

Create More Accessible Presentations with Microsoft PowerPoint

Version 2.2 Beta, Revised June 2025

T.M. Weissenberger, University of Iowa

Microsoft PowerPoint is one of the most popular presentation tools in use today. PowerPoint lets you create engaging presentations and interactive materials for print, digital sharing, and in-person presentation.

Here are a few tips and tricks to help you provide more accessible Microsoft PowerPoint presentations for any audience.

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PowerPoint Accessibility To-Do List

Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker

- Use the Accessibility Checker to review accessibility issues in PowerPoint
- Accessibility Checker covers only a fraction of potential accessibility issues

Slides, Layouts, Placeholders

- Use slide layouts and placeholders contained in PowerPoint
- For each slide, provide a meaningful TITLE

Content Reading Order

- Ensure that the page title is read first
- Use the Reading Order tool to manage the reading order of your content

Alternative Text for Images, Graphs, and other Non-text Content

- Apply alternate text to all images that provide content or functionality
- For complex images such as charts or graphs, provide a link or reference to a longer description or alternate presentation
- For images that do not provide content or functionality, select "Mark as Decorative"
- Provide appropriate captions or transcripts for audio or video content

Color Contrast and Use

- Ensure that all foreground/background color combinations meet or exceed guidelines for color contrast
- Do not use color as the sole means of identifying an object in your presentation

Data Tables

- Identify a header row and column as appropriate for each data table
- Avoid merging or splitting cells

Links

- Use descriptive text, not URLs, for links

Export to PDF

- For digital sharing, consider exporting your presentation as a PDF optimized for accessibility

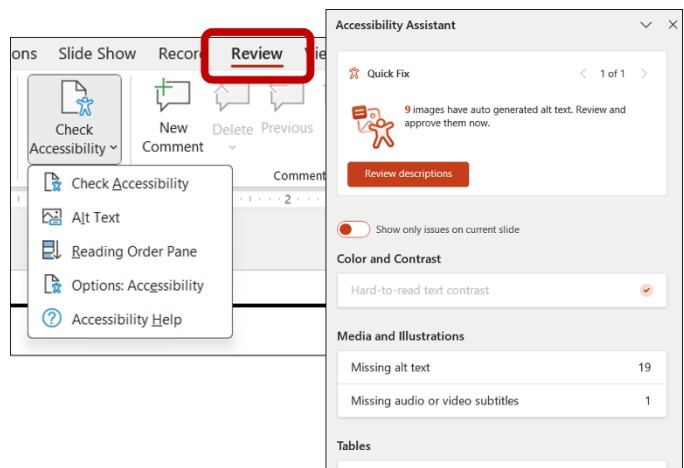
Microsoft PowerPoint Accessibility Checker

Microsoft PowerPoint offers an Accessibility Checker feature that can help you to manage your accessibility tasks. The accessibility checker doesn't provide a comprehensive assessment of a document's accessibility, but it can help you to find opportunities to add important accessibility features to your PowerPoint presentation. This tool is also available in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

Run the Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker

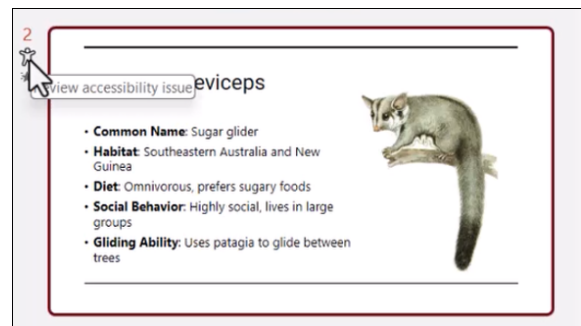
- Open the Review ribbon and find the Check Accessibility tool
- View accessibility issues in the Accessibility Assistant

When you select one of the Inspection Results, Accessibility Checker will open a panel with Additional Information that describes the accessibility problem and offers suggestions on how to fix the issue.



Review Accessibility Issues

You can set the Review Accessibility Issues feature in Options: Accessibility. Review Accessibility Issues displays an icon next to slides in your Normal view to help you recognize and address accessibility issues.



Note: Not all accessibility issues are of equal concern. Focus on structural and content issues like slide titles, content reading order, ALT text, and table structure.

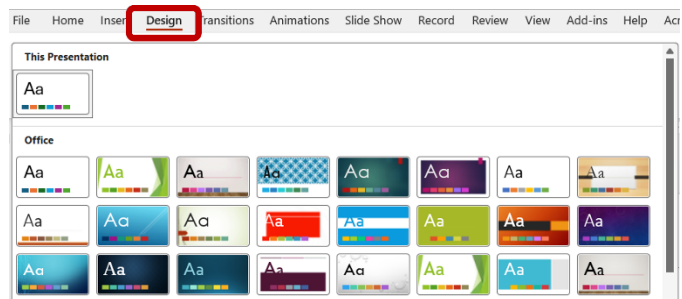
PowerPoint Themes: Slide Layout, Placeholders, Slide Masters

At the center of every presentation is the slide. PowerPoint slides are available in a variety of layouts, and each layout is defined by placeholders, which hold specific kinds of content. Each group of slides is styled with colors, fonts, positioning, placeholders, and other elements to create an overall design scheme, or theme.

Understanding how slide placeholders and layouts fit together can help you to produce presentations that are robust, easy to update and maintain, and accessible to users of assistive technologies.

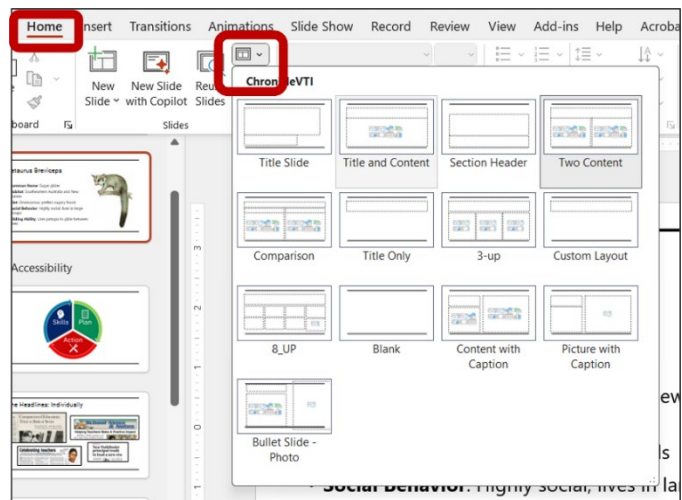
View Themes

- Open the Design ribbon and find the Themes group
- Select a theme and apply it to your presentation



View Default Layouts

- On the Home ribbon, locate the Slides section.
- Select NEW SLIDE to view available layouts.



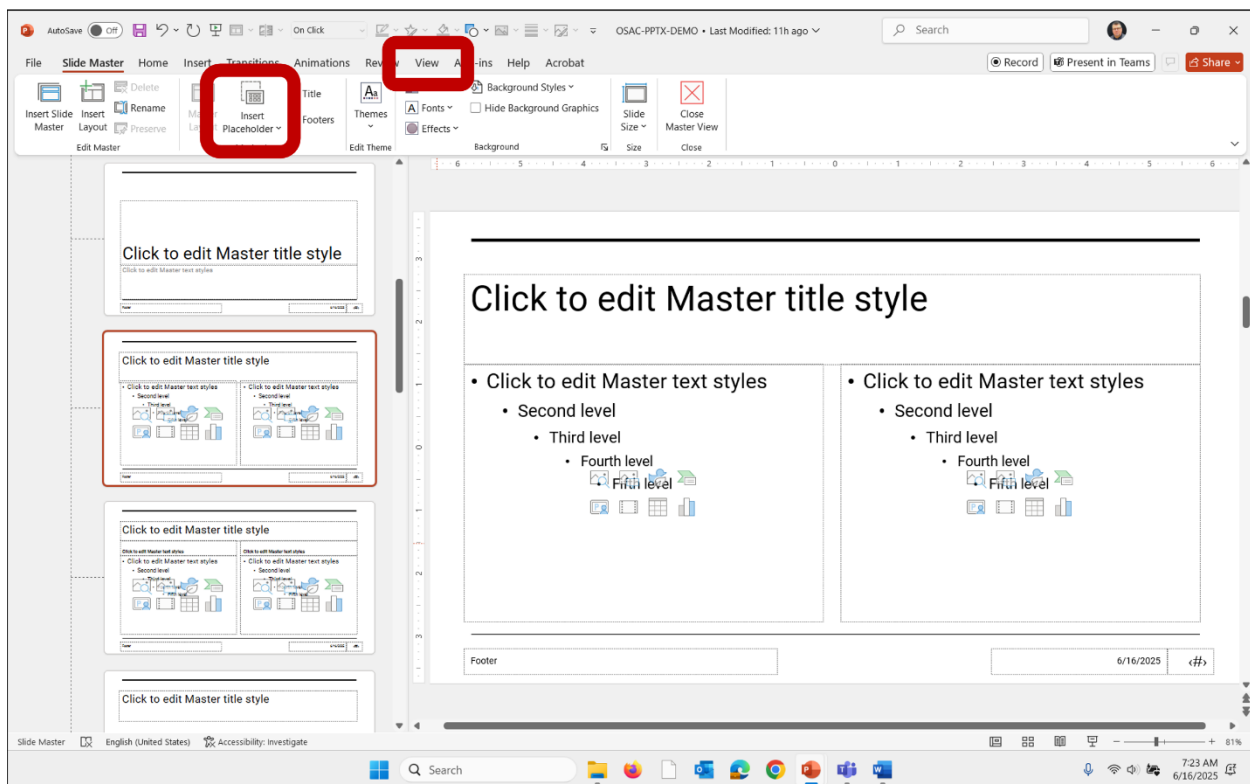
Placeholders

Placeholders are fillable regions that you populate with the content of your presentation. By default, most PowerPoint slides come equipped with a “TITLE” placeholder, and one or more placeholders for various types of content. The way these placeholders are configured defines the slide’s “layout”. A PowerPoint theme, or “design” contains a variety of pre-defined layouts that you can use to create individual slides in your presentation.

The correct use of “TITLE” placeholders is a key factor in the accessibility of your PowerPoint presentation. The “TITLE” placeholder announces the title of the slide to a screen reader, typically along with the slide number (e.g., “Slide 3”); this information helps users to remain oriented within your presentation and to understand the intended purpose of individual slides. The “TITLE” placeholder should always contain meaningful content and should be the first content element a user encounters in any slide.

Placeholders also define the reading order for objects on a slide. All slide content should be contained in placeholders, and placeholders should be organized to reflect the order in which they are to be read.

Presenters can re-order placeholders when making slides, but the order of placeholders in the slide master will serve as a default.



Customize Slides in Slide Master View

The Slide Master reflects most or all of the formatting choices for a design theme. You can customize colors, fonts, positioning, graphics, background objects and other items for recurring use throughout your presentation.

Customize a Slide Master

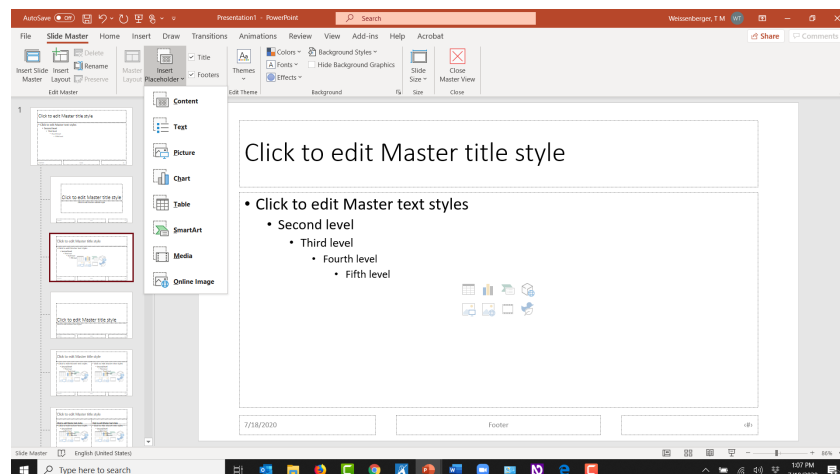
- From the View ribbon, select Slide Master
- In the Slide Sorter view, select the layout you want to modify
- Add or modify fonts, images, background shapes, positioning, placeholders, and other style and content features.

Slides created from customized slide masters will take on the stylistic and semantic properties of the updated masters.

Add a Custom Layout with Placeholder

To add custom content or content outside an existing placeholder, create a custom slide master with placeholders in the appropriate places. DO NOT use the Text Box feature or insert images outside of PowerPoint placeholders.

- Open Slide Master view
- Select a slide layout you want to modify or customize, or create a new slide
- Add and arrange placeholders, background shapes, and other components as desired
- View the modified Slide Master in Normal view



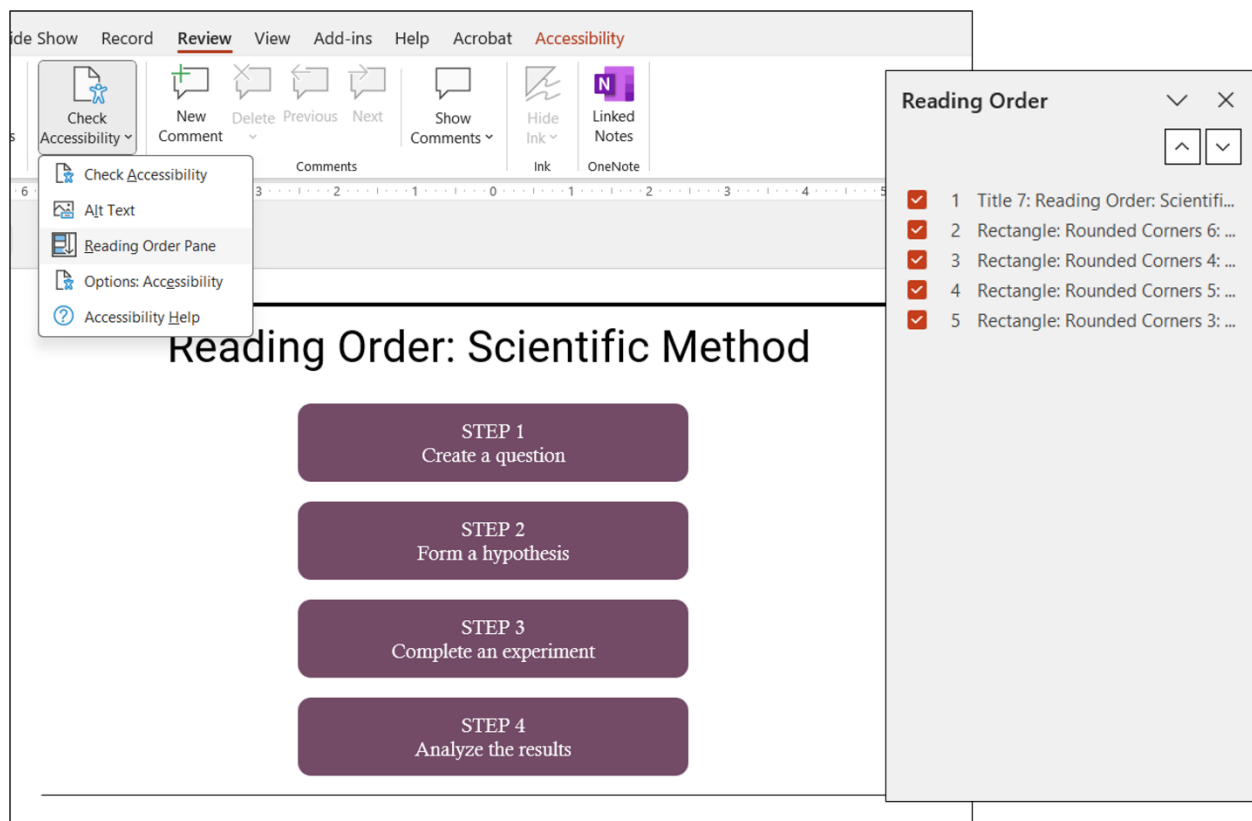
Content Reading Order

For slides that describe a sequence or process, it's important to ensure that the items on the slide reflect the sequence you want to present. Even when items appear visually to be in order, they may be presented out of their logical order for users of assistive technology.

You can use the Selection Pane to reorder items in your PowerPoint slide. The selection pane reflects the presentation order of slide elements in a stack, proceeding from the bottom to the top.

To Reorder Objects on a Slide

- Display the slide in PowerPoint
- In the REVIEW ribbon, open *Check Accessibility* and then *Reading Order Pane*
- Drag or use your arrows the slide objects into the correct order



The screenshot shows the PowerPoint interface with the **Review** ribbon active. The **Check Accessibility** dropdown menu is open, showing the **Reading Order Pane** option. The **Reading Order** pane is open on the right, displaying a list of five items with checkboxes:

- 1 Title 7: Reading Order: Scientifi...
- 2 Rectangle: Rounded Corners 6: ...
- 3 Rectangle: Rounded Corners 4: ...
- 4 Rectangle: Rounded Corners 5: ...
- 5 Rectangle: Rounded Corners 3: ...

The slide content is titled "Reading Order: Scientific Method" and features four steps in a vertical sequence:

- STEP 1
Create a question
- STEP 2
Form a hypothesis
- STEP 3
Complete an experiment
- STEP 4
Analyze the results

Use Sufficient Color Contrast

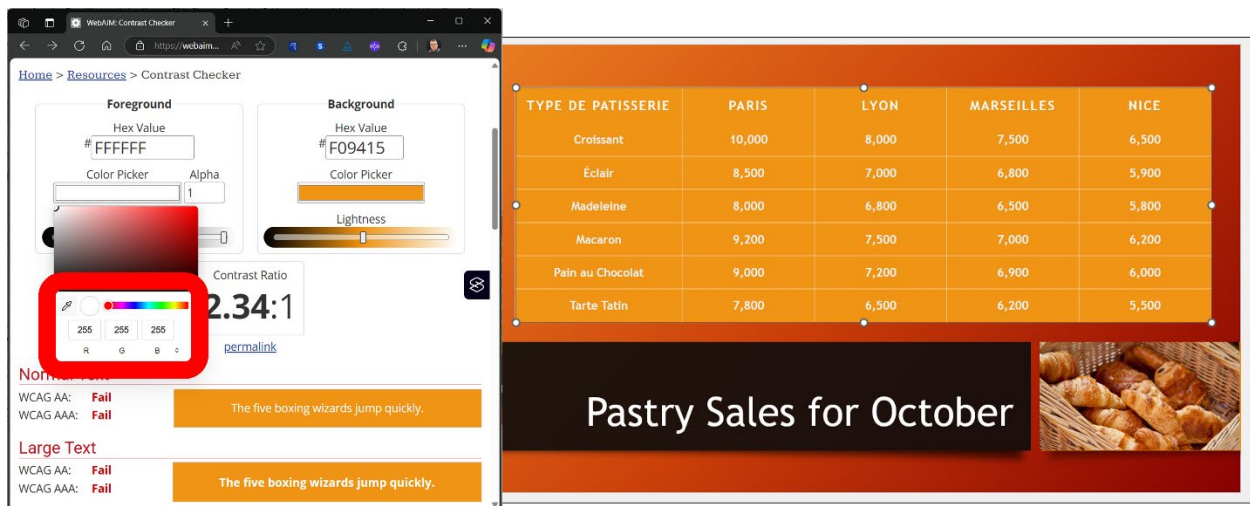
Providing sufficient contrast between background and foreground colors is not specifically a Microsoft PowerPoint accessibility technique; all documents need a level of contrast that makes them readable by low-vision or color-blind users. In general, light text should go on a dark background, and dark text on a light background.

Determine a font color in your PowerPoint presentation

- Place the cursor in a line of text
- Open the Format Font dialog (ALT+O, F)
- Open the Font Color picker and select More Colors (ALT+C, M)
- The color picker dialog will contain the RGB value of the selected text

Use a Contrast Checker


- Visit WebAIM.org and search for Contrast Checker
- Use the Contrast Checker's Color Pickers to select foreground and background colors.
- Contrast Checker calculates the contrast ratio and indicates a Pass or Fail
- Adjust the colors in your PowerPoint presentation for sufficient contrast



The screenshot shows the WebAIM Contrast Checker tool on the left and a PowerPoint slide on the right. The tool displays a contrast ratio of 2.34:1 for white text on an orange background, which is a 'Fail' according to WCAG standards. The PowerPoint slide is titled 'Pastry Sales for October' and contains a table of sales data.

TYPE DE PATISSERIE	PARIS	LYON	MARSEILLES	NICE
Croissant	10,000	8,000	7,500	6,500
Éclair	8,500	7,000	6,800	5,900
Madeleine	8,000	6,800	6,500	5,800
Macaron	9,200	7,500	7,000	6,200
Pain au Chocolat	9,000	7,200	6,900	6,000
Tarte Tatin	7,800	6,500	6,200	5,500

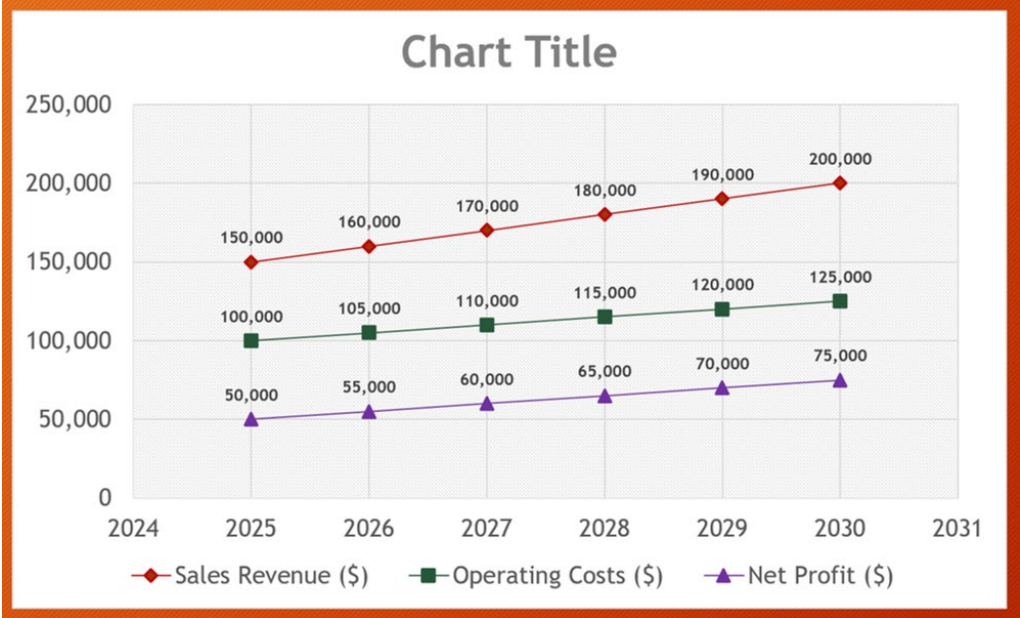
Pastry Sales for October



Color to Convey Information

Color should not be the only visual means of conveying information or otherwise communicating with the user of your presentation. Where color is used to distinguish or identify content, provide a secondary method, such as a text label, to convey information visually.

In this example, note that each series is distinguished by color, marker shape, and data label. The data is also contained in a table adjacent to the chart. Offering multiple ways to identify the content helps to ensure that anyone can use the data.



Year	Sales Revenue (\$)	Operating Costs (\$)	Net Profit (\$)
2025	150,000	100,000	50,000
2026	160,000	105,000	55,000
2027	170,000	110,000	60,000
2028	180,000	115,000	65,000
2029	190,000	120,000	70,000
2030	200,000	125,000	75,000

Provide Meaningful Link Text

If you use links in your PowerPoint presentations, be sure the text of the link clearly indicates where the link goes. Avoid generic link text such as "More" or "Click Here"

Bad: [Click here](#)

Slightly better, still not great: [Click here to learn more](#)

Good: [Learn more about the Canary Islands](#)

Still better: [Our World: The Canary Islands \(Tagged PDF, 1.2 MB\)](#)

Consider all of the information contained in the last hyperlink example above—document title, document format, file size—each element conveys information to the user about the upcoming experience and helps the user to make an informed choice about how to approach the material.

Ensure that links are understandable out of context

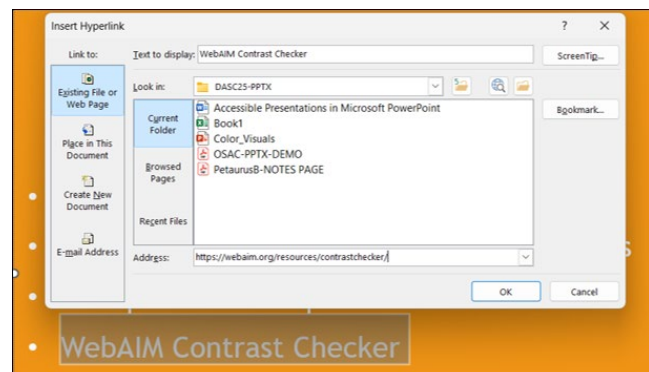
If you include links in a body of text, make sure that the link text contains all of the information a user needs to understand the purpose and target of the link. Do not use link text that consists only of the URL. If you want to provide the URL, as in the case of a presentation intended for printing, place it AFTER the link text, and not in the link itself. Example:

[International Space Station Overview](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station) (https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station)

Enter or edit link text in your document

To create or edit link text, you can use the Insert Hyperlink command (Control+K), or select Hyperlink from the Insert tab. This opens the Insert Hyperlink dialog box, where you can add both your text and your link's URL.

- Highlight the text you want to use as a hyperlink
- Open the Insert Hyperlink dialog (Control+K)
- In the "Text to display" field, confirm or edit the text of your link
- In the "Address" field, enter the URL of your link



Provide Column and/or Row Headers for Data Tables

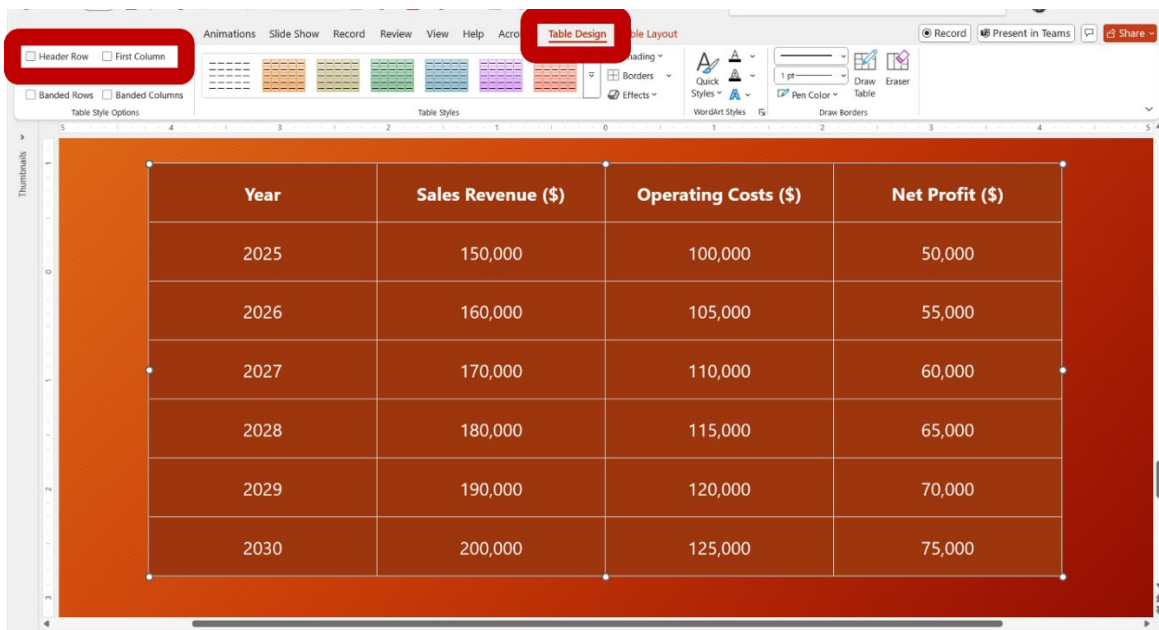
Compared to other file formats, PowerPoint offers little in the way of accessibility for data tables. Keeping your table as simple as possible; straightforward, grid-shaped tables with a single row of header cells (and column of row headers if appropriate) will yield the most accessible results by associating table headers and data cells. Set Header Row and First Column for any table that displays organized data.

Create Your Table

- In the Content placeholder, select the Insert Table option
- Enter data into your table
- Edit the caption if necessary

Set Header Row/First Column

- Click inside the table
- Open the “Table Design” ribbon
- Check “Header Row”, “First Column”, or both as appropriate



The screenshot shows the PowerPoint interface with the Table Design ribbon active. The 'Header Row' and 'First Column' checkboxes are checked. Below the ribbon, a table is displayed with the following data:

Year	Sales Revenue (\$)	Operating Costs (\$)	Net Profit (\$)
2025	150,000	100,000	50,000
2026	160,000	105,000	55,000
2027	170,000	110,000	60,000
2028	180,000	115,000	65,000
2029	190,000	120,000	70,000
2030	200,000	125,000	75,000

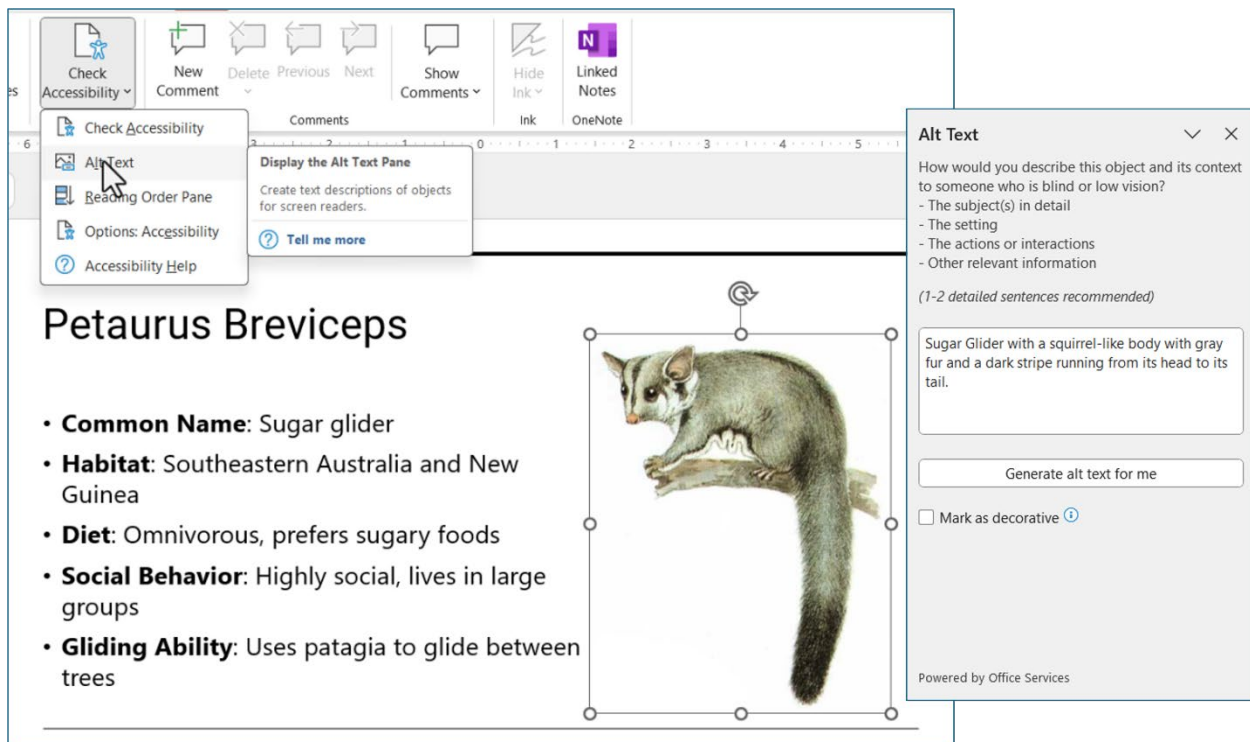
Provide ALT Text for Images

Images, charts, and other graphical elements are not read by screen readers and present an accessibility barrier to users of those technologies. Good ALT text lets users know the meaning and purpose of a graphical element when they can't view the image on the screen.

In PowerPoint, ALT text is exposed to screen readers when an image is positioned in a placeholder or inserted directly onto a slide. As with other slide elements, ALT text will be read by assistive technology according to the reading order in the Selection Pane.

Add ALT text to an image in PowerPoint

- Insert an image into an appropriate placeholder in your PowerPoint slide
- Highlight the image to reveal its “Format” ribbon
- Select the ALT text button
- Enter your ALT text in the ALT TEXT pane
- If the image is purely decorative, select the “Mark as Decorative” checkbox



The screenshot shows a PowerPoint slide titled "Petaurus Breviceps" with a list of facts about the sugar glider. An image of a sugar glider is selected, and the "Format" ribbon is visible. The "Alt Text" button is highlighted in the ribbon. A tooltip for "Display the Alt Text Pane" is shown, and the "Alt Text" pane is open on the right side of the slide. The pane contains a text box with the following text: "Sugar Glider with a squirrel-like body with gray fur and a dark stripe running from its head to its tail." Below the text box is a "Generate alt text for me" button and a checkbox labeled "Mark as decorative".

Petaurus Breviceps

- **Common Name:** Sugar glider
- **Habitat:** Southeastern Australia and New Guinea
- **Diet:** Omnivorous, prefers sugary foods
- **Social Behavior:** Highly social, lives in large groups
- **Gliding Ability:** Uses patagia to glide between trees

Alt Text

How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind or low vision?

- The subject(s) in detail
- The setting
- The actions or interactions
- Other relevant information

(1-2 detailed sentences recommended)

Sugar Glider with a squirrel-like body with gray fur and a dark stripe running from its head to its tail.

Generate alt text for me

Mark as decorative ⓘ

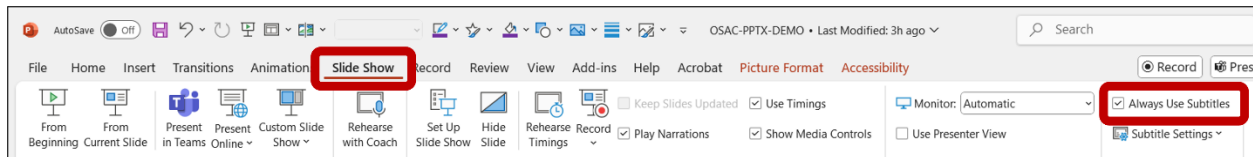
Powered by Office Services

Use Live Captions in a Presentation

PowerPoint accessibility isn't limited to sharing an accessible version of your slide deck. Make your live presentations more accessible by turning on live captions to ensure your attendees don't miss a word.

Turn on Always Use Subtitles

- In PowerPoint, select the Slide Show tab
- Find and check the *Always Use Subtitles*



Petaurus Breviceps

- **Common Name:** Sugar glider
- **Habitat:** Southeastern Australia and New Guinea
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- **Gliding Ability:** Uses patagia to glide between trees



Sugar gliders are small marsupials known for their gliding ability.

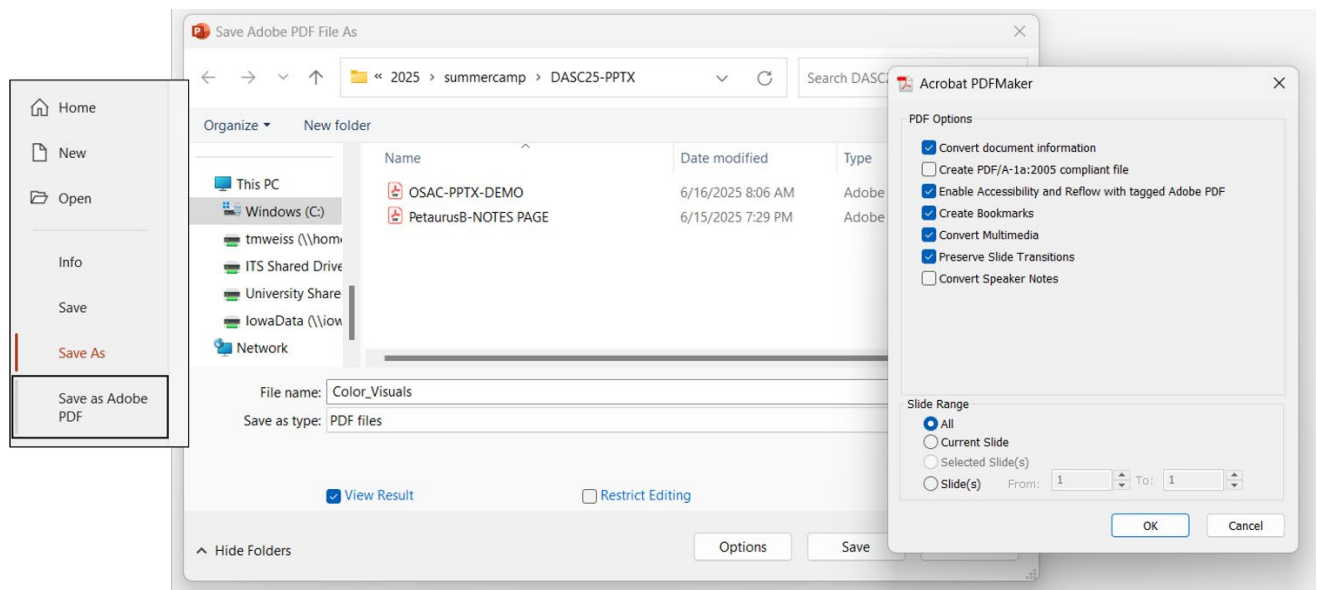
Prepare Presentation for Export to PDF

If you have created your PowerPoint slide deck with accessibility in mind, most or all of the accessibility features should transfer to the PDF version of your document. When you export to PDF, check your Save As options to make sure accessibility features are included.

Save as Adobe PDF

To save your PowerPoint presentation as an Adobe PDF

- Create your PowerPoint presentation, applying any appropriate accessibility features
- In the File page, choose *Save as Adobe PDF*
- Adjust the Options as necessary in the Save As dialog box



Use the Create PDF Add-in

Note: you must have the Acrobat toolbar to perform the following task.

To export your PowerPoint file to PDF

- Create your PowerPoint presentation, applying any accessibility features
- In the Acrobat toolbar, set preferences such as Heading conversion, Advanced tagging, etc.
- Select the "Create PDF" tool from the toolbar