

# Accessibility Tips for PowerPoints

The City of Virginia Beach is dedicated to transparency and enhancing access to essential city documents for every resident. To ensure that all citizens can access presentations that come before the City Council, please adhere to the tips below to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) 2.1 AA. Please refer to the resources at the end of the document for additional guidance.

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## Useful Design Tips

- **Use an accessible presentation template:** Use one of the accessible PowerPoint templates to make sure that your slide design, colors, contrast, and fonts are accessible to all audiences. They are also designed so that screen readers can more easily read the slide content:
  - To find an accessible template, select File > New.
  - In the Search for Online templates and themes text field, type accessible templates and press Enter.
  - In the search results, select a suitable template.
  - In the template preview, select Create.
- **Save PowerPoints as a “.pptx” file so you use the accessibility tools.** Older versions (Presentation 97-2003) of PowerPoint don't have the accessibility checker.
- **Every slide must have a title and every title should be unique.**
- **Number the slides and title the cover slide.**
- **Use a sans serif font** (e.g., Calibri, Arial) that is at least 18 point. 24 point is best for readability. Maximum 6-8 lines of text per slide.
- **Ensure good contrast at least 4.5:1** between background and text and 3:1 between non-text elements and adjacent color/s. Don't use color alone to convey information or identify content.
- **Use a plain background** without any watermark or photo behind it.
- **Use default bulleted and numbered lists.**
- **Provide descriptive alt text for all images, maps, charts and graphics.** All images, maps, charts and graphics should have alternative text so they can be understood when not seen. Be aware that automatically generated alt text may not be accurate or adequately convey the meaning or significance of an image. Always check alt text for accuracy.

## How to add alt text to an image

- Right click on the image or object for which you want to add alt text. Select “View (Edit) Alt Text.”
- Access Alt Text Options:
  - Go to the Format tab on the ribbon.
  - Click on Alt Text in the Accessibility group.
  - Alternatively, right-click the object and choose Edit Alt Text from the dropdown menu.
- Enter a Concise Description:
  - In the Alt Text pane that appears, enter a brief description in the text box. This description should convey the content and context of the image or object for people with visual disabilities.
  - Don’t repeat the text of an adjacent caption. Screen readers read both the caption and the alt text, so avoid having the same details in both.
  - End alt text with a period. This signals the screen reader to pause before proceeding.
- **Reading order should be left to right, top to bottom.** Verify the reading order in these panes:
  - Reading order: content should be in order from top to bottom. (Not available for Mac.)
  - Selection pane: reverse order – title at the bottom, content above.
- **Videos embedded in PowerPoint are inaccessible.** Consider adding a caption with a linked text to video.
- **Use the “Check Accessibility” feature in the “Review” tab** to identify potential issues.
- **Add a meaningful title in the document properties area:** File > Info > Title
- **Save to PDF correctly to keep the ADA modifications.** Select File > Save As > PDF.

## Creating Accessible Tables

- Tables should be used for data and not layout. Tables can be very difficult for screen readers to understand unless there is a clear relationship between header and data cells. It is best to use simple tables with one row of column headers and no nested rows, columns, or merged cells. Avoid blank rows, columns, or cells. Avoid using tables for layout or formatting purposes, such as formatting a numbered list.
- Complex tables can also be made accessible in Adobe Acrobat Pro. However, complex tables can often be simplified by breaking them into multiple simple tables.
- To make simple tables accessible, select the row that contains the column headers, select the “Table Design” tab in the PowerPoint ribbon, and then check “Header Row.”

## Things to Avoid

- Avoid using abbreviations (acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviated names).
- Avoid using acronyms, acronyms are similar to initialisms, but the letters are used to form an abbreviation that is spoken as a word, such as NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), VML (Virginia Municipal League), etc.
- Avoid using all capital letters for emphasis or headings.
- Don't use print screens of text or tables.
- Don't create a table using the "Draw Table Tool" instead use "Insert Table."
- Don't use slashes in place of "and" or "or" (e.g., "red and/or blue" should be "red or blue, or both")
- Avoid using embedded media. If you must embed video or audio, they must also be accessible.
- Avoid automatic slide transitions.
- Don't print to PDF. This saving method will not result in an accessible document.
- Avoid using Text Shadow and Text Effects fonts styles.

## Resources

- [WebAIM PowerPoint accessibility instructions](#)
- [Making your PowerPoint presentations accessible](#) (video)
- [Checking PDFs for accessibility](#)
- [Color Contrast Checker](#)