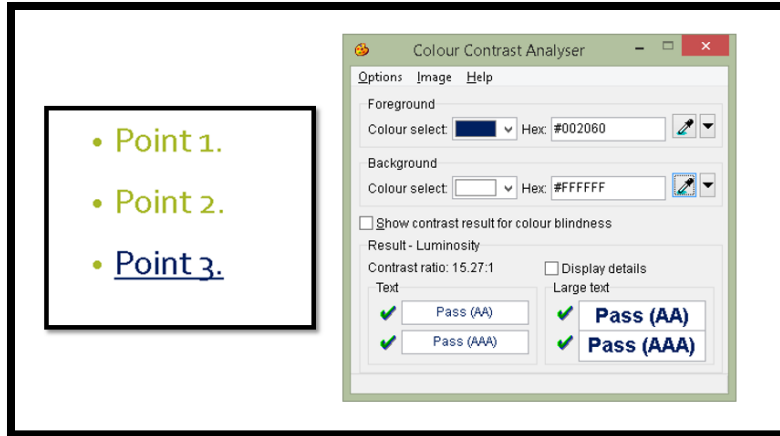


Figure 35 Colour Contrast Analyzer for blue link text.

Adding Accessible Slide Placeholders

There is an updated tutorial on how to “Add Accessible Placeholders to PowerPoint Presentations” document attached to this PDF document.

Outline View

An easy way to check the accessibility of a basic PowerPoint presentation is to look at it in the Outline instead of Thumbnail view.

The following image shows Outline View for a presentation I did on access to specialized public transport in rural communities.

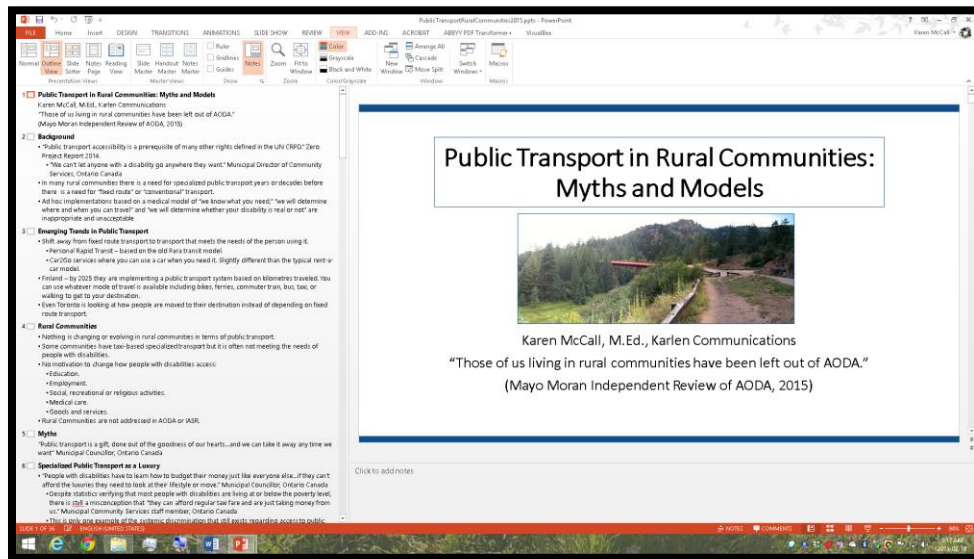


Figure 36 Slide presentation in Outline View.

All of the text shown in the Outline View will be exported to text when the presentation is saved as an RTF or Outline document.



Figure 37 Thumbnail and Outline Views of Text Box content on a slide.

While Text Box content might show up in the Thumbnail view as shown in the previous image, it does not show up in the Outline View.

Likewise, when a SmartArt graphic is added to a slide, it will show up in the Thumbnail View but not the Outline View as shown in the following image.

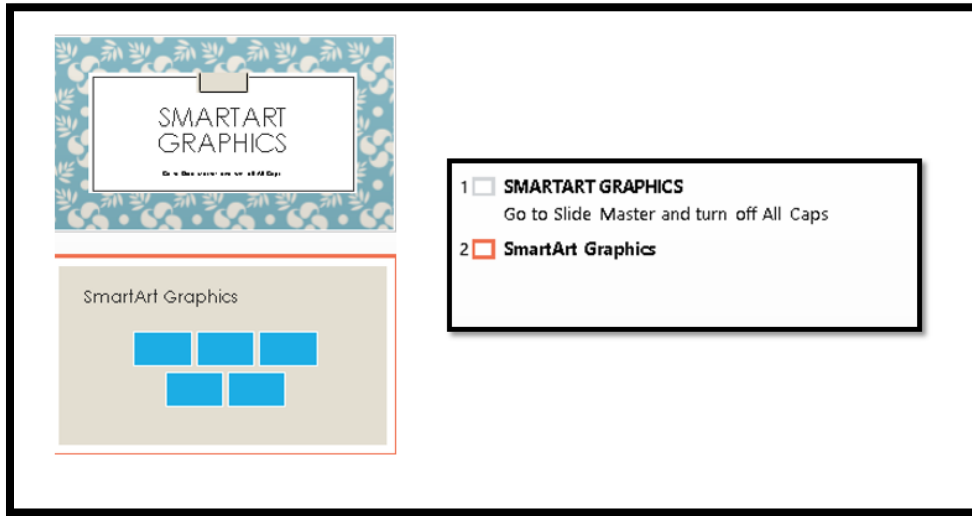


Figure 38 SmartArt Graphics in Thumbnail and Outline Views.

You can set PowerPoint to always show you the Outline View instead of the Thumbnail View which will save time in switching back and forth between views of the presentation.

1. Press Alt + F, T for File/Backstage area, and go to the advanced category by pressing A.
2. Press Alt + letter O to move to the list “Open all documents using this view.”
3. Choose “Normal, Outline, Notes and Slide,”

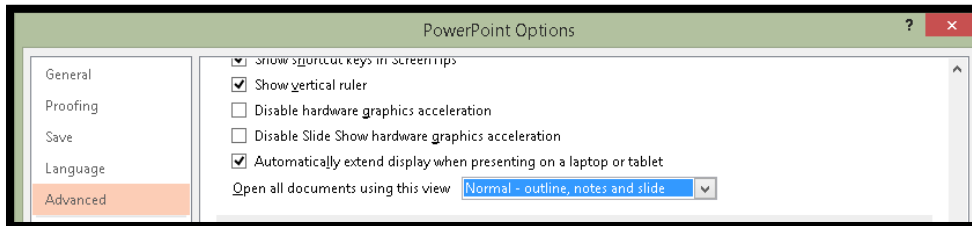


Figure 39 Set PowerPoint documents to open showing Outline View.

All presentations will now open showing the Outline View instead of the Thumbnail View. You will still be able to see the normal slide layout and your Notes Pane.

Alt Text for Objects and Using the Notes Area

Any image on a slide that is not on the slide master must have Alt Text with the exception of Title, Text or Content Placeholders.

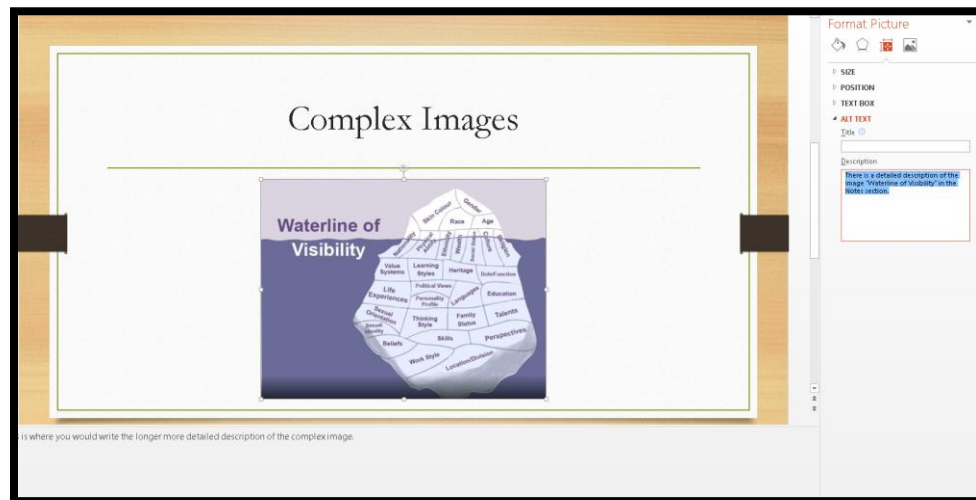


Figure 40 Complex image on slide with Format Picture Pane open and text in Notes area.

If you are not using the Notes area to provide detailed notes or a script for your presentation, you can use it to transcribe audio or video content or to describe complex images on slides. Remember that adaptive technology has buffers and the Alt text cannot be an essay or really long description of the image or object.

This technique assumes you are going to distribute the PPTX file and that you are not necessarily using the Notes Pane for your own notes.

Each slide must have a Title using the default Title Placeholder.

The image used on the preceding slide is shown below to demonstrate its complexity.

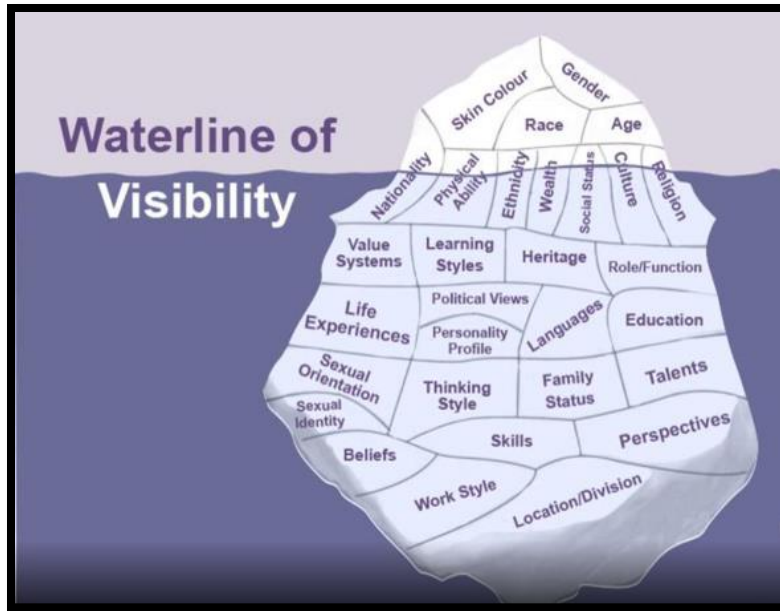


Figure 41 Waterline of Visibility showing the various components of ourselves that are visible and hidden.

The “Waterline of Visibility” is from the article “[The Diversity Iceberg](#).”³

The “Waterline of Visibility” is represented by an iceberg with a small number of characteristics above the waterline (visible) and many more beneath the waterline (invisible). It is an image that can be used to discuss cultural diversity.

If you are using the Notes area for descriptions, you will need to let people know this and to send the PPTX file not a Slide Show. This is why we think about how we are going to distribute our presentations BEFORE we start adding content and bling.

Consider: Based on the description I provided in this text would you have a good understanding of which elements are above the water line and which ones were below the water line? What additional information would you need to understand the image whether you encountered this image on a slide or in any other document?

Slide Titles

Every slide must have a slide title. Every slide title must be different. If you have content that spans 2 slides, then use the “(continued)” after the second title. For example, “Key Finding 1” and “Key Finding 1 (continued)”. I use the entire word “continued” for those with visual, learning, cognitive or other print disabilities so that they aren’t confused by an abbreviation.

³ The Diversity Iceberg, California State University blog:
<https://csuchicocdo.wordpress.com/2012/02/06/the-diversity-iceberg-3/>

If you have more than 2 slides on one topic, use numbers to identify the slides. For example, “Key Finding 1 – 1”, “Key Finding 1 – 2”, “Key Finding 1 – 3” and so forth.

This technique lets someone quickly refer to a slide if they have a question. When you convert the PowerPoint to an alternate format for Braille or large print, someone will be able to refer to both the slide number and the slide title quickly. We’ll cover alternate format later in this tutorial.

The questions arise: “What if there is an image that is the same as the slide title? What if I don’t want a slide title, I just want the image? What if my picture covers the entire slide? I “can’t have a slide title!

There are a couple of techniques you can use to maintain the accessibility or pass the Accessibility Check while retaining a specific look and feel for the slide.

Technique 1 is to make the text in the Slide Title placeholder white text on a white background. If the background of the slide is not white, simply match the colour.

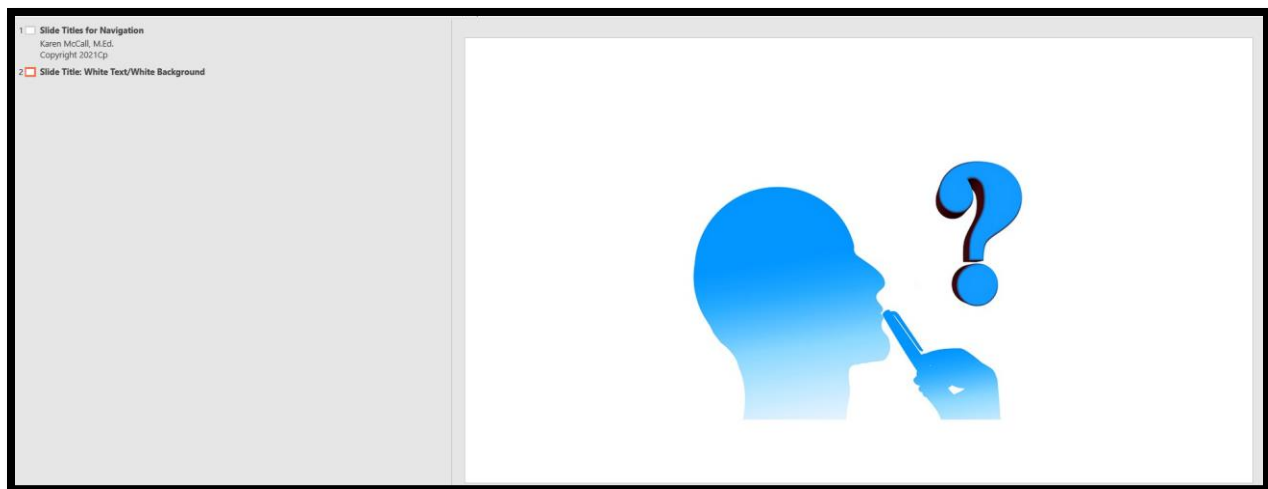


Figure 42 Slide title of white text on a white background.

While not visible when in the Thumbnail view of a presentation, if you switch to Outline view, you can see the text as illustrated in the preceding image.

Of course, the image used has to be easily interpreted by the audience. In the example shown in the illustration, the slide is for asking questions. There is a silhouette of a person’s head and a large question mark.

If there is ambiguity between the slide title and the image, then it is better to have both.

Technique 2 is for slides where an image covers the entire slide. Make the slide title match the background of the slide and size the image to cover the slide.



Figure 43 Map of the world covering a slide with correct reading order.

The preceding image shows a map of the world completely covering the slide. It is usually maps or complex diagrams where someone wants the image to cover a slide. With this technique, the slide title is shown in Outline view to the left of the slide and the Reading Pane shows the logical reading order for the slide. You always land on the slide title first!

I use the caveat again that for the live audience, it may be helpful to have the slide title visible so that the audience knows why the image is on the slide. In this example I've used a plain map of the world with no data markers on it. Consider this same map with colours identifying specific areas of population, pollution, agricultural areas or areas of economic growth. The slide title tells the audience what they are to focus on when you land on this slide in your presentation. While giving the audience a larger image to look at, until you start talking, and talking clearly, they have no idea why this slide is there.

It can also be argued that hiding the slide title creates an accessibility barrier for those NOT using adaptive technology. 😊

When a presentation is converted to tagged PDF the slide titles for the first slide and any section break slides will be <H1> and the slide titles on all slides between section breaks will be <H2>. This creates a way to navigate the presentation in a tagged PDF document.

Adding Alt Text to Images Objects and Tables on Slides

Office 365 applications have their own Alt text Pane that can be accessed using the context menu for an image.

If you are using adaptive technology, the best strategy is to close the Alt Text Pane once you've worked on an image. I find that sometimes the Panes steal focus from where I'm working in documents and presentations. If you are using the keyboard, you can try leaving the Alt Text Pane open and using F6 and Shift + F6 to move between the document and any open panes.

If you are using the mouse, you can leave the Alt text Pane open and click from image to the Alt text Pane as you move through the document.

The Alt Text Pane can be launched from the Review Ribbon by choosing Review, Check Accessibility, Alt Text. The keyboard command is Alt + R, A, number 1, L. This is standard throughout other Office 365 desktop applications.

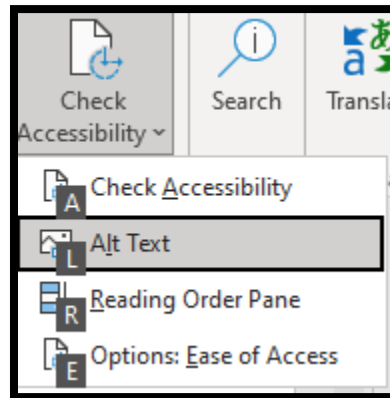


Figure 44 Review Ribbon, Check Accessibility drop down menu.

To add Alt text to images, objects and tables in PowerPoint from the context menu of an image:

1. Select the image, object or table.
2. Press the AppKey or use a right mouse click.
3. Choose Edit Alt Text.
 - a. The keyboard command is A.
4. The Alt Text Pane opens to the right of the slide. Your focus is in the edit area where you can immediately type the Alt Text.
 - a. If you have the ability to automatically generate Alt Text turned on, you will need to review it. If you don't it will show up in an Accessibility Check as needing review so you might as well do it now while the purpose of the image is fresh in your mind.
 - b. Use F6 and Shift + F6 to move between the document/slide and any open Panes if you are using the keyboard instead of a mouse.
5. There is no title description anymore. This was a confusing attribute to add and none of the adaptive technology supported it. It was an attempt to map HTML guidelines/syntax to non-HTML content.
6. Type or copy and paste the Alt text.

7. Press Ctrl + Spacebar to open the context menu for the Alt text Pane and then press C to Close the Alt text Pane (
 - a. This is also the keyboard command to close any open Pane.)
 - b. If you are using the mouse, you will not need to close the Alt Text Pane.

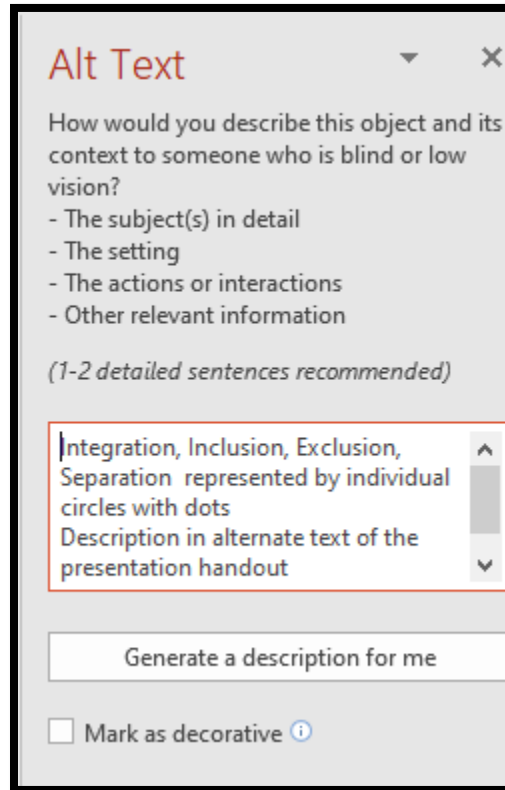


Figure 45 Alt text Pane showing the Alt Text for an image.

The Alt Text shown in the preceding image is for a complex diagram showing four types of “inclusion” models. I’ve copied the image into the text of this document as the following image. There is too much information to be provided in Alt Text. This is where using the Notes Pane if you are going to send out the PPTX version of the presentation can be used.

Another method of providing more detailed Alt text is to add the longer description in the alternate format handout for this presentation. I always generate an alternate format version of presentations in case someone asks for one...it is already done.

I include this information in the Alt Text on the slide in case I also provide an accessible PDF version of the presentation.

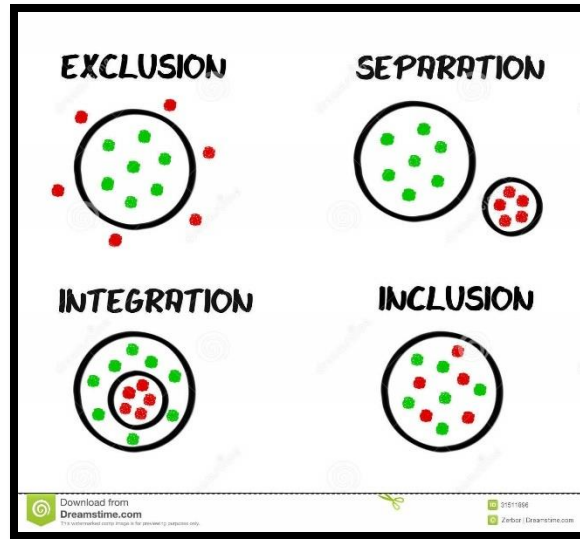


Figure 46 Image showing four models of "inclusion".

In the Alt Text Pane there is a button to Automatically Generate Alt Text. This is part of the Intelligent Services tools that come with Office 365. You must check The check box to use these services as they are cloud-based and based on machine learning.

Marking an image as decorative will only work if the person who is opening the document or presentation is using a version of Office that supports it. If someone opens a document or presentation with images marked as decorative in Office 2013 or early versions of Office 2016 (non-subscription), there will be errors when an accessibility check is done.

Someone using adaptive technology such as a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool with an earlier version of Office will hear "graphic, 4 inches by 3 inches" which doesn't tell them anything but the size of the image and that it is an image.

If you use the ability to generate Alt text, the Alt Text will have a disclaimer which will flag it during an Accessibility Check. It is a warning to make sure that the Alt text generated is what you want it to be. Once you make any modifications to the Alt Text that was generated, that item is removed from the Accessibility Checker.

If I do use an image from the online search in Office, I do include the citation as part of the Alt text that the image is either royalty free or part of the Creative Commons.

You will need to copy that information and remove the text box that it is in when it was inserted on the slide.

Checking the Logical Reading Order on Slides

Reading Order Pane

In the case of PowerPoint slides, the order in which the title and text placeholders are tabbed to is the order in which they are read or accessed by someone using a screen reader. For tagged PDF it may also affect the logical reading order of the resulting tagged PDF document.

Note: Those of us who use screen readers do NOT Tab through all content! This is a myth. We do Tab through form controls and links but not text in documents. The exception is for slides. Because slides are small canvases onto which we have containers known as placeholders, we Tab from placeholder to placeholder and then press Enter to go into Edit mode if we want to add or edit content. We press Escape when we are finished editing and can then Tab to the next placeholder. Once we are in a placeholder/in edit mode, we can use our normal navigating and reading keyboard commands. It is important to have the placeholders or containers arranged on a slide in a logical reading order.

Microsoft has added a Reading Order Pane which is better than using the Selection Pane to check the logical reading order of content on a slide. The Selection Pane gives you the content from bottom to top with the slide title at the bottom of the list. Most of us found this very confusing and illogical. The reading Pane lets us not only see the logical reading order from top to bottom but also lets us fix some of the problems on a slide immediately.

To launch the Reading Order Pane click the Review Ribbon, Check Accessibility, reading Pane. The keyboard command is Alt + R, A, number 1, R. The Reading Order Pane opens to the right of the slide.

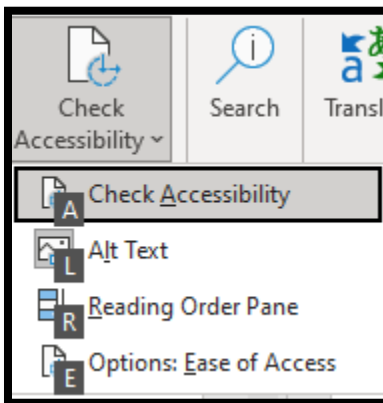


Figure 47 Reading Order Pane in Review Ribbon, Check Accessibility menu.

I recommend that you add the Reading Order Pane to your quick Access Toolbar so it is always easy to find and launch.

The fastest way to do this is to use the Ask A question/Search tool. The keyboard command is Alt + Q.

Type in Reding Order Pane.

Press the Down Arrow once to select it.

Right click or use the Application key and choose Add to Quick Access Toolbar.

The Reading Order Pane will take its place as the next item in the Quick Access Toolbar.

In my iteration of PowerPoint, I don't have additional tools on my quick Access Toolbar so my keyboard command is Alt followed by 6 to launch the Reading Order Pane. You will need to check and see what number in combination with the Alt key is your assigned keyboard command. Notice that this is not Alt PLUS 6 but Alt, pause, 6.

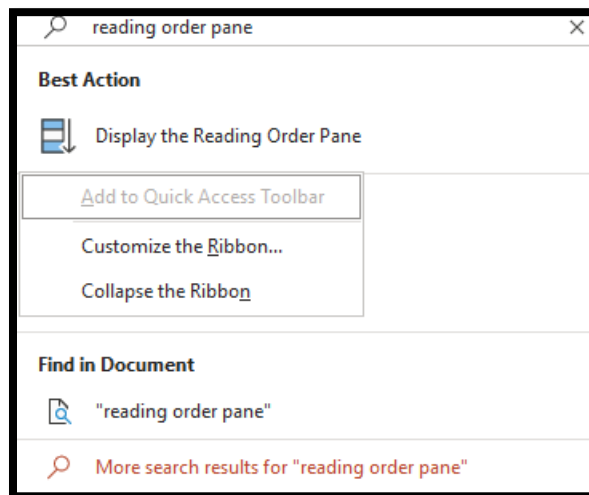


Figure 48 Add the Reading Order Pane to the Quick Access Toolbar.

The preceding image has the Add to quick Access Toolbar unavailable because I've already added it to my Quick Access Toolbar.

When launched, the Reading Order Pane opens to the right of the current slide and will remain open until you close it.

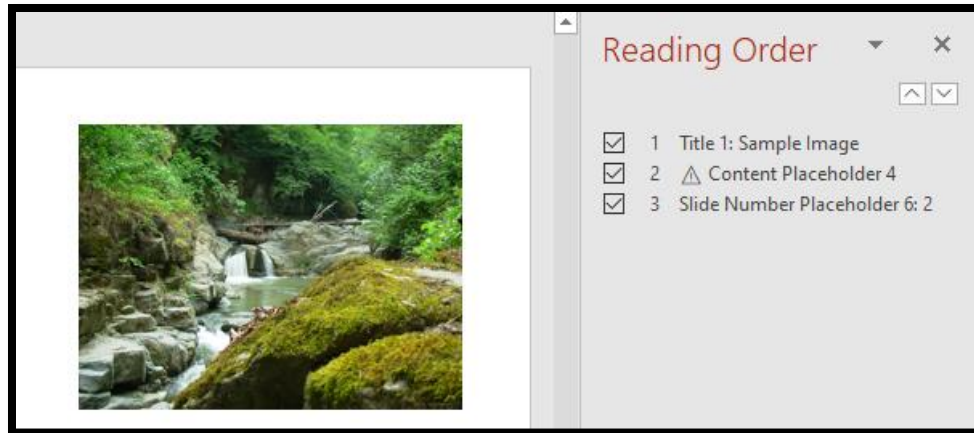


Figure 49 Reading Order Pane to the right of a slide.

In the preceding image I moved the picture closer to the Reading Order Pane so you could see the two side by side.

Notice that for the picture, there is a symbol letting you know that there is a problem with the picture. The picture has no Alt Text. If you click on that item in the Reading Order Pane a small Alt text edit area will open and you can add the Alt text. If you are using the keyboard, press F2 to go into Edit mode, type or copy the Alt Text and press Enter to close the Alt Text edit area to confirm the remediation.

Click off of the Alt Text edit area once you've entered the Alt Text and the Alt text is added to the picture.

If you are using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool and go down the list of items in the Reading Order Pane you will hear that you are on the Title Slide and what the title text is, that you are on the picture slide and what the Alt Text is and that you are on the slide Number item and what the slide number is.

Unlike the Selection Pane, which we've all been complaining about for years, the Reading Pane goes from top to bottom on the slide. The Selection Pane goes from bottom to top.

To reorder placeholders and objects on a slide, select the item in the Reading Order Pane and use the Up and Down Arrows in the Reading Order Pane to move things up one spot or down one spot at a time. This can be used if you are using a keyboard with adaptive technology. You would Shift + Tab from the item in the list until you are on the arrow you want and then press Spacebar to make the move up or down.

If you have access to the Reading Order Pane, use it instead of the Selection Pane to reorder or confirm order of placeholders on a slide.

When you are working in Slide Master View and are adding additional Content or Text Placeholders, make sure you check their order before you save and start using the template/slides.

Note: Just as with the Selection Pane, you might rearrange some items only to find that something you've used as a background now hides text. Try remediating the problem using a slide master.

Selection Pane

In the case of PowerPoint slides, the order in which the title and text placeholders are tabbed to is the order in which they are read or accessed by someone using a screen reader. For tagged PDF it may also affect the logical reading order of the resulting tagged PDF document.

In PowerPoint you can reorder the text placeholders or objects on a slide by using the Selection Pane. However, now that we have a Reading Order Pane, I recommend using that instead. The Reading Order Pane has some remediation tools that will save you time when you are working on slides.

To reorder objects/content on a slide using the Selection Pane:

1. Press Tab to move to the first object on the slide.
2. It will then have handles around it.
3. Press Alt + J, A, P to open the Selection Pane from the Drawing Tools, Format Ribbon, Selection Pane.
 - a. You can also press Alt + H, S, L, P for Home Ribbon, Select, Selection Pane.

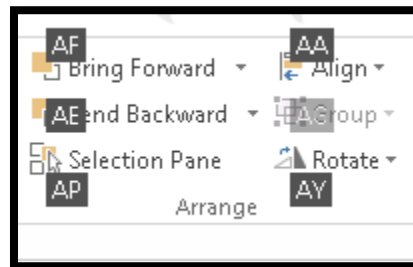


Figure 50 Selection Pane from the Picture tools, Format Ribbon, Arrange Group.

The Selection Pane opens to the right of the slide.

The logical reading order or the Tab Order of the objects on the slide will appear from bottom to top which is counter intuitive since you expect that the first item in the Selection Pane will be the first item on the slide. It is the reverse. The objects are tabbed to from the bottom up. So, the Title Placeholder will be the item "Title" in the Selection Pane.

The Selection Pane has up and down arrow buttons, so you can move an object up or down in the Tab Order or logical reading order on the slide.

As you Tab through the objects, the corresponding item will be identified in the Selection Pane.



Figure 51 Title Placeholder highlighted in Selection Pane and on slide.

The slide used in the preceding image has the Title Placeholder, a Content/Text Placeholder and a decorative image that I put on a slide master, so it will not show up in the Selection Pane and is not available to adaptive technology. It is a decorative image.

The following image is of a slide with a Title Placeholder, Text/Content Placeholder and an image. The Selection Pane was used to order the content on the slide.



Figure 52 Slide with 3 "objects" and the Selection Pane open to the right of the slide.

It is recommended that if you are using any Footer content, that the slide number be read before the rest of the Footer information such as copyright or date information. For those who are following along with the presentation as you speak, this will let them quickly refer to the slide number if they have any questions without having to go through the repetitive content on each slide.

To close the Selection pane once you are finished, put focus in it and press Alt + Spacebar to open the context menu for the Selection Pane, then press C for Close.

When you are working in Slide Master View and are adding additional Content or Text Placeholders, make sure you check their order before you save and start using the template/slides.

The arrangement of the objects/placeholders on a slide will affect the order in which the Tags are created in a PDF document. The tagging tools will follow the "logical" order you placed the content onto the slides. If you do not correct the Tab Order, you will need to repair this in Adobe Acrobat. In addition, someone reviewing your PowerPoint

presentation with adaptive technology will not be able to read slide content in a logical or meaningful order.

Note: if you are going to have slide numbers on slides and not use other Footer information, add them last. This lets you arrange content on slides in their Tab Order. Once the slide numbers are added (Alt + N, S, N), they will appear in the Selection Pane in the top position or the last thing tabbed to on a slide.

Tables on Slides

When using a table on a slide, use the tools in PowerPoint to insert a table. Make sure that in the Table Tools, Layout Ribbon (Alt + J), that Header Row (letter O)) and First Column (M) are checked for data tables. This ensures that if the presentation is converted to tagged PDF that the <TH> or Table Header Tags are created for column and row titles. This gives access to the column and row titles to adaptive technology as each cell is encountered.

Note: tables will need to be copied and pasted into the outline or RTF document if this is the alternate format needed by participants. If you've used the proper table structure the table should convert nicely to Braille or EPUB.

To insert a table onto a slide press Alt + N, T to open the Table Gallery. You can use either the Column and Row Gallery or the Insert Table item on the sub-menu.

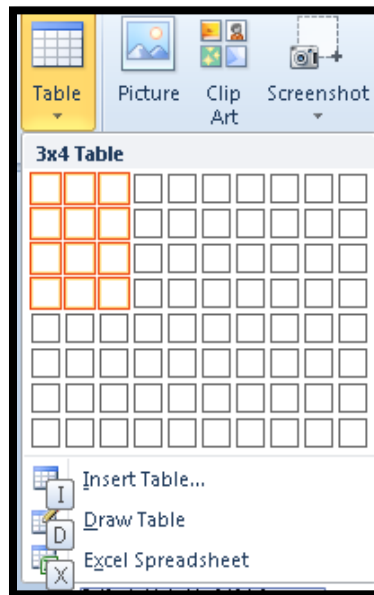
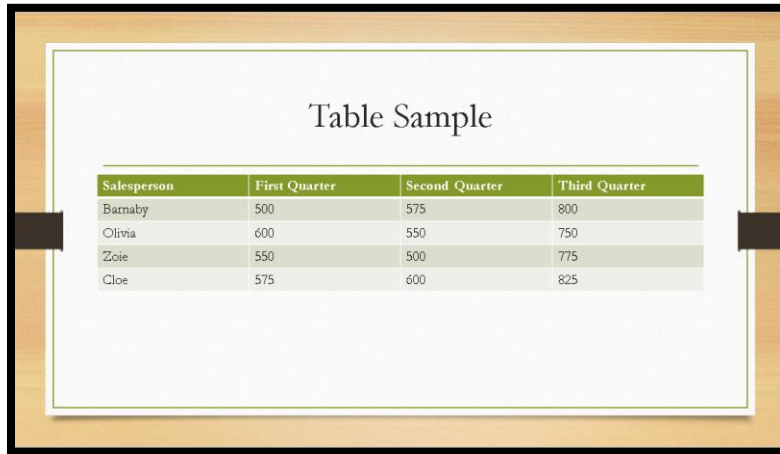


Figure 53 Insert Table on slide showing cells in the table Gallery selected.

Once the table is inserted onto the slide you can add the data. As with other types of documents, tables should not be used for layout on a slide. Tables should always be used to display data effectively.



The image shows a PowerPoint slide with a light green border. The title 'Table Sample' is centered at the top. Below the title is a table with four columns: 'Salesperson', 'First Quarter', 'Second Quarter', and 'Third Quarter'. The table contains data for four salespeople: Barnaby, Olivia, Zoie, and Cloe.

Salesperson	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter
Barnaby	500	575	800
Olivia	600	550	750
Zoie	550	500	775
Cloe	575	600	825

Figure 54 Table inserted on slide through the Insert Ribbon.

Don't use grouped objects to create the illusion of a table. Use the proper table structure. If you use grouped objects to create the illusion of a table, they will all need Alt Text as individual images both in the PowerPoint and subsequent tagged PDF documents. This means that the information will not be presented in table format to someone using adaptive technology such as a screen reader. It will be presented as individual bits of content with no relationship to each other.

If you are using colour in tables, make sure there is a good contrast so that the data is readable. As expected, the "Wood" colour palette resulted in a Colour Contrast Analyzer failure.

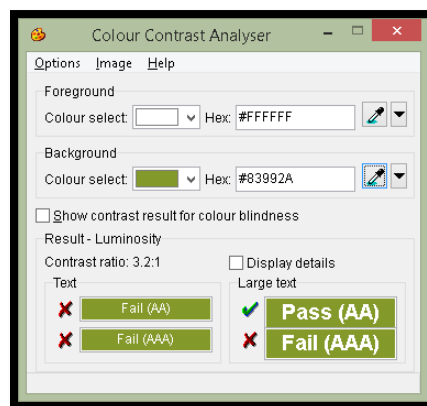


Figure 55 Text in title row of table fails the Colour Contrast Analyzer.

Tables in PowerPoint don't necessarily have the same level of keyboard access as tables in Word do. For this reason, it is important to create tables in PowerPoint properly and to use them for small amounts of data.

Links in Presentations

As with links in Microsoft Word, it is preferred that links be contextual rather than the full web addresses. The following is an example of a list of full web addresses from the JAWS screen reader. A person using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool has to listen to every character of those links to figure out where the link will take them. We can't use first character navigation because everything starts with the letter "H."

The following image is of a list of non-contextual links for a slide from the JAWS screen reader.



Figure 56 Non-contextual links in a PowerPoint presentation.

If the PowerPoint document is to be saved and distributed as an Outline for distribution in Braille or Large Print, you will need to convert the contextual links as full web links in the RTF document. It is a good idea to put the long URL or web address in the Notes area for the slide.

In Word documents, I leverage the ability to add Footnotes or Endnotes to provide the long web addresses while retaining the contextual links in the body text of a document. You'll see that I've done this in this tutorial and others I create. This lets someone access the long web address visually if the document is printed out for a meeting or other purpose. The contextual links facilitate easier reading.

You don't want to play around with the size of text used for links. In some presentations I've seen five or six font sizes on one slide in one text placeholder which is visually distracting and detracts from the message you are giving the audience. Your audience will

be spending time concentrating on reading varied font sizes rather than listening to you explain what the points on the slide mean.

While I support the use of contextual links for documents, slide presentations are something different. Generally, you want the audience to be able to go out on their own while you are speaking to take a look at something you might be pointing out on a slide. Having the long web addresses for the slides and then adding Alt text to them if you convert the presentation to tagged PDF is a better way to go in this instance.

If you do use contextual links, use the Notes area or have a separate slide at the end of the presentation with the long web addresses on it for those who might want them.

I find having the long web addresses as the last point on the slide where you are talking about a website or resource stops participants from asking for the long web address while you are speaking. As you are giving the presentation, make sure you read out the long web address on a slide slowly for those who cannot see it. Do not use abbreviations, acronyms or jargon. Make sure that the web address is understandable for those entering the information in a web browser as you speak.

A better idea is to have a digital version of the presentation created from Outline view with the long web addresses in it so that participants can read along and activate links as you are speaking.

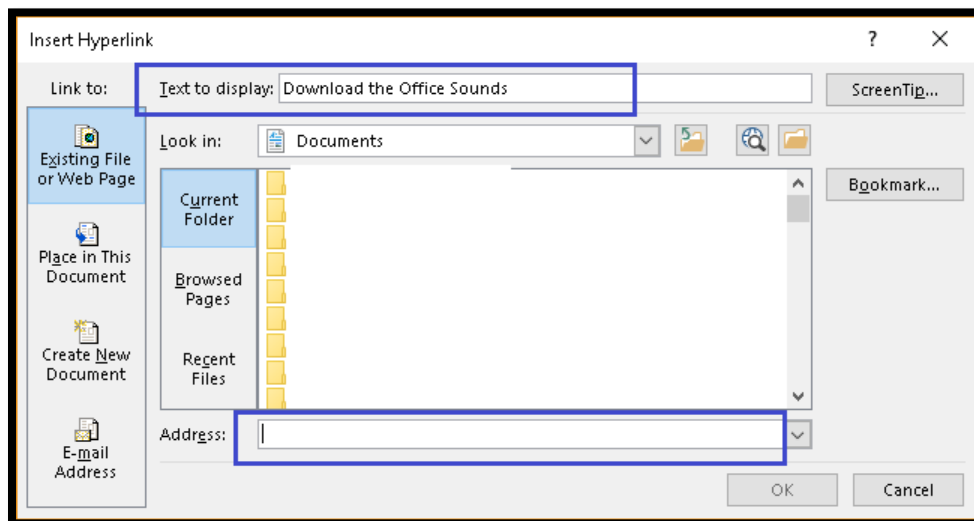


Figure 57 Insert Hyperlink dialog showing Text to Display and area to paste web address.

If the presentation is converted to tagged PDF, you can add Alt text to the <Link> Tag for those of us using adaptive technology if contextual links were not used in the presentation.

Bulleted and Numbered Lists

Use the Bullets and Numbering Galleries on the Home Ribbon to either change the bullets or switch to numbering. Do not use different bullets on each slide! Keep your design simple but effective. Sometimes more is just awkward and unprofessional looking.

- Alt + H, U, L for Bullets or Alt + H, U depending on the update to Office 365.
- Alt + H, N for Numbering.

Just as with Word, you don't use the enter key to create space between bulleted points in a PowerPoint slide presentation. Instead use the Paragraph dialog to add space below each bulleted item.

If you've put too much content into a slide and are readjusting the line spacing so that text doesn't overlap, choose "single" line spacing in the Paragraph dialog rather than "Multiple" which PowerPoint will do by itself when you ask it to cram too much content into one text placeholder.

Better yet, distribute the content to other slides so that it isn't unreadable.

For slides without a huge amount of content on them, you can easily adjust the spacing between bulleted or numbered points.

To adjust the spacing between bulleted items, select the entire list and press Alt + H, P, G to open the Paragraph dialog from the Home ribbon. If this sounds familiar, it is the same keyboard commands used in Word to open the Paragraph dialog.

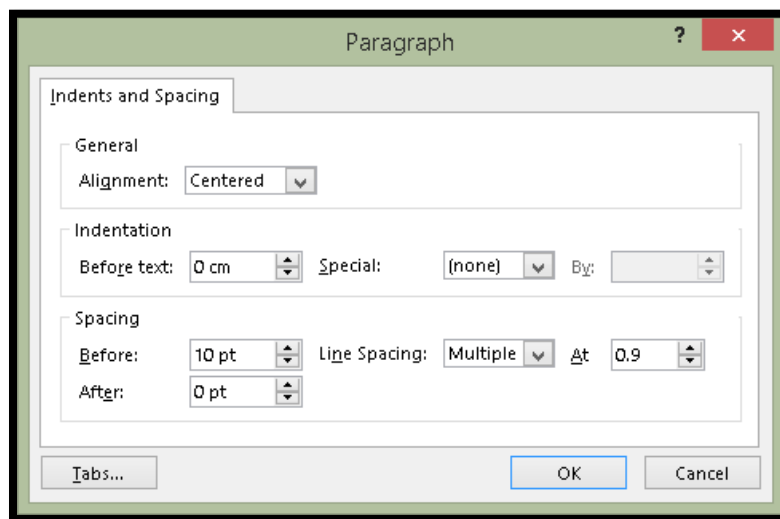


Figure 58 Paragraph dialog in PowerPoint.

In the Paragraph dialog above I've used 20 point spacing which gives the typical amount of space between bulleted items that a press of the Enter key would.

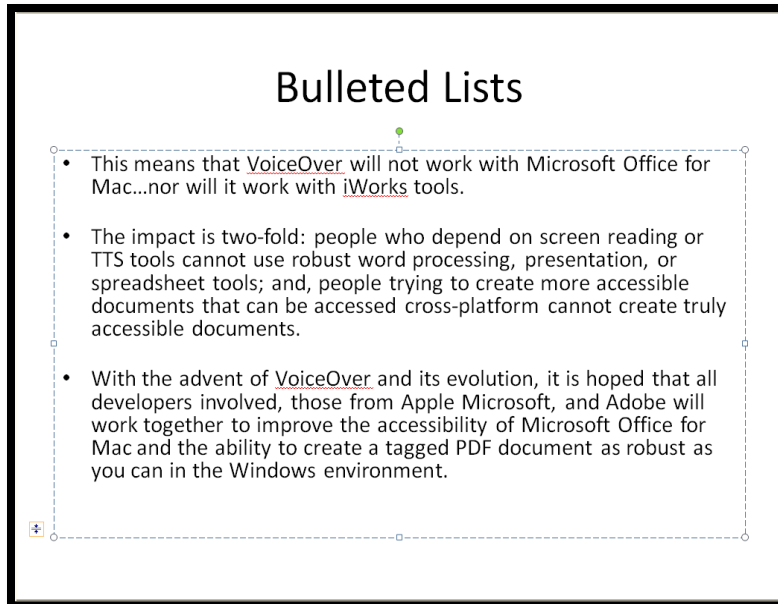


Figure 59 Bulleted list on a slide spaced using the Paragraph tools.

As with Word, we added the spacing after each bulleted item. We know that the first bulleted item has enough space around it because it is the first one in the Content/text placeholder and the Content/text placeholder is positioned by default to allow space between the title placeholder and the Content/text placeholder or content on the slide.

By using the spacing between the bulleted list items the list is not broken. This means that the content will be read as one list of three bulleted items rather than three lists of single items. This will convert nicely to a List structure in a tagged PDF version of the presentation.

If you have a single piece of content on a slide, using bulleted text might not be the best way to present it. You can turn off the bullets by selecting the text in the text placeholder and pressing Alt + H, U, L for Home Ribbon, Bullets, and choosing "None" from the Bullets Gallery. You can then resize the text placeholder and position it where you want on the slide.

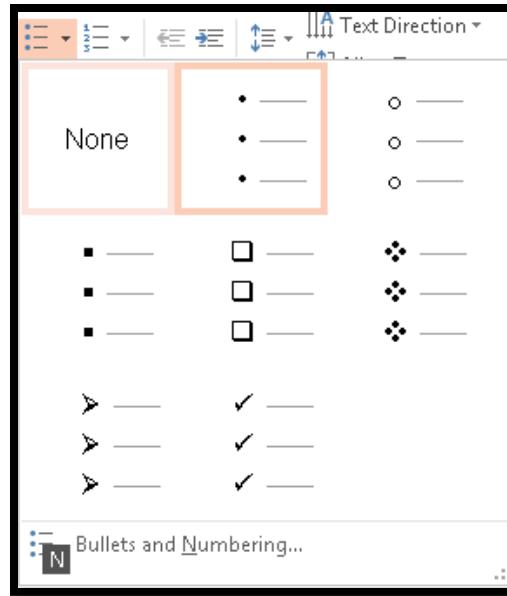


Figure 60 “None” chosen from the Bullets Gallery in PowerPoint.

You can create a slide template with a text placeholder that is not formatted for bullets or numbering by using the Slide Master to do this.

In finishing this section on the amount of slide content and using bullets and numbering, I have to discuss a trend that seems to be around the presentation world. It is that you should only have one bullet point on a slide and only one.

Having sat through a couple of presentations with this concept, I find it dizzying and counterproductive. I found myself not paying attention to the speaker but rather seeing a whirl of text or an image go by at the speed of light creating a blur and taking my mind off of the presentation itself.

While not writing an essay on a slide, slides do replace index cards we used to use for public speaking so can have four or five bullet points on them depending on the amount of content for each bullet point.

The skill in writing and designing a PowerPoint or other slide-based presentation is balancing the text with the speaking and being able to hold the interest of the participants.

I also find with the “one bullet point per slide” that the speaker is often distracted as they have to continually advance slides and aren’t as focused on their presentation.

Slide Numbers

There is a tool for adding slide numbers that will automatically use a “Slide Number placeholder” that is more accessible than a text box with a number plunked into it. The numbers will also be automatically updated as you add or remove slides.

Using the tool for adding slide numbers will ensure that the numbering of slides in the presentation is consistent and sequential as you add or remove slides.

You’ll find this tool under Insert, Slide Number or by pressing Alt + N, S, N. This launches the Header/Footer dialog.

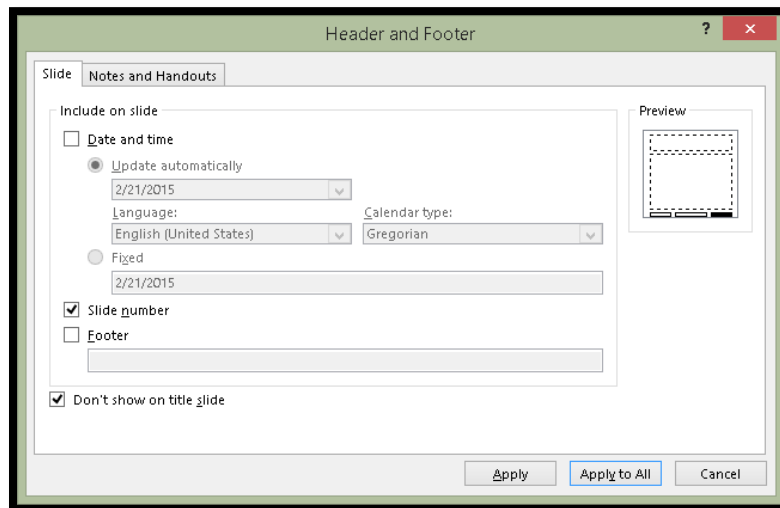


Figure 61 Header and Footer dialog.

Check the check boxes for Slide Numbers and “Don’t show on title slide.” The keyboard commands are Alt +N and Alt + S respectively to move to and check these check boxes.

Choose to have page numbers applied to all slides in the presentation. The slide numbers won’t be on the first slide (because you checked the different first slide check box) but will be on all the rest. The advantage of using this method is that if you reorder your slides, the numbering will reorder itself automatically unlike those Text Boxes you used to use!

Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint

The Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint can help identify elements you may have overlooked such as Alt text on images or tables.

Note: The Office 365 Accessibility Checkers are always being updated and refined. Keep track of what is being checked, what is no longer being checked and what might be coming in future versions of Office 365 by bookmarking the [Rules for the Accessibility Checkers](#)⁴ page on the Microsoft website.

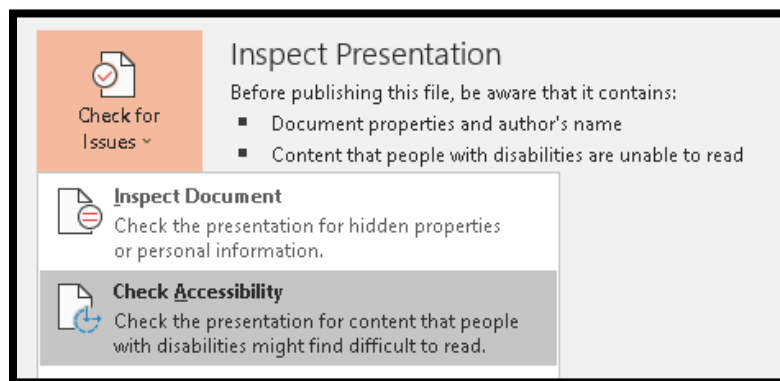


Figure 62 Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint.

To access the Accessibility Checker from the File/Backstage area, press Alt + F, letter I, letter I for File/Backstage area, Information (Info tab) and Inspect Document.

Press the Down Arrow to get to Check Accessibility or press A. The Accessibility Checker opens to the right of the slide area.

The Accessibility Checker is also on the Review Ribbon. The keyboard command is Alt + R, A, number 1 for Review Ribbon, Accessibility Checker. This is also where you'll find the Immersive Reader tools.

⁴ Rules for the Accessibility Checkers, Microsoft: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/rules-for-the-accessibility-checker-651e08f2-0fc3-4e10-aaca-74b4a67101c1#:~:text=Errors%20%20%20Rule%20%20%20Accessibility%20Checker.%20%20PowerPoint%20%203%20more%20rows%20>

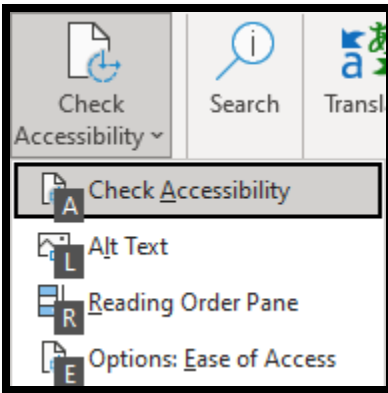


Figure 63 Review Ribbon, Check Accessibility menu.

The Accessibility Checker can also run in the Status bar of an office desktop application. This is turned on by default. If you don't see the Accessibility Checker in the Status Bar, use either the Review Ribbon, Check Accessibility, Ease of Access Options (Alt + R, A, number 1,e) or use the File/Backstage area, Options, Ease of Access (Alt + F, T, E). The check box to run the Accessibility Checker in the Status Bar is the first option in that category.

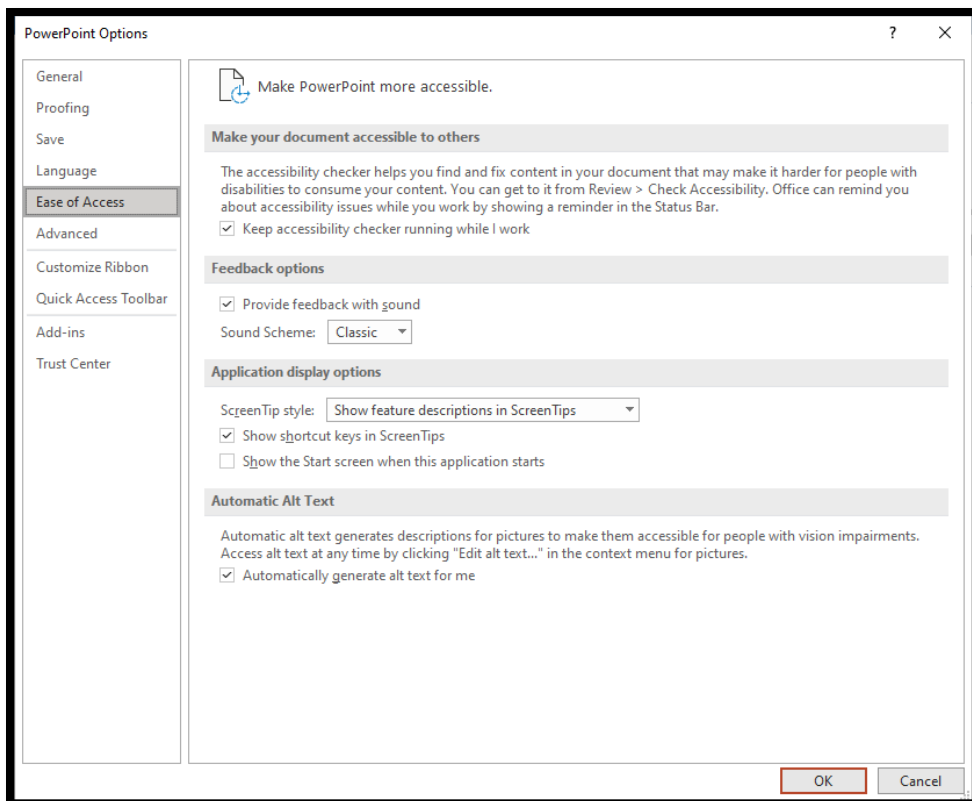


Figure 64 PowerPoint Options, Ease of Access category selected.

The Ease of access category is also where you can turn on or off the ability to Generate Alt Text Automatically.

In the preceding Accessibility check, there are some problems that I need to fix. The image on slide 2 has no Alt Text and the Title Slide has no content, Slide 2 has no Title and I need to check a Hyperlink on Slide 4.

As of the version of Office 365/Office 2016/2019 at the time of this tutorial, the Accessibility Checker is also checking for colour contrast if colour is used for text in a document or presentation.

If you've used the tool to automatically generate Alt Text or you will see warnings to go and check that Alt Text.

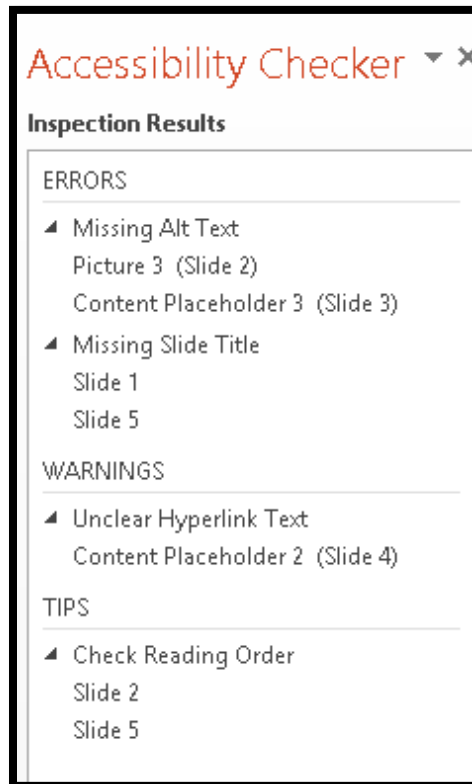


Figure 65 Accessibility Check for a PowerPoint presentation.

In all Accessibility Checks, you will see slides where you've added images or somehow change the slide layout. You will be asked to check the logical order of content on those slides. At the present time, even if you confirm as you go or go back and double check the reading order on the slides, the items will not be removed from the Accessibility Checker. This does not mean that the presentation is not accessible, it simply means that there are slides in the presentation that needed checking. Microsoft is aware that this is confusing and that some organizations require clean accessibility checks. They are working on a solution.

As you make the repairs, the Accessibility Checker automatically updates to reflect the changes (except for the reading Order items).

A caveat to using the PowerPoint Designer feature. If you create an accessible table, then apply one of the suggested designs from PowerPoint Designer, you will need to redo/check the accessibility again. In the following image, once I applied a suggestion from PowerPoint Designer, the table was no longer accessible. The Header Row and First Column check boxes were unchecked as the PowerPoint Designer design was applied.

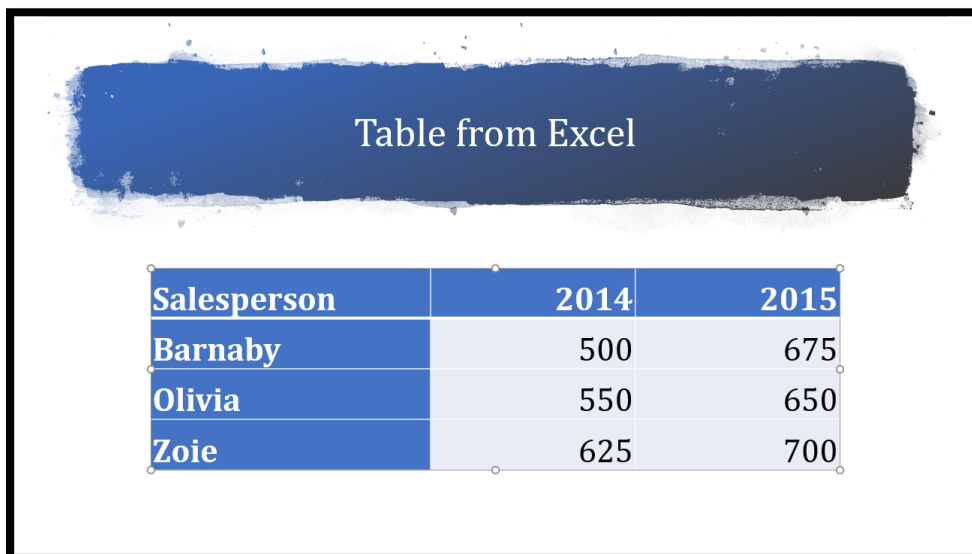


The image shows a slide titled "Table from Excel" with a blue header bar. Below the header is a table with four rows and three columns. The first row contains the headers "Salesperson", "2014", and "2015". The subsequent rows contain the names "Barnaby", "Olivia", and "Zoie" in the first column, and their corresponding values "500", "550", and "625" in the second column, and "675", "650", and "700" in the third column. The table is presented in a plain, unformatted style.

Salesperson	2014	2015
Barnaby	500	675
Olivia	550	650
Zoie	625	700

Figure 66 Slide with a table made inaccessible by using PowerPoint Designer.

As soon as I checked the check boxes for First Column and Header row, the table reverted to its original look and feel/design.



The image shows a slide titled "Table from Excel" with a blue header bar. Below the header is a table with four rows and three columns. The first row contains the headers "Salesperson", "2014", and "2015" in bold blue text. The subsequent rows contain the names "Barnaby", "Olivia", and "Zoie" in the first column, and their corresponding values "500", "550", and "625" in the second column, and "675", "650", and "700" in the third column. The table is presented in its original, formatted style.

Salesperson	2014	2015
Barnaby	500	675
Olivia	550	650
Zoie	625	700

Figure 67 Slide with remediated table from PowerPoint Designer shows original formatting.

You have the same accessibility barriers when you paste content from Excel as HTML. The First Column and Header Row check boxes are not checked. Once they are, the table has the look and feel of the default table layout/colours for the presentation.

If you copy part of a table to the Office Clipboard (not the Windows Clipboard) and paste it into a PowerPoint presentation, you have the same accessibility barrier: the First Column and Header Row become unchecked.

Content from Office Clipboard

Barnaby	1050	1175
Olivia	1075	1150
Zoie	1075	1175

Figure 68 Table pasted from Office Clipboard onto a slide.

If you check First Column and Header Row in the Design Ribbon for the table, the table reflects the default colours of the presentation.

There will be PowerPoint Designer options that you won't be able to use because they create accessibility barriers.

Animations and Transitions

Most tips on general PowerPoint presentations advocate that transitions and animations NOT be used. This is important in terms of accessibility. Timing the advancement of slides and having content fly in or out can cause readability barriers.

As with any PowerPoint presentation, avoid the use of animations and transitions.

If there are audio or video files embedded in the presentation, turn off their ability to play as the slide advances. For those using screen readers or Text-to-Speech tools, having an audio or video file begin in competition with their adaptive technology when they don't know where the embedded multimedia is, is a barrier to accessibility.

Other Accessibility Considerations for Presentations

The accessibility of a slide presentation also depends on how it is distributed.

If a presentation is packaged as a slide show with no ability to control the flow of the slides using the keyboard, it is not accessible.

If the slides contained embedded/linked content to other documents or slide elements such as Excel or Word content, this content is not seen by adaptive technology in slide show mode.

Additionally, if you expect people to be able to access this content, all embedded files must travel with the PPTX file and be accessible if the presentation is on an Internet or Intranet site. This will let people who need to explore the content in Word or Excel the ability to do so.

If the presentation is packaged as a slide show with no ability to access captioning or a transcript for any audio or video content, the slide show is not accessible.

If someone is using an older version of PowerPoint and adaptive technology, some parts of a slide may not be accessible whereas it would be accessible with current versions of both.

Current versions of the JAWS screen reader do provide recognition and access to linked content from Excel or Word, however this content is not accessible if only the slide show view is distributed. They **MUST** have the actual slides to explore.

If you create grouped objects on a slide, they will be tabbed to individually. Adding Alt Text to the global frame for grouped objects or SmartArt does not mean that each element will be identified. In fact, there is no way to add Alt text to each element of a grouped object that would make sense to someone who can't see it or to parts of SmartArt objects. There is a tutorial document on this topic attached to this tutorial.

Appendix A: Accessible Slide Placeholders

Introduction

There are times when you might need a custom slide and want to make sure that the content on the slide is accessible to people who use adaptive technology. There is an easy way to do this using Slide Master View.

Unfortunately, you can't simply copy a Content placeholder from an existing slide and use it on another slide. Not sure why.

If you are really desperate, there is a shortcut method of doing this at the end of this document.

This tutorial has a file attached to it with samples of accessible slide layouts that I've customized. You can copy them into a presentation template or individual presentation.

Step 1: Slide Master View

The first step is to go into Slide Master View. Many of us are afraid of doing this because we don't understand the ability we have to customize slide layouts. Prior to PowerPoint 2007 I was in this group. Somehow Slide Master View is easier to use as of PowerPoint 2007 and now I use it all the time to customize slide layouts for individual presentations and for PowerPoint templates and Themes. Create it once, use it many times!

Press Alt + W, M for the View Ribbon, Slide Master View.

On the right of your screen you will see all of the existing slides you can use in a presentation.

At the top is the main slide where any design you add to that slide affects all of the slides under it...all of the slides in your presentation.

If you want to add a decorative image to a specific slide layout, Slide Master View is where you do it so that adaptive technology won't "see" it. An image added to a Slide Master becomes part of the background and does not require Alt Text because it is invisible to adaptive technology such as screen readers (for people who are blind or visually disabled) or Text-to-Speech tools (for people with learning, cognitive or visual disabilities).

When you go into Slide Master View, the first Ribbon becomes the "Slide Master Ribbon. The keyboard command to access it is Alt + M.

The following image shows part of the Slide Master Ribbon and some of the slide layouts in Slide Master View.

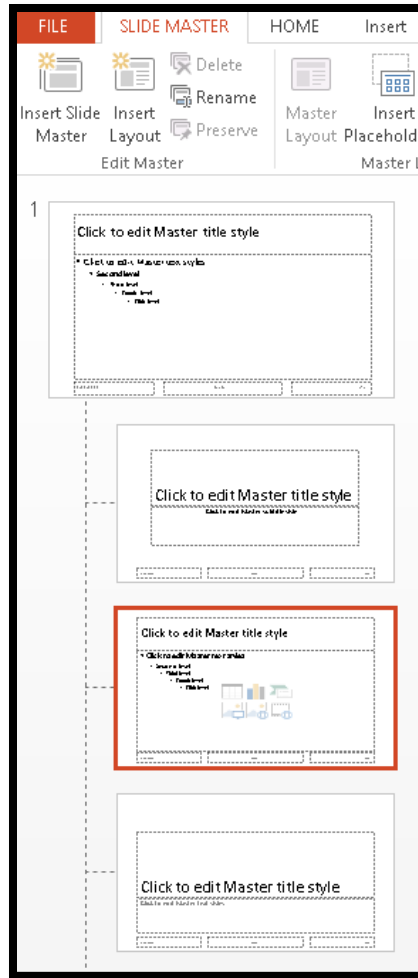


Figure 69 Slide Master View showing part of the Slide Master Ribbon and the Slide Masters.

To help with orientation, anything you do to the top slide is reflected in every slide under it. Think of it as the “parent” slide and the slides under it as the “children” who inherit elements from the parent.

If you only want something to appear on an individual slide, only apply it to that individual slide. For example, if you want an image on the Section Break slide, put the image on that slide. It won’t appear on any other slide.

Step 2: Duplicate a Slide Layout

The next step in the process is to create a duplicate slide that closely matches the type of slide layout you want. In this example we are going to create a slide with two accessible placeholders on it.

Select the default slide layout that gets added to your slides when you press Ctrl + M. It has a title Placeholder and a Content Placeholder as shown in the following image.

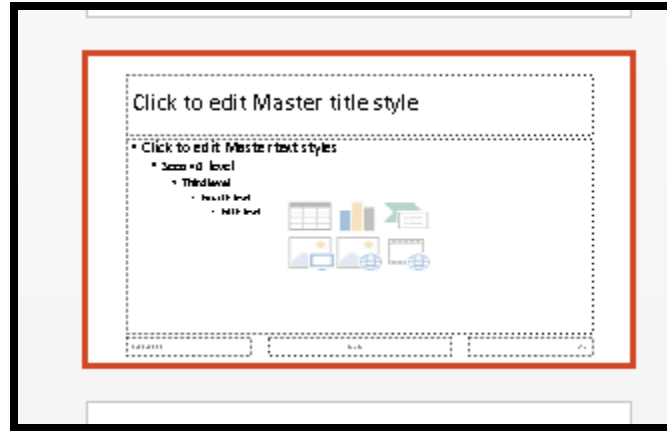


Figure 70 Default slide layout with a Title Placeholder and a Content Placeholder.

The Content Placeholder has the small images of the types of content you can add to your slide such as pictures, tables, shapes and so forth. It also has text indicating that you can “click to add content.”

With the default slide layout selected in the Slides pane to the right of the main slide area, press the AppKey (equivalent to a right mouse click).

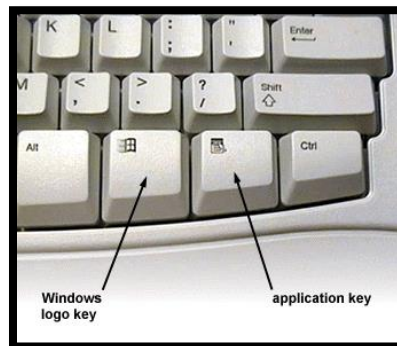


Figure 71 Qwerty keyboard showing AppKey between the Windows key and Ctrl key.

The AppKey is typically located on the main keyboard area, lower right, between the Alt and Ctrl keys or the Windows and Ctrl keys depending on your keyboard. It may be located somewhere else on a laptop keyboard. If you can't find it, Shift + F10 will work but not in as many places. F10 is in the row of Function keys just above the main keyboard area.

Choose Duplicate Layout from the context menu.

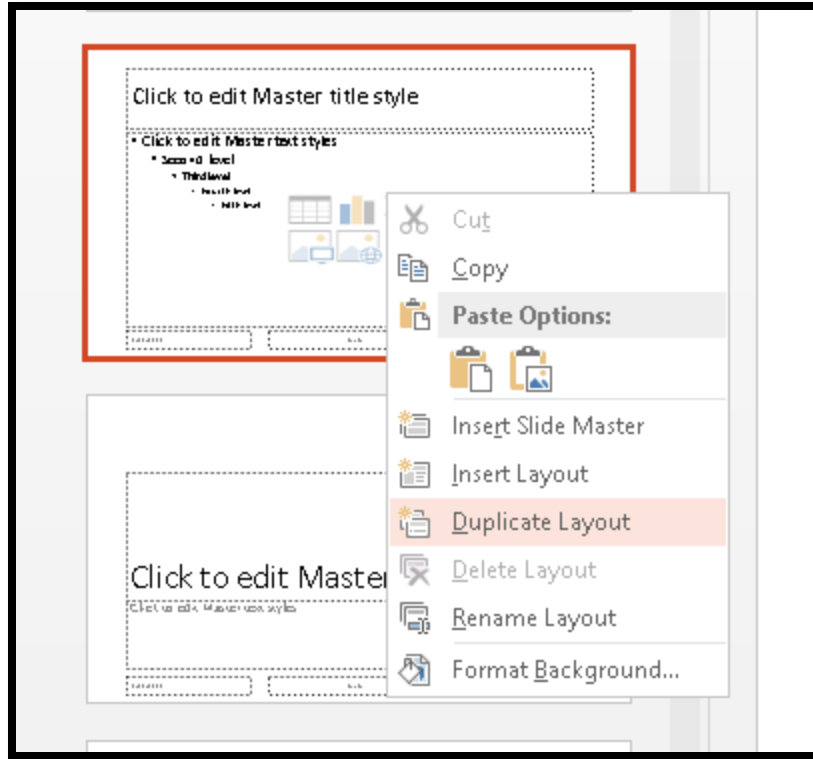


Figure 72 Duplicate Layout from context menu in Slide Master View.

A duplicate slide will be added to the Slide Master set just under the slide you duplicated, and it will now be selected/have focus.

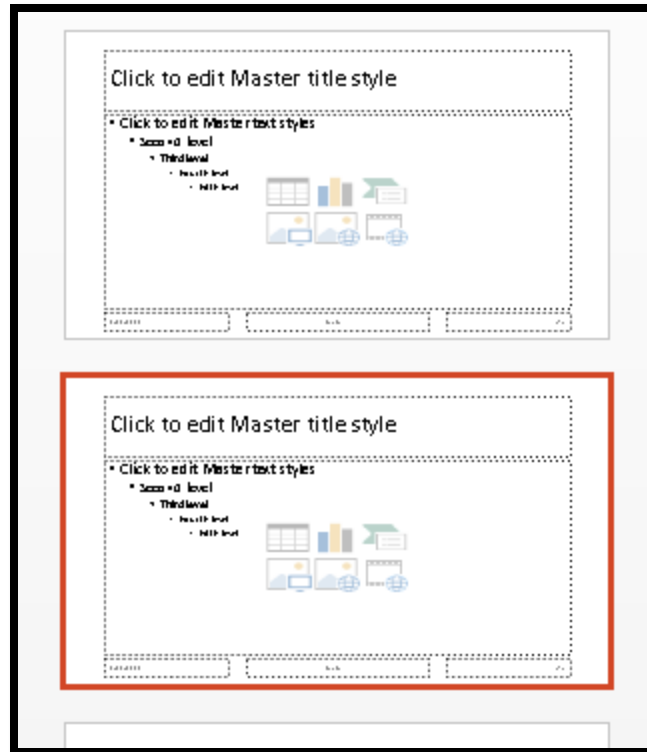


Figure 73 Duplicate slide layout added to Slide Master.

We now need to rename the new slide layout with something that is meaningful.

Step 3: Rename the New Layout

The next step is to rename the new layout so that when it appears in the list of slides available to you (Alt + H, letter I for Home Ribbon, Insert Slide) you will know what it is for.

In this example we are going to create a slide layout with two placeholders. We're going to call the slide layout "Two Paragraphs No Bullets."

Press the AppKey on the duplicate slide layout and choose Rename Layout.

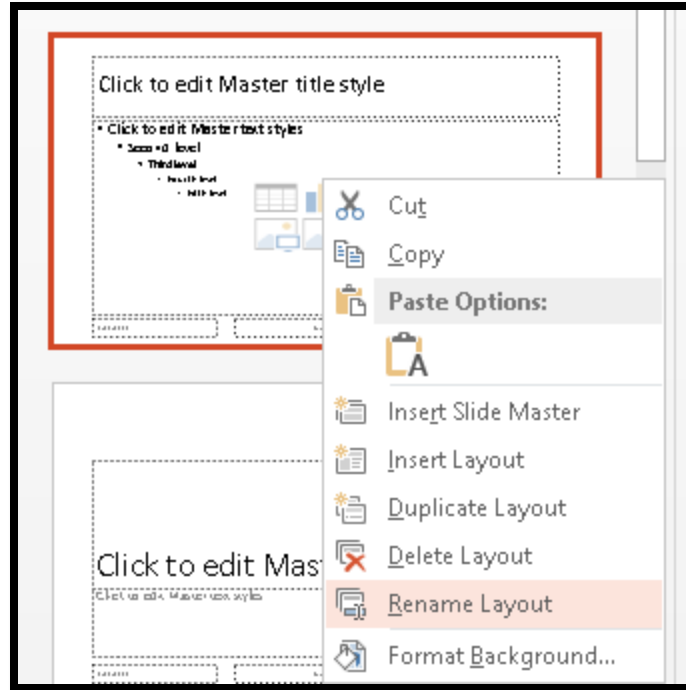


Figure 74 Rename Layout option from context menu.

A small dialog opens where you can type in the name of the new slide layout.

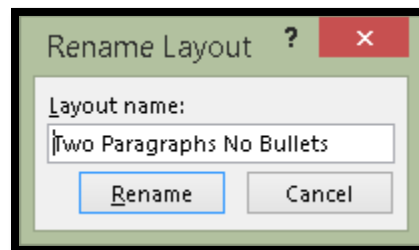


Figure 75 Rename Layout dialog.

Once the new slide layout has a name, we are ready to make some changes!

Step 4: Adding another Placeholder

We are now ready to customize the slide layout. The first thing we need to do is to make the existing Content Placeholder smaller so that we can clearly see the new placeholder we add.

For this example, I've simply moved the handle on the right side of the placeholder to the left which resizes the placeholder.

For those using the keyboard with adaptive technology, the dimensions of the Content placeholder are now 12 cm high by 11.42 cm wide. You can do this by selecting the Content Placeholder, pressing the AppKey and choosing Size and Position. Your focus is placed in

the Format Shape Pane (which I admit is misleading). You can then Tab to the Height edit area and then the Width edit area. When you are finished, press Ctrl + Spacebar, C to open the context menu for the Format Shape Pane, to Close the pane.

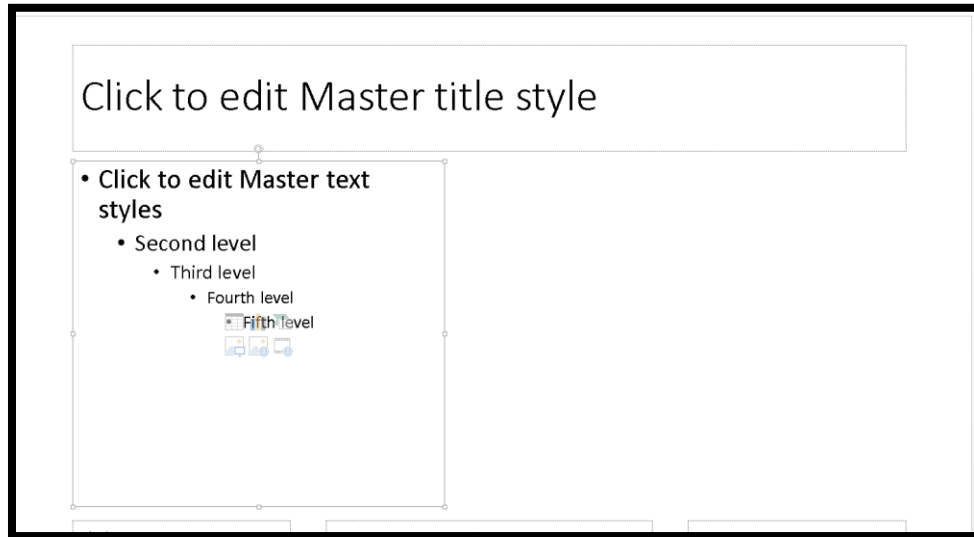


Figure 76 Resized Content Placeholder.

The next step is to go to the Slide Master Ribbon and Insert a Placeholder.

The keyboard command is Alt + M, A for Slide Master Ribbon, Insert Placeholder. We are going to insert a Text Placeholder, so you can see the difference.

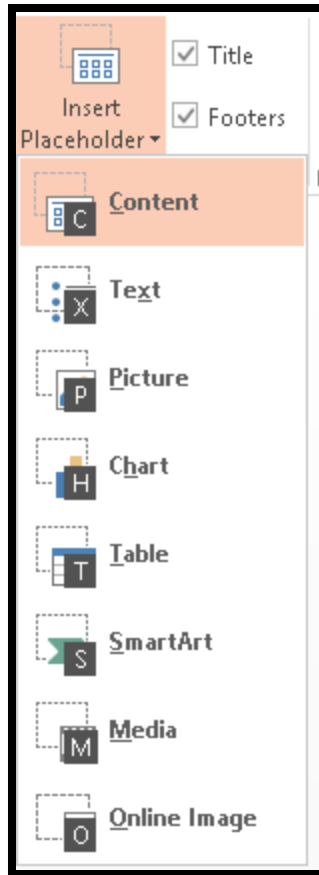


Figure 77 Insert Placeholder Gallery.

Here your choice for an accessible placeholder is either Content or Text. The difference is that with a Content Placeholder you have the small images in the centre that give you the option of choosing which type of content to add, while a Text Placeholder only lets you add text to the slide in the placeholder.

Once you choose a placeholder, your cursor turns into a cross hair and you can draw the size of the placeholder on the slide. This is a mouse dependent activity.

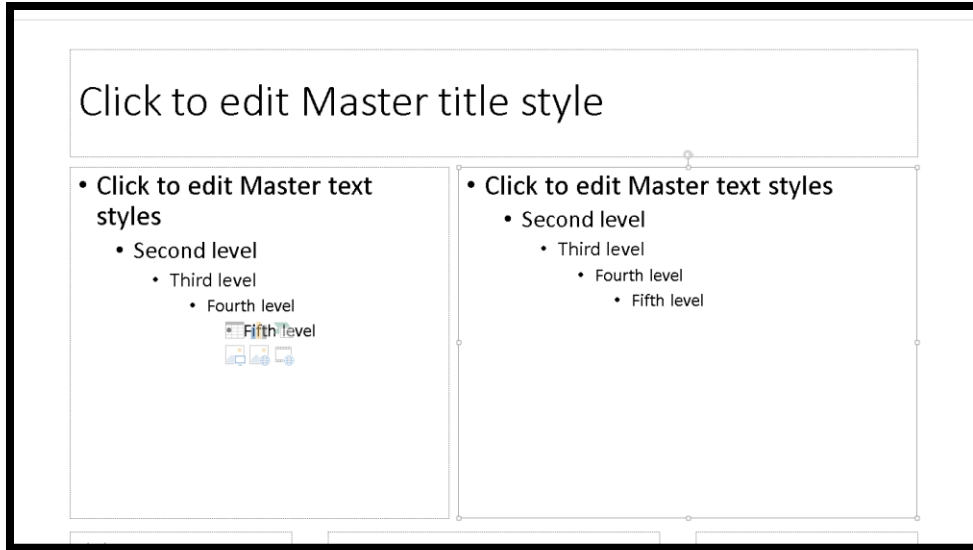


Figure 78 Text Placeholder added to a slide layout.

We now have to use the Selection Pane to make sure that the Tab Order of objects (including placeholders) are in a logical order (logical reading order).

The order in which you Tab from object to object on a slide is the way that anyone using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool will read the content.

If you convert your PowerPoint presentation to tagged PDF, this is also the order in which the content gets tagged. It is the logical reading order for the PDF document. Doing this in PowerPoint means you won't need to rearrange things in Adobe Acrobat Pro. In effect, both formats of the presentation will be accessible.

Step 5: Correcting the Tab Order of Objects.

Before returning to Slide Layout View, always check the Tab Order of objects on the slide you've worked on. This step applies to any slide you add content to whether you are in Slide Master or Slide Layout View. The order in which you Tab through the slide content is the order in which it is going to be read to someone using adaptive technology. It is also the order in which the content will be tagged if you convert the slide to tagged PDF.

For example, the new Text Placeholder we added is now the last thing accessed on the slide. We "logically" move from the Title placeholder to the Content Placeholder to the Date Placeholder, to the Footer Placeholder, to the Slide Number Placeholder and then to our Text Placeholder.



Figure 79 Text Placeholder selected showing it is last item to be read on slide (Selection Pane open to right of slide.)

For some reason, the Selection Pane shows the order of objects on a slide in a counter-intuitive order...from the bottom up.

To move the Text Placeholder to its logical place in the reading/Tab Order on the slide, use the Up and Down buttons just above the list of contents on the slide in the Selection Pane.

This can be done using the keyboard by pressing Shift + tab from the list of objects to the Up or Down button and then pressing Spacebar on the button you want. Press Tab to move back to the list of placeholders/objects on the slide.

When you are finished, with focus in the Selection Pane, press Ctrl + Spacebar, C to open the context menu and choose Close or click on the Close icon in the Selection Pane. Sometimes an open Pane will steal focus from adaptive technology, so I usually leave it closed until I need it, this can't happen.

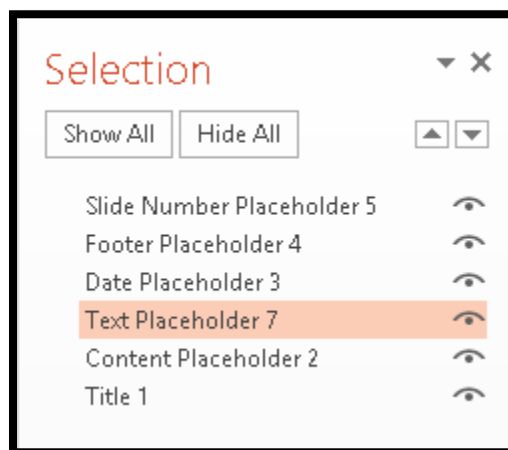


Figure 80 Corrected Tab Order for the custom slide layout.

Save your presentation!

At this point, you are “finished” and can return to Slide Layout View by pressing Alt + W, L for View Ribbon, Layout View.

Or...we can remove the bulleted lists, resize the Content and Text Placeholders and give our new slide layout a different look.

Are you ready to continue the adventure?!

Step 6: Removing Bulleted Lists from a Slide

There are few things more awkward looking on a slide than a single paragraph that is formatted as a single bullet. This step guides you through removing the bullets from a slide and can be used when in Slide Master View or in Slide Layout View.

First, select the bullet levels starting at level 2.

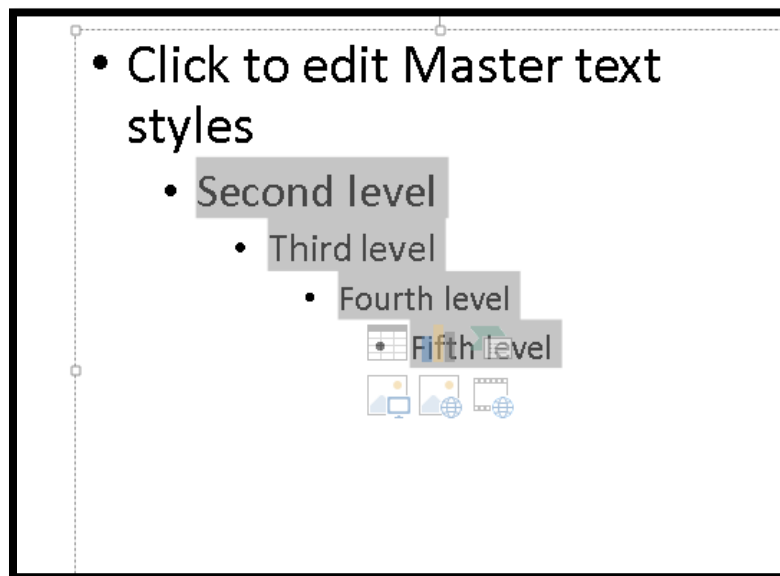


Figure 81 Content Placeholder with secondary levels selected.

Press the Delete key to remove these levels. If we are going to use this layout for paragraph text, we don't want the additional levels.

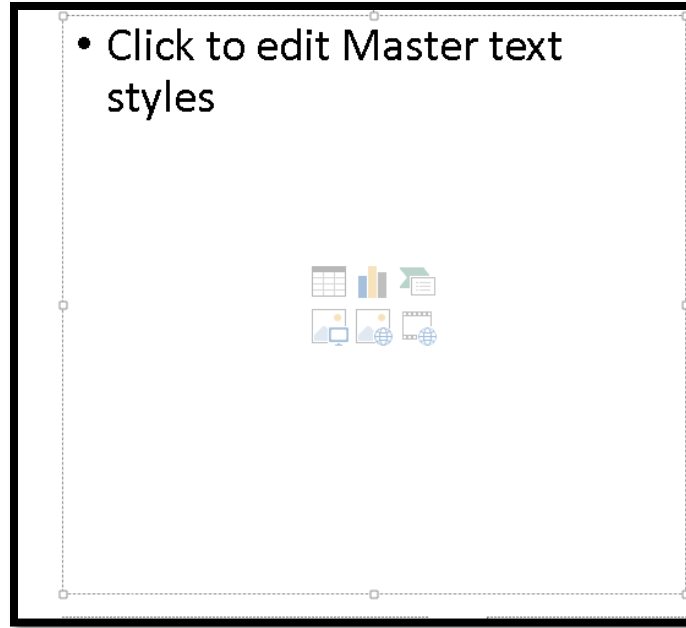


Figure 82 Content Placeholder with only first level bullets.

Select the remaining text but DO NOT delete it.

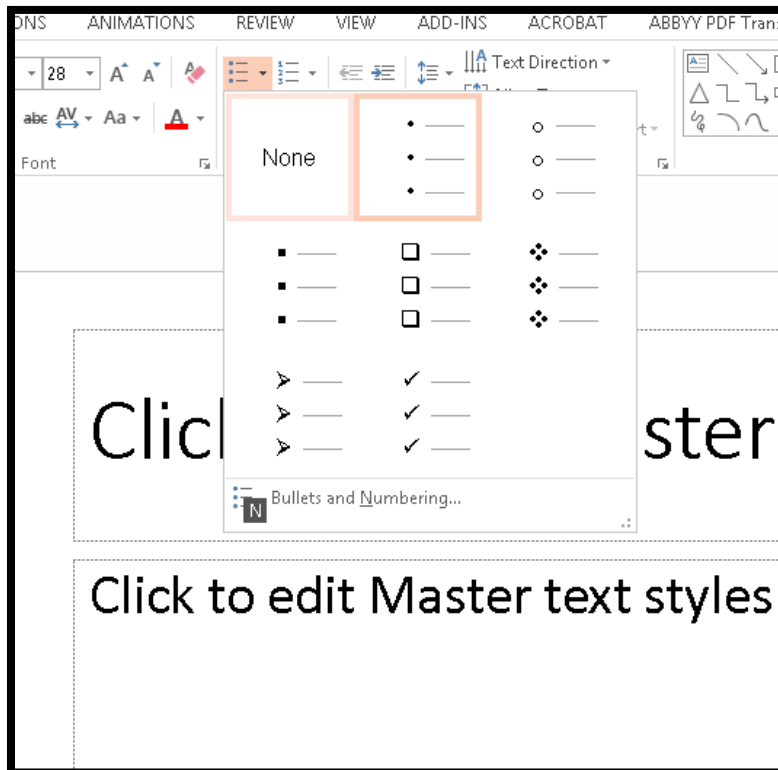


Figure 83 Bullet Gallery showing None selected.

Press Alt + H, U for the Home Ribbon, Bullets. Choose None from the Gallery. The text in the content Placeholder will be regular text with no bullets.

Repeat this process for the Text Placeholder if you don't want bulleted text in that placeholder.

Save your work!

Step 7: Positioning the Placeholders

Once you have the Content or Text Placeholders formatted the way you want, you can resize and reposition them for a more professional look to your slides.

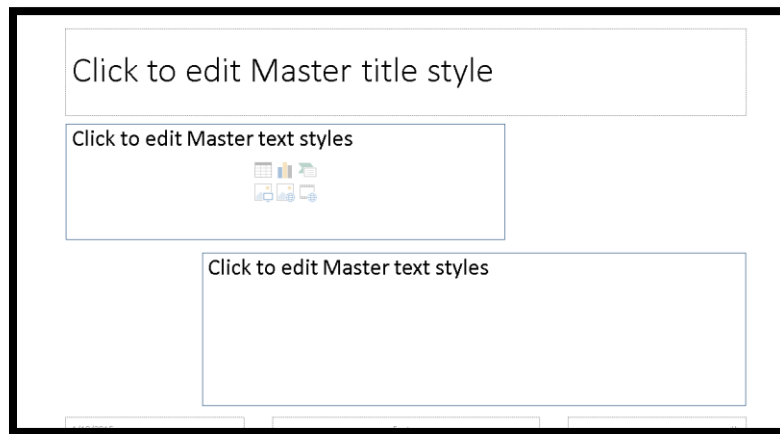


Figure 84 Content and Text Placeholders resized and positioned.

In the preceding image of the resized and positioned Content and Text Placeholders, I added a blue outline to them, so they show up better in the image. This is something you may want to consider if you have a plain slide design. Keep in mind that over formatting prevents your message from being heard. With PowerPoint, less is more!

I used the mouse to resize and reposition the content and Text Placeholders. You can do this using the keyboard.

It is important not to let placeholders overlap. This can cause your content to be unreadable.

Check the Tab Order of the slide content using the Selection Pane if you rearrange the placeholders so that the logical reading order has changed.

Step 8: Add an Outline to a Placeholder

If you want to add an outline to any placeholder or object on a slide, it is easy to do. We are still in Slide Master View of our presentation so anything we do will be used for any slide added to our presentation with this layout. We are also currently working on the Two Paragraph slide layout.

With the Text Placeholder selected, press Alt + J, S, letter O for Drawing Tools, Format, Shape Outline. There is a Text Outline tool so make sure you don't choose that one!

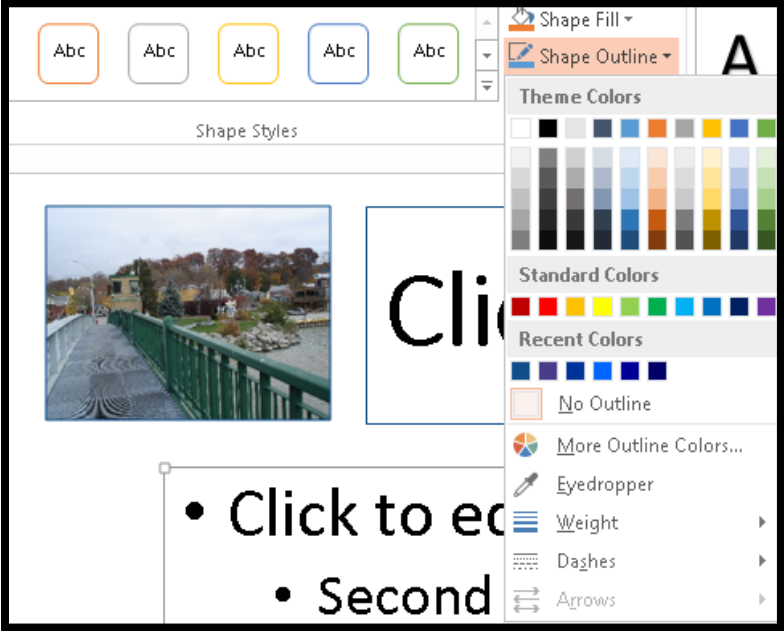


Figure 85 Content Placeholder selected showing Shape Outline option from Drawing Tools Ribbon.

You can then choose an outline colour for your placeholder, shape or object.

This can also be done in the Format Picture, Shape or Object pane under Line.

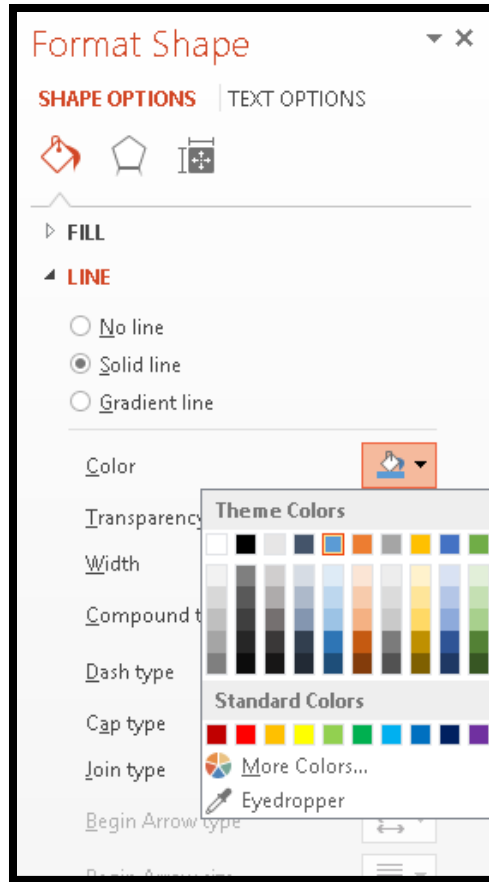


Figure 86 Adding an outline to a placeholder through the Format Shape Pane.

The option can be found under the can of paint button.

Save your work!

Customize a Slide with a Subtitle

If you want to create a slide with an accessible “subtitle” you can do this in Slide Master View.

For this slide layout, we are going to start with the Comparison Slide Layout.

In Slide Master View, duplicate the Comparison Slide Layout and rename it “Subtitle and Content.”

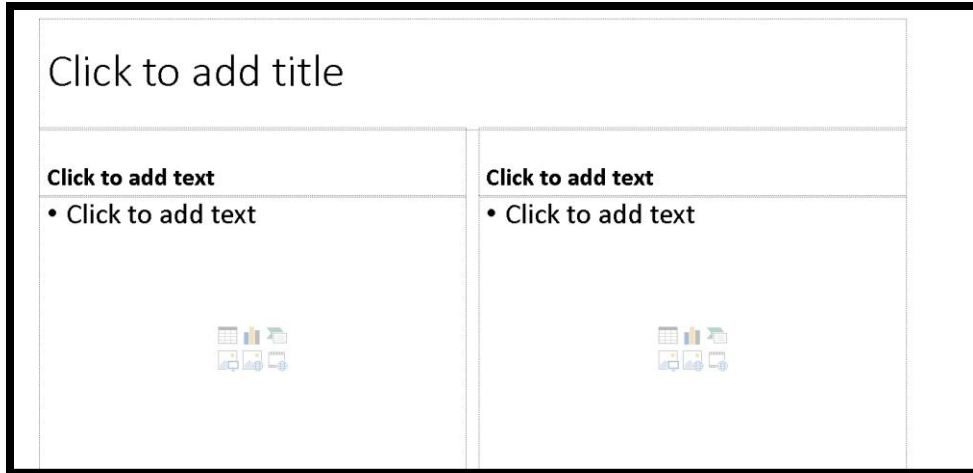


Figure 87 Comparison slide layout.

Select and delete the placeholders on the right side of the slide.



Figure 88 Subtitle and Content layout with half the placeholders removed.

Now we can expand the two remaining placeholders: A Text and Content Placeholder respectively.



Figure 89 Resized placeholders on Subtitle and Content layout slide.

Of course, you can resize these placeholders to any size you want. The key thing to remember is that you've now got an accessible slide layout that has a subtitle.

When you resize placeholders and objects significantly and/or move them around, be sure to double check the tab Order by using the Selection Pane.

Save your work!

Alternate Way of Having Two Accessible Placeholders.

This is the technique I said I'd give you at the start of this tutorial.

I know, why didn't I show you this first?

If you only need a one-off slide layout with two Content Placeholders, you can use the Two Content slide layout.

Press Alt + H, letter I for Home Ribbon, Insert Slide and choose Two Content.

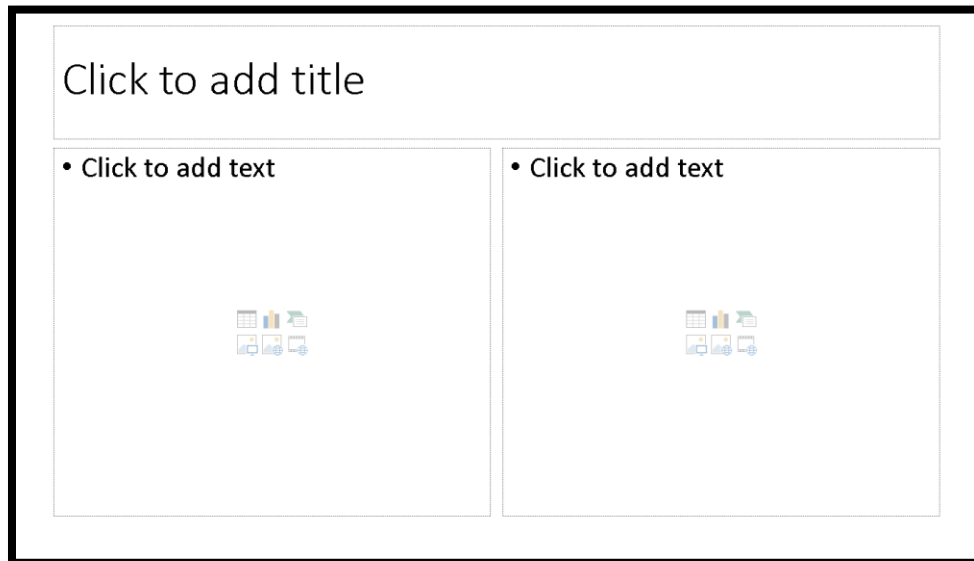


Figure 90 Two Content slide layout from the Home Ribbon.

If you need more customized slide layouts, they are easy to do once you get used to working in Slide Master View. You can create a slide layout for a PowerPoint template that you have access to whenever you use that template.

With this two-content slide layout, you can use the same techniques for resizing and removing bullets that were demonstrated in the Slide Master contents of this "How To" tutorial.

Alternate Method of Creating Slide with Subtitle

I know, but you really wanted to know the way to do this in a Slide Master first!

In Slide Layout, which is the default view of a presentation, Press Alt + H, letter I for Home Ribbon, Insert Slide and choose Comparison.

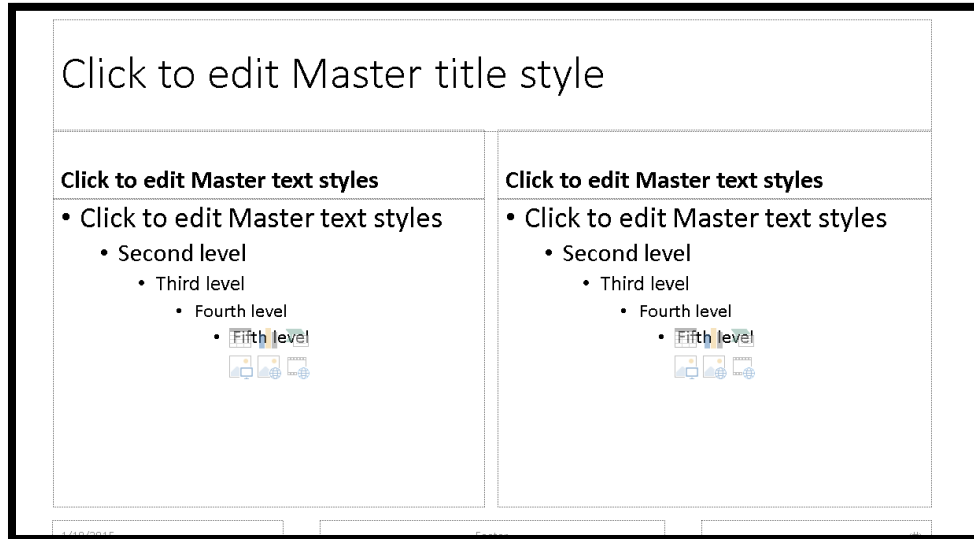


Figure 91 Comparison slide layout.

Remove the second placeholders for comparison and expand the remaining “subtitle” and Content Placeholders.

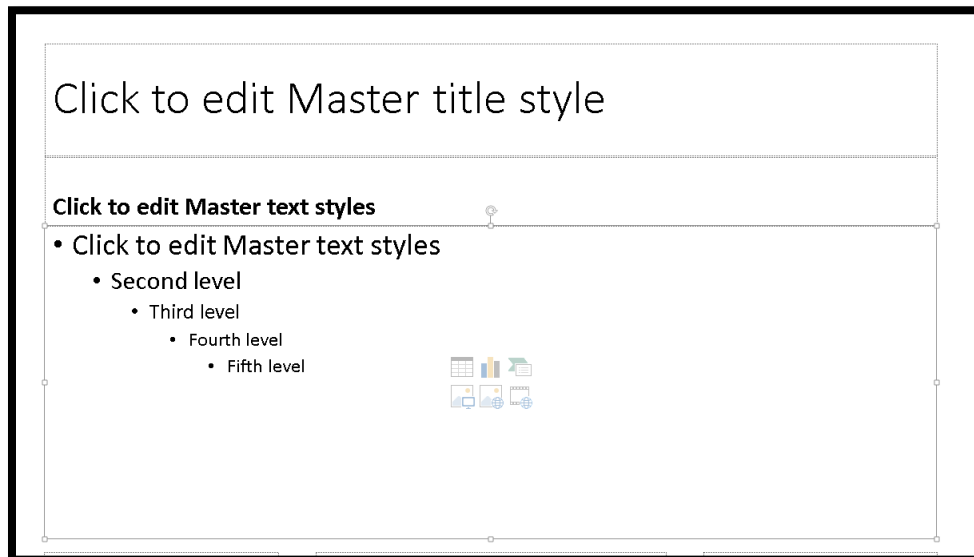


Figure 92 New Subtitle slide layout.

Contact Information

If you have questions or want to see another topic covered in the how to series, [contact Karen McCall](#). You can also visit the [Karen McCall School on Teachable](#)⁵ to find online courses, books and other tutorials.

⁵ Karen McCall School on Teachable: <https://karen-mccall.teachable.com/>