Creating Accessible Presentations with Microsoft PowerPoint

State of Iowa

September 2025

Common Office Features

Use the same features as Word when available

- Document title
- Lists
- Links
- Alt text for images

- Data tables
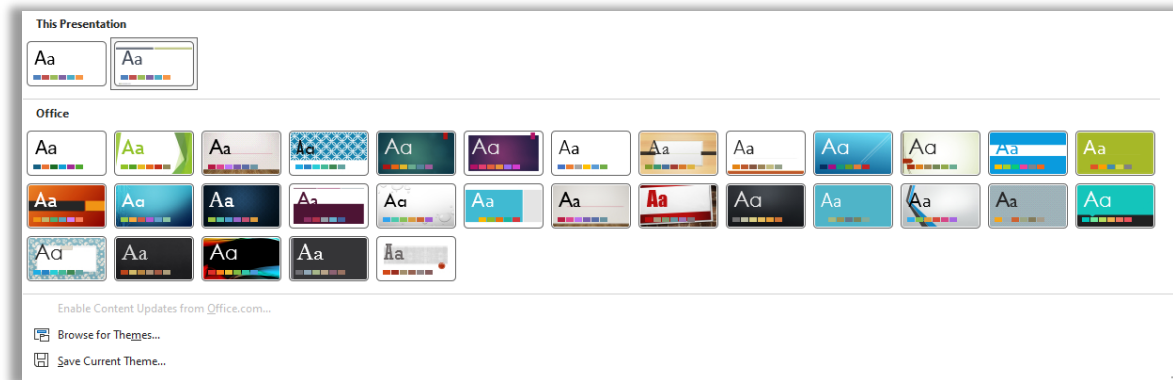- Color contrast
- Check accessibility

PowerPoint Features

- Themes
- Layouts
- Slide Master
- Transitions

- Animations
- Text Effects
- Data Table headers
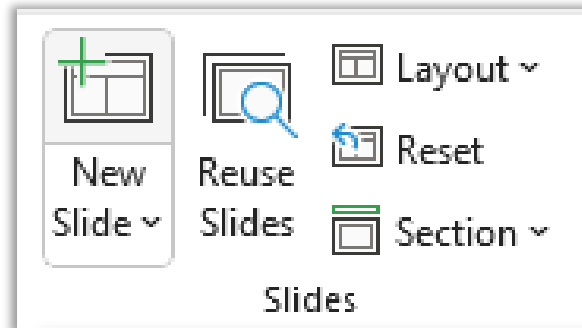- Reading Order

MSF&W

Themes

- Choose a theme with high contrast between text and background colors

- Avoid busy backgrounds

- Use 18 pt font or larger

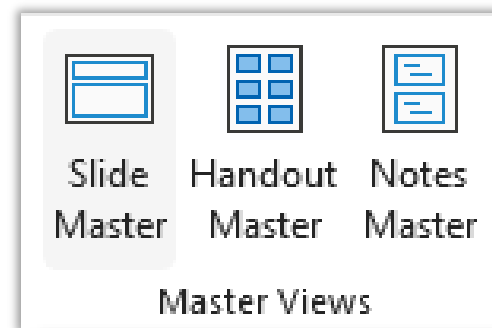- Left-align text whenever possible

- Design tab → Themes

Layouts

- Slide title and placeholder areas
- Choose a new slide layout or change the layout of the current slide
- Home tab → Slides → Layout

Slide Master

- Make design changes such as colors, fonts, and backgrounds

- Changes made in the Slide Master are applied to every slide layout

- View tab → Slide Master

Transitions

- Effects that occur when moving from one slide to the next (in Slide Show view)

- Can be distracting and affect the user's ability to read and understand the content

- If transitions are used, choose one from the "Subtle" group

- Transitions tab → Transition to This Slide → Subtle
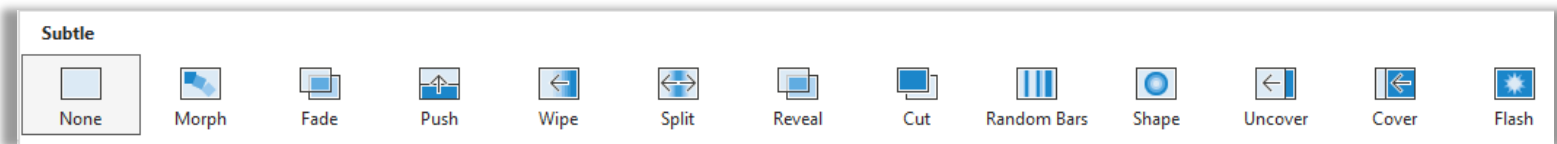
Animations

- Effects that add emphasis to images or text, such as Entrances and Exits

- Can be distracting and effect the user's ability to read and understand the content

- Avoid excessive animations

Animation Pane

▷ Play All

1. 1838 – Iowa T...
2. 1846 – Iowa B...
3. 1857 – New St...
4. 1886 – Fairgro...
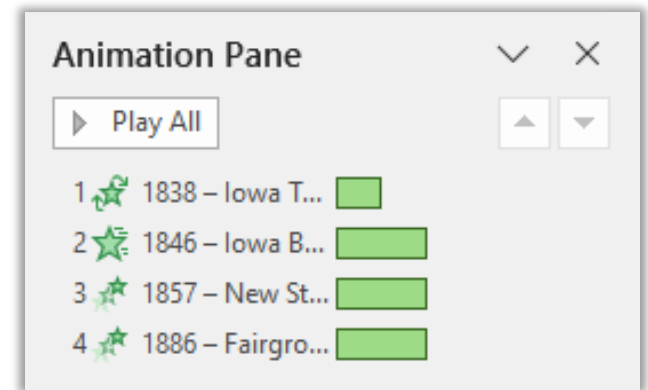
Text Effects

- Text shadow, reflection, glow, etc. used to provide emphasis or style to text in a document

- Avoid use of Text Effects

- Can result in poor readability and may also cause redundancy for screen readers
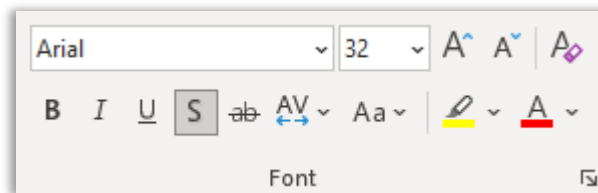
Data Tables

- Require one additional step to add row headers
- Table Design tab → Table Style Options → check Header Row and First Column
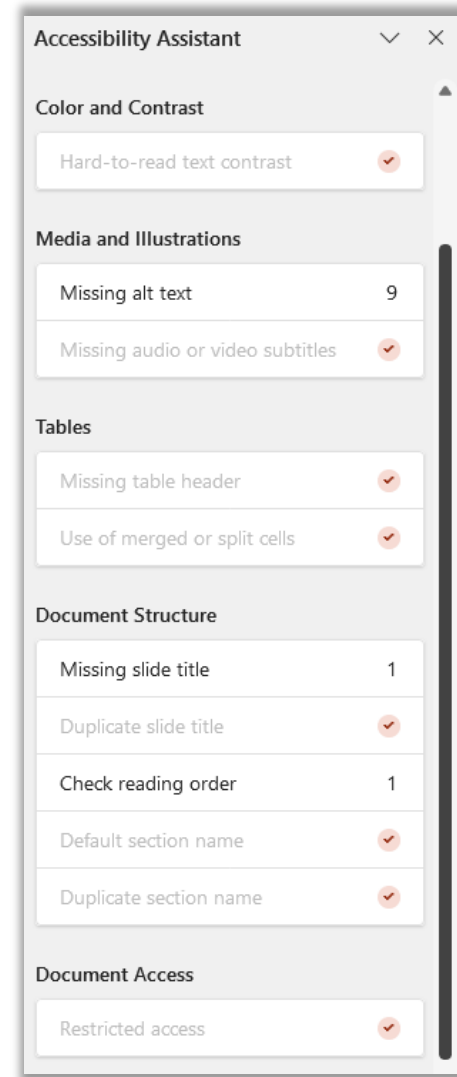
PowerPoint Accessibility Checker

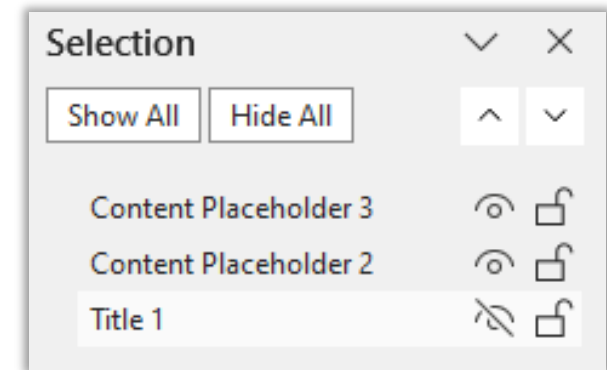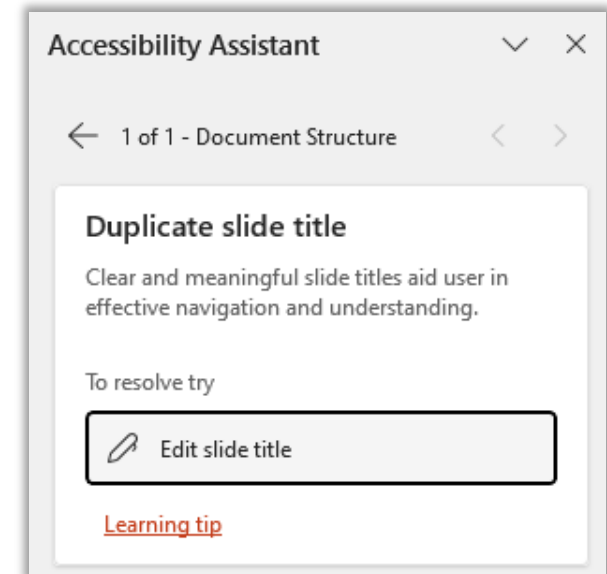- Review tab → Accessibility → Check Accessibility

Accessibility Assistant

- Results vary depending on the version of PowerPoint

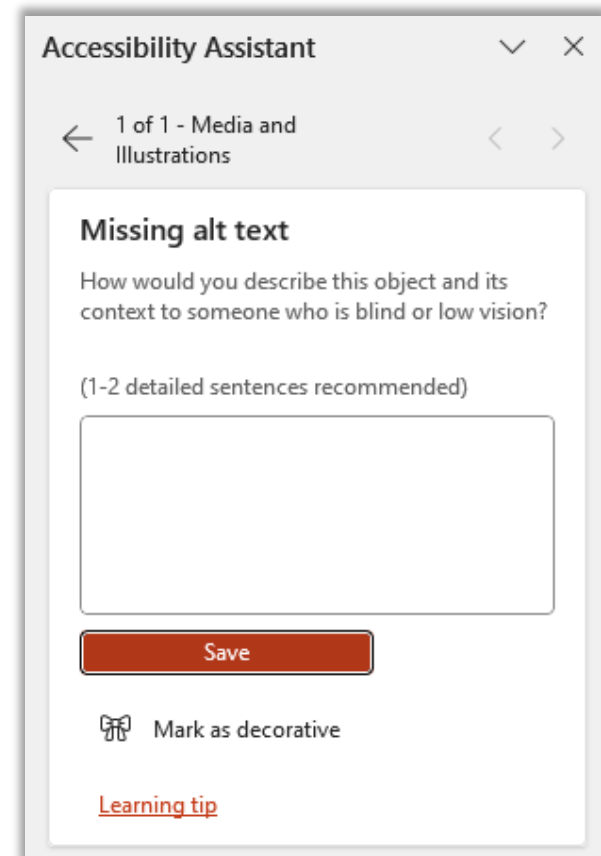- Click to open an issue and make changes

Missing/Duplicate Slide Title

- Add or edit slide titles via the Accessibility Assistant

- If you do not want a title to appear visually, go to Home tab → Drawing → Arrange → Selection Pane and mark the title as hidden

- Hidden titles will not show in Slide Show mode and will not convert to PDF

Accessibility Assistant

← 1 of 1 - Document Structure

Duplicate slide title

Clear and meaningful slide titles aid user in effective navigation and understanding.

To resolve try

✎ Edit slide title

Learning tip

Selection

Show All | Hide All

Content Placeholder 3

Content Placeholder 2

Title 1

Missing Alternative Text

- Click on the error in the Accessibility Assistant

- Type the appropriate alt text for the entire group into the field and Save

Check Reading Order

- Shows the order of items on the slide

- Reads from top to bottom

- Move into the correct order

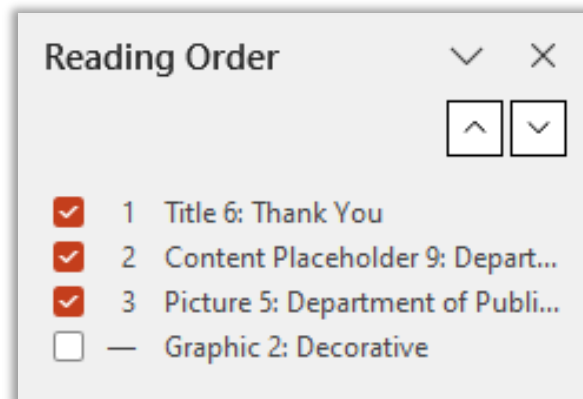- Review tab → Check Accessibility → Reading Order Pane or Accessibility tab → Reading Order Pane

Check reading order

People who cannot view the slide will hear the slide text, shapes, and content read back in specific order. Verify if that order is logical.

To resolve try

⟳ Verify Object Order
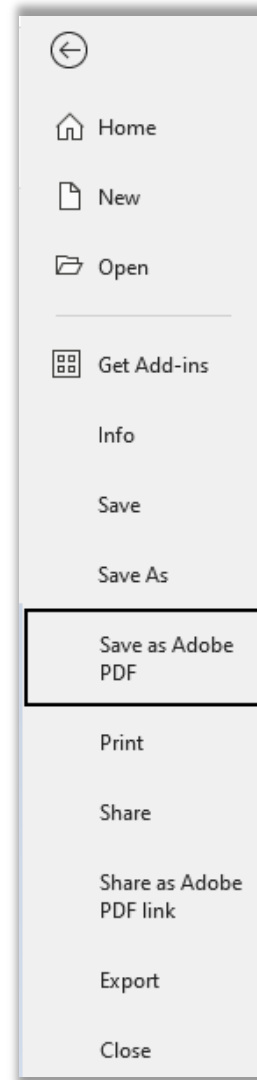
Learning tip

Reading Order ⌄ ✕

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☑ 1 Title 6: Thank You
☑ 2 Content Placeholder 9: Depart...
☑ 3 Picture 5: Department of Publi...
☐ — Graphic 2: Decorative

Save as Adobe PDF

- File tab → Save as Adobe PDF

- Do not print to PDF

Remediation in Acrobat

- Title
- Headings
  - Verify heading levels
  - Add additional headings
- Reading Order

Summary

- Documents need to be accessible for people with disabilities

- If possible, address accessibility before creating PDF

- Use PowerPoint features (themes, layouts, slide master, lists, alternate text, etc.) to produce most accessible PDF possible

- Be aware of transitions, animations, and text effects in PowerPoint

- Create PDFs using "Save as Adobe PDF"

Q&A

Questions?

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