Creating Accessible Class Materials

Microsoft PowerPoint

**Summary:** To create accessible PowerPoint presentations, use the prebuilt page layouts, ensure a logical reading order for all objects on the slide, and add alternative text to all images and manually created text boxes.

**What is an accessible PowerPoint slide?**
An accessible slide presentation is one where all the content (both images and text) has a text alternative, and the content is read in a logical order either via keyboard navigation or using a screen reader. Follow the guidelines on this page if you plan to distribute an electronic copy of the native slide file (.pptx) to your audience. Sometimes, however, it can be easier to distribute an accessible document that summarizes the main points of your talk.

**Use predefined page layouts**
Predefined page layouts (with names like Title Only, Title and Content, Section Header, and so on) are comprised of content placeholders. They are useful both for creating a consistent layout on your slides, and for people who use adaptive technologies to read the content. If you populate your presentation content into the slide placeholders, you don’t have to worry about logical reading order, because the screen reader will read top to bottom on the slide.
Ensure a logical reading order
You want the content to be read in a logical order. A logical reading order is ensured when you use the predefined page layouts. However, when you add content via text boxes, or by manually adding shapes or images to the slide, these will be read back to the adaptive technologies user in the order in which they were added to the slide.

To arrange reading order:

1. On the Home tab, select Arrange and choose Selection Pane (or Reorder Objects)
2. To see the reading order of the slide, use your Tab key to tab through the slide, noting the order in which each content element is highlighted.
3. To rearrange the reading order on a PC, select the arrow up/down button on the Selection Pane (On a Mac you will drag layers. Highest number is read first.)
4. Check the reading order once more using your Tab key, to make sure you arranged them appropriately.

You may need to group some objects (select the objects, then Arrange > Group) in order to create a logical reading order.

Add alt text to any non-decorative element and to text boxes
To add alt text:

1. Select the image. Then in the Format menu, select alt text.
2. Enter alt text in the Description field (not the Title field). Include extended descriptions for charts and other graphics.

It may seem counterintuitive, but screen reader software cannot read text that is contained in a text box. You need to add the text in the alt text box in a separate step.
Create hyperlinks that match the context
If you are distributing the slides electronically, you should embed the hyperlink in the words that describe where the link leads. However, if your slides will be distributed as a paper copy, you'll need to print out the full text of the hyperlink.

Make your links clear, concise, and descriptive. "Musings on veganism" is better than "Musings".

Do not use “Click Here” or “more info”.

To create a hyperlink in your text:

1. Select the text you want to be the hyperlink
2. Right click and choose Link from the menu.
3. Paste or type in a hyperlink.
4. Select the Apply button to save the link.

Create Presentation best practices
Don't use your slides as a teleprompter. People can't read and listen to you at the same time, so putting all that text on the slides won't be effective anyway. Rather than cramming as much text as you can onto your slides, only create slides for information to which you'd like to "powerfully point", that is, the essential points.

Don't assume that all the people in the room can see your slides, or that people will understand your slides the same way you intend. Therefore, get in the habit of describing the visual display of your slides (e.g., "This slide shows a comparison of two types of grasses that can curb soil erosion when planted along ditches.")

Likewise, if you display a slide with a quotation, read it to your audience. Say, "I'll read this quotation for you," and begin reading, rather than pause and assume that everyone in the room will be able to read the text.