

Guidelines for Creating Section 508 Compliant PowerPoint Presentations

What is 508 compliance?

Section 508 is a 1998 amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It requires that all website content, including any files, be accessible to people with disabilities. Since presentations for this conference will be made available online, they must be section 508 compliant.

What does it mean for presenters?

All presenters are **required** to do their best to ensure that their presentations meet section 508 standards, so they are accessible to people with disabilities. Presentations must convey the same information to everyone. It is important to consider this as you create your presentation since it may influence what you choose to include and the way you include it. For example, if you were planning to include a video or audio clip in your presentation you must ensure it has an accompanying transcript file and/or closed captions, subtitles etc. included. **This guide aims to assist you to create an accessible and should be read before you begin to put your slides together.**

Quick check list

- Presentation uses the conference PowerPoint template, or your Federal Agency's template (See [Structure](#) on page [2](#) for more information)
- Presentations uses a clear sans-serif font, or Times New Roman and no text is smaller than 12 pt (See [Text](#) on page [2](#) for more information)
- There is ample color contrast between the text and background (See [Color](#) on page [3](#) for more information)
- Tables are structured properly (See [Tables](#) on page [3](#) for more information)
- Images have been grouped, if appropriate (See [Images](#) on page [3](#) for more information)
- All images** have alternate text (See [Add Alt Text](#) on page [3](#) for more information)
- There is no flickering text or animation (See [Video, animation, flickering text and smart art](#) on page [4](#) for more information)

- Any video/audio had closed captions, subtitles and/or an accompanying transcript (See [Video, animation, flickering text and smart art](#) on page 4 for more information)
- Document properties have been completed (See [Complete Document Properties](#) on page 4 for more information)
- There are no errors when the built in accessibility checker is run (See [Check Accessibility](#) on page 4 for more information)
- The reading order is correct (See [Reading Order](#) on page 5 for more information)

Creating your presentation

1. Structure

- **All presenters, with the exception of those from federal agencies, and poster presenters are encouraged to use the 508 compliant conference PowerPoint template.**
- Use the layouts included in the template. If you must create a custom layout do so through the slide master. **This is essential to maintain the logical structure of your presentation so it can be read by a screen reader, do not just add text boxes to your slides.** Although a screen reader can read text boxes, it may not read them in the order you expect.
 - To go to the slide master click the “View” tab and select “Slide Master”
 - The various layouts will appear on the left
 - Click on the “Slide Master” tab
 - Click “Insert Layout” and use the “Insert Placeholder” option to add content holders to the new layout
 - You can also duplicate an existing layout by right clicking on the layout on the left, you can then customize this by rearranging the existing placeholders and/or adding new ones until you have what you need
 - Once you have finished, click “Close Master View” on the “Slide Master” tab
 - The layouts should now be ready for you to use in your presentation.

2. Text

- Choose an easy to read font. Sans-serif fonts are preferable e.g., Verdana, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica, Calibri, however, Times New Roman is acceptable.
- Ensure that the font size is easily readable, no smaller than 12pt is acceptable for most fonts in documents, but keep in mind that presentations

are designed to be easily read from anywhere in the room so larger fonts 18pt and above may be more appropriate.

3. Color

- Ensure there is enough color contrast between the background and your text. You can [check color contrast online](#).
- Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning, i.e., if your reader is unable to see the colors or cannot distinguish between the ones you choose, would they still be able to understand what you are trying to convey?

4. Tables

- If possible, use only simple tables with no merged or blank cells. Ensure your table has a designated header row by highlighting the row, clicking on the “Design” tab and checking the box for “Header Row”
- Do not use tables just for layout purposes.

5. Images

- Lots of shapes and images on one slide (e.g. a flow chart) can be difficult to navigate, and all images must have alt text as detailed below in number 6. If you have lots of related images on a slide, group them together in one of the following ways:
 - Select all the images (hold shift as you click to select each one, or click and drag a selection box around them all). Click the “Format” tab and “Group”.
 - Select all the images (hold shift as you click to select each one or click and drag a selection box around them all). Right click and select “Cut” then right click and from the Paste options select picture. This will paste the images back in as one picture

6. Add Alt Text

- **All images that convey meaning must have alternative text that conveys the same information to people with a visual impairment.** This includes any images of tables, charts or images that are of text, e.g., an image of an article or webpage. **A screen reader cannot read text from an image so alternative text must be added.**
 - To add alternative text, right click on the image, select “Format Picture (or Format Shape)” then “Properties (or Layout & Properties),” and “Alt Text.” Add your text in the “Description” box.

- Keep descriptions concise, and do not use phrases such as “image of,” “table of,” etc.
- When writing alternative text think about why you are including the image, what are you trying to convey by using the image? The alternate text “A group of graduates” does not convey the same meaning as “A diverse group of graduates, cheering, shouting and jumping.”

7. Video, animation, flickering text and smart art

- Include a separate word document transcript for any video or audio you use in your presentation, and/or ensure videos have closed captioning.
- Do not include animation in the presentation you submit for posting, any animation will be removed prior to posting the PowerPoint online
- Do not use flickering text or smart art.

8. Complete Document Properties

- Click on the “File” tab. On the right under the “Properties” section check that the Title and Author sections are completed. To complete or correct just click and type next to the property.

Checking your presentation

1. Check Accessibility

- Click the “File” tab, then “Check for Issues,” and “Check Accessibility”
- The Accessibility panel will open to the right of your presentation. It will show “Errors” which will need to be fixed, e.g., pictures missing alt text, and “Tips” such as identifying slides which you may need to check the reading order on. To go to the item that needs to be fixed or checked, click on it in the Accessibility Panel and the presentation will jump to it.

2. Reading Order

- Check that the slides will read in the correct order. On the “Home” tab select “Arrange” then “Selection Pane.” Items should be ordered from bottom to top i.e. the first item, usually the title, will be at the bottom of the list. To change the order, either click and drag an item in the list to the correct position or click to select it and use the arrow keys to move it up or down.

Additional Resources

The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website](https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/making-files-accessible/index.html) (<https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/making-files-accessible/index.html>) provides accessibility checklists that can assist in ensuring files are compliant.

There is a useful tool for checking color contrast on the [WebAIM website](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/) (<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>). The website also has some resources on [making PowerPoint presentations accessible](https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/) (<https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/>).