

Making Power Point Accessible

Microsoft Power Point is one of the most popular tools for creating slide show presentations. It is often used to organize thoughts for a meeting or lesson, to present key points in a live presentation, and even to create handouts. This article outlines how to can make PowerPoint files more accessible on the web.

Create Accessible Power Point Files

Whether you link directly to a Power Point file (PPT), or display your presentation in another format like PDF, there are several things that you can do to make your file as accessible as possible.

Power Point for Mac

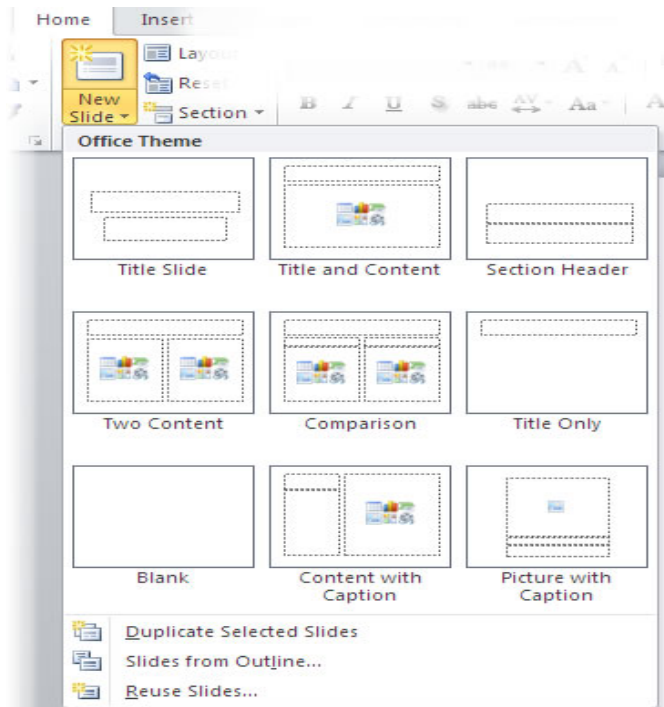
All versions of Power Point for Mac through 2008 have serious accessibility limitations. For example, you cannot give images appropriate alternative text or export the presentation as an accessible PDF file. Because of these accessibility limitations, this article does not include guidelines for Office for Mac users.

Slide layouts

Every version of Power Point since at least 2000 contains a series of highly accessible slide layouts. Power Point is designed to encourage the use of these slide layouts, especially in newer versions. Using these templates correctly will ensure that your files have correctly structured headings and lists, proper reading order, etc. The correct use of slide layouts is probably the most significant thing you can do to ensure that your content is accessible.

Power Point 2007-2010

Select Home > New Slide, or select the New Slide button, and a menu of slide types will appear.



Alternative text for images

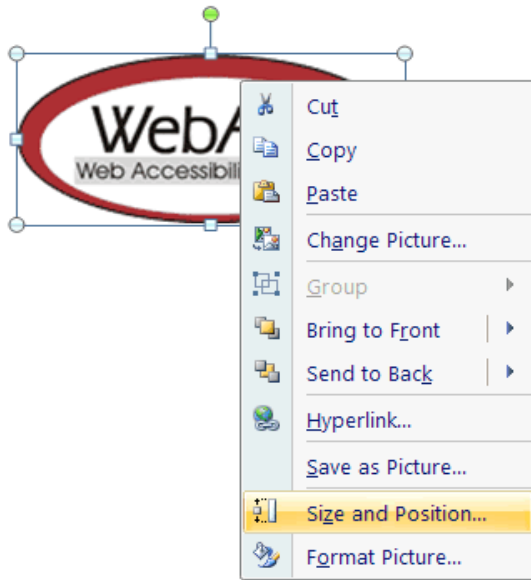
Power Point presentations usually include images. While these images are sometimes decorative, many contain content that should be given a text alternative. Images can be give appropriate alternative text in Power Point. This alternative text will be read by a screen reader in a Power Point file and should remain intact when exporting to HTML or PDF.

Notes

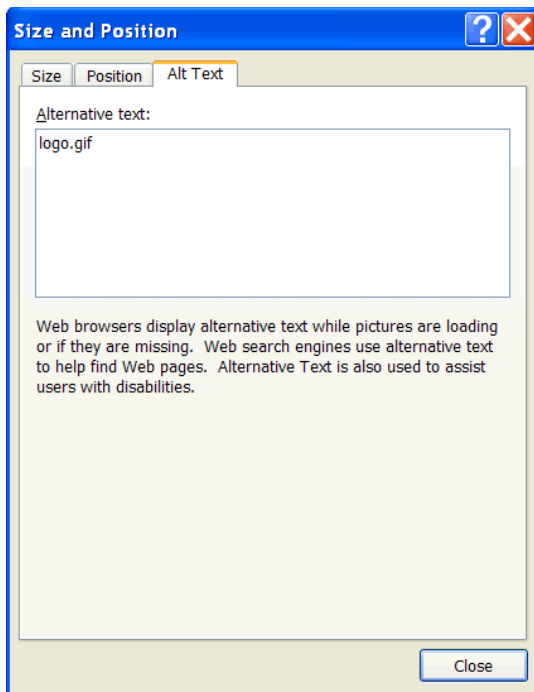
- There is no way to add empty/null alternative text to an image in PowerPoint. If your presentation has decorative images that do not convey unique content, the best thing to do is to leave the alternative text field blank. If the image does not have alternative text a screen reader will typically skip it.
- "Word art" is actually converted to an image in Office 2003-2007 and must be given alternative text. It remains text in Office 2010.
- Embedded charts should be given alternative text, but sometimes the content of the chart might be too long for alternative text. If your presentation contains numerous charts or graphs, consider including a link to the original PPT file. The data that is used to create the chart will be accessible in the original file (it is basically a simple spreadsheet), but will not be included in a PDF or HTML version.

Power Point 2007

Adding alternative text to images is less intuitive in Power Point 2007. To add alternative text, right-click on the picture and select Size and Position.



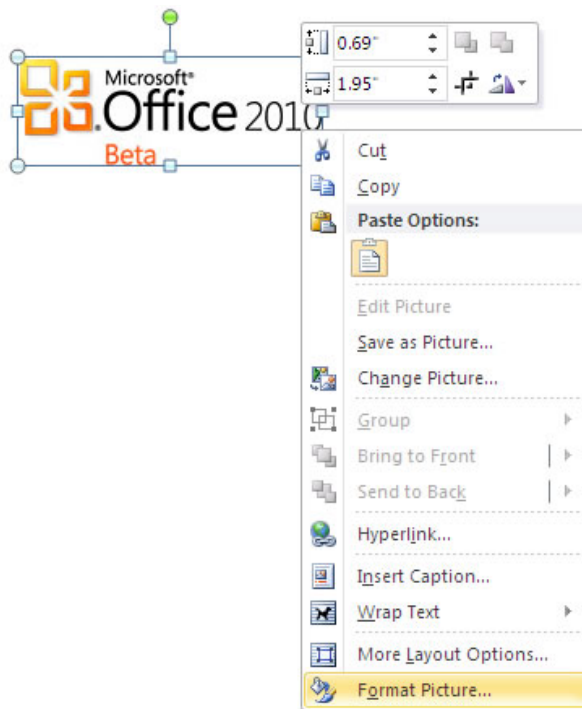
A dialog box will appear. Select the Alt Text tab. You will notice that the image filename is entered into the field by default. The filename is never appropriate alternative text. This functionality will almost certainly result in misuse of the alt attribute.



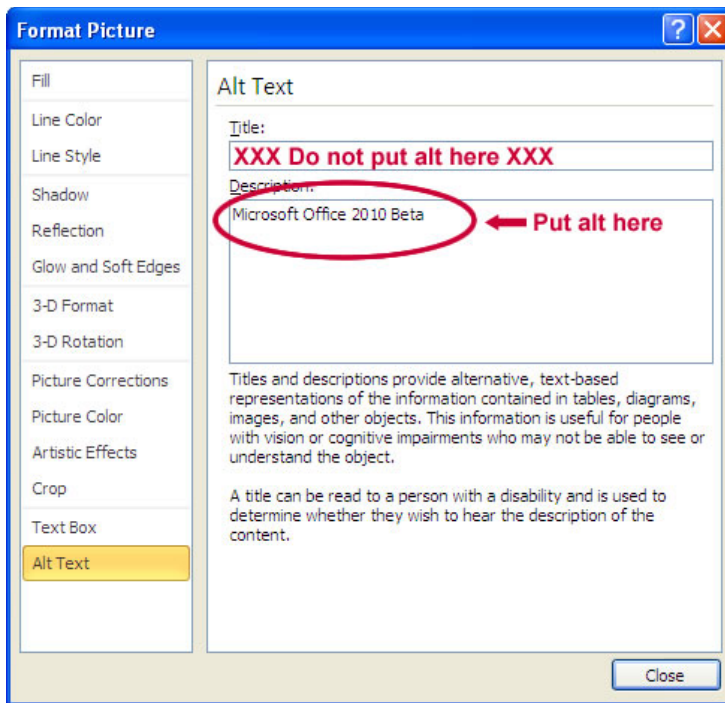
Replace the filename with appropriate alternative text. For this image, it would be something like "WebAIM - Web Accessibility in Mind." If an image is decorative, remove the filename and leave this field blank.

Power Point 2010

PowerPoint 2010 moved the alternative text field back to an intuitive place, but made things more confusing by creating two fields for alternative text. To add alternative text to an image, select Format Picture.



With the Format Picture menu open, select the option for Alt Text in the sidebar. Two fields will appear, one labeled Title and one labeled Description. For best results, add appropriate alternative text to the Description field, not the Title field. Information in the Title field will not be saved as alternative text when the file is saved as HTML.

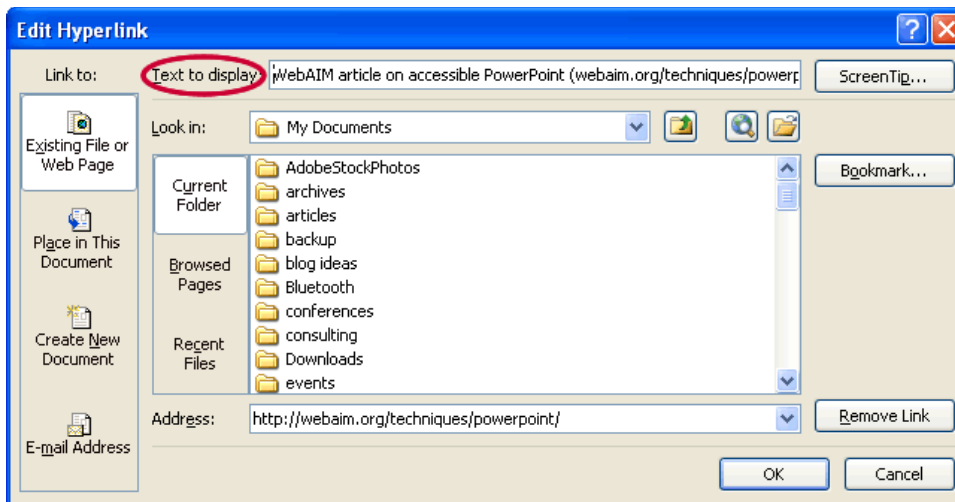


Data tables and accessibility issues

In HTML, there are ways to identify row and column headers in a data table (using the <th> element). In PowerPoint, you can style rows and columns so they appear as data tables, but there is no way to add the content in a way that will be identified by a screen reader. If your presentation contains more than the simplest tables, and if you have Adobe Acrobat, consider saving your presentation to PDF and adding the additional accessibility information in Acrobat Pro.

Links

Hyperlinks are usually created in PowerPoint by pasting the full URL into a page (e.g., <http://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/>) and hitting space, Enter, or some other key. This automatically creates a link. It is simple, but the URL may not make sense to the reader. To change the link text, select a link, right click and select Edit Hyperlink, or select Ctrl + K. Change the URL in the Text to display field to something more descriptive.



If you are creating a presentation that is intended for electronic display, and in a printout, you may want to include the URL and a description in the link text - "WebAIM article on accessible PowerPoint (webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/)."

Other principles

- Ensure that font size is sufficient. If your presentation will be viewed on a projector, font size may need to be even larger.
- Provide sufficient contrast. If your presentation will be viewed on a projector, sometimes the contrast needs to be even more pronounced.
- Do not use color as the only way to convey content.
- Avoid automatic slide transitions.
- Use simple slide transitions when possible. Complex transitions can be distracting.
- Use simple language.
- Check reading order of text boxes that are not part of the native slide layout. They are usually the last thing read by a screen reader.
- If you have embedded video, ensure that the video is captioned, and that the player controls are accessible.
- If you have embedded audio, ensure a transcript is included.
- If your slides contain animations, ensure that they are brief and do not distract from the most important content on the page.

Outline and Notes Panels

PowerPoint contains two panels that can sometimes be used to enhance accessibility: the outline panel and the notes panel.

The outline panel contains a text outline of the content that appears in your slides. Reviewing this panel can help ensure the content on the slides is logically

sequenced, that slide titles are unique and meaningful and that reading order is appropriate. The text in this panel may also be a good starting place for handouts or HTML alternatives to slides (more below). Alternative text for image and text boxes that are not part of the default layout will not be included in the outline view.

The notes panel allows the speaker to add notes and information that will not appear on the slides. It can be used to add additional information to printed handouts as well. Placing image or chart descriptions in this area is not reliable and should be avoided. A screen reader may not access this type of information, especially if the presentation is saved to PDF or some other format.

Source: <http://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/>