



Best Practices for Creating ADA-Compliant Presentations

Accessible PowerPoint presentations ensure that content is usable by individuals with visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive disabilities. Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related standards (such as Section 508 and WCAG) is not only a legal requirement for many organizations, but also a best practice that improves clarity and usability for all audiences.

1. Use Accessible Slide Structure

- Rely on built-in slide layouts rather than manually placing text boxes. PowerPoint's predefined layouts preserve correct reading order for screen readers.
- Ensure logical reading order by checking the Selection Pane and confirming that titles, body text, and visuals are read in a meaningful sequence.
- Include unique, descriptive slide titles on every slide to help users navigate using assistive technologies.

2. Ensure Text Readability

- Use clear, sans-serif fonts (e.g., Calibri, Arial, Verdana). Avoid decorative or script fonts.
- Maintain sufficient font size: generally 18 pt or larger for body text and 24 pt or larger for headings.
- Avoid conveying meaning through color alone (e.g., "items in red are required"). Pair color with text labels or icons.

3. Apply Proper Color Contrast

- Maintain strong contrast between text and background (e.g., dark text on a light background or vice versa).
- Avoid busy images or gradients behind text.



- Use PowerPoint’s accessibility checker or external contrast tools to verify compliance.

4. Make Visuals Accessible

- For complex charts or infographics, provide a text summary on the slide or in speaker notes.

5. Design Accessible Tables and Charts

- Use simple tables with clearly defined headers.
- Avoid merged or split cells, which can confuse screen readers.
- Ensure charts include clear labels, legends, and data descriptions in text form when needed.

6. Use Multimedia Responsibly

- Caption all videos accurately and synchronize captions with audio.
- Provide transcripts for audio-only content.

7. Write Accessible Content

- Use plain language and concise bullet points.
- Avoid excessive acronyms or define them when first used.
- Structure content consistently across slides to reduce cognitive load.

8. Test Before Sharing

- Run PowerPoint’s Accessibility Checker and resolve flagged issues.
- Test slides using a screen reader when possible.
- Export presentations to PDF only if accessibility is preserved; otherwise, distribute the original PowerPoint file.