How to Make an Online PowerPoint Poster Accessible

What is an Accessible Poster?

These instructions focus on making and electronic posters accessible by using the latest version of Microsoft PowerPoint. Accessible posters will be able to be read by people who are blind, visually impaired, and/or use adaptive technology, such as screen readers. You can make your posters accessible by following some easy steps.

Why Should Electronic Posters Be Accessible?

If your poster is available to people who use assistive technology, even more people will be able to read your research or creative work. Learning how to make your work accessible is an important part of training to become a scholar and researcher. Many academic conferences and journals require work to be made accessible. SUNY Oneonta will be using online software called **Acadiate** (www.acadiate.com) to create a virtual research show where visitors can view our presenters' work.

Instructions

Step 1: The Slide Canvas

When making a poster using PowerPoint, you will most likely change the slide size to meet the specifications of the event. For the research shows at SUNY Oneonta that size is usually 42" x 36", but whatever the size of the poster, you never want any of the poster's objects (textboxes, images, graphs, tables) to cross the canvas boundary.
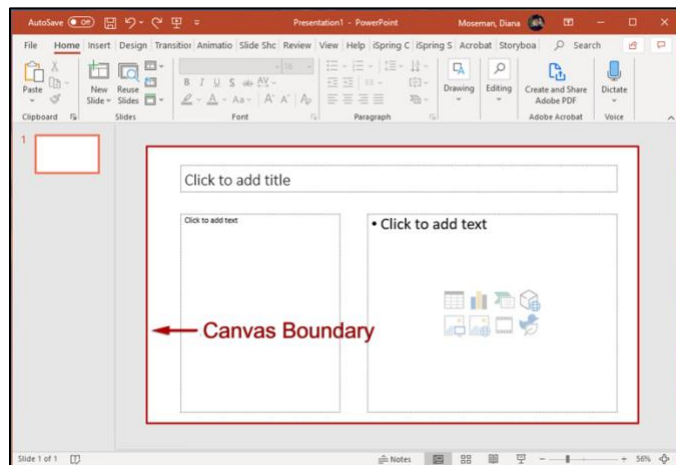
The canvas boundary is where the white background of the slide meets the gray background of the design window.

Objects that cross the boundary can create situations that certain types of assistive technology might not be able to handle correctly.

Step 2: Font Type and Size

For online reading, sans-serif fonts are considered more legible. Examples of sans-serif fonts are Arial, Verdana, and Calibri. Decorative and narrow fonts should be reserved for headlines and decorative texts only. If you choose to add a background image or color to your poster, you need to pay extra attention to the readability of the fonts you use. You can review **this chart of font sizes** and use it as a reference of font sizes and how they will appear on your poster relative to other sizes.

Step 3: Color Contrast

Use a color scheme that provides enough contrast between the text and the background. You can check your color combinations by using the **Color Safe** (http://colorsafe.co) website.
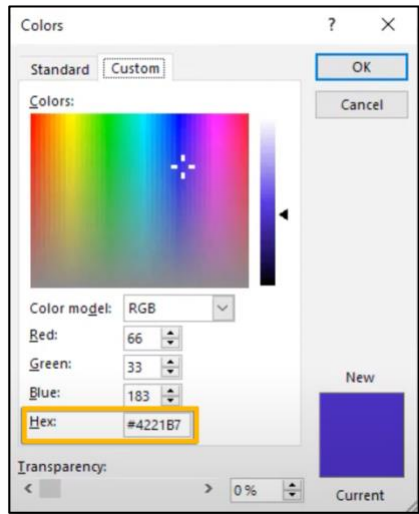
To help colorblind viewers to access and understand your presentation, avoid using the colors red, green, and orange to denote importance; use textures instead of colors in graphs; and draw attention to information on your poster by circling it rather than changing its color.

Many applications use a hexadecimal value (HexCode) to identify individual colors. These values begin with a hash character (#). You can find a color's HexCode in PowerPoint by looking on the RGB color slider on the Color panel.

You will need this value to test color contrast.

Step 4: Add Alternative Text to Images, Charts, Graphs, and Tables

How would you describe your visual to someone who cannot see it? Alternative text, or *alt text*, for simple images should be concise, generally around 125 characters. For more complicated items like charts, graphs, and tables will need longer descriptions.
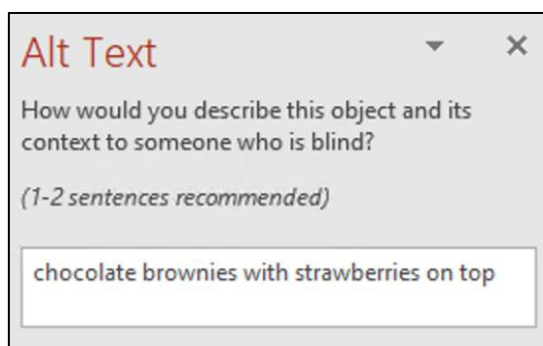
To add alt text descriptions right-click the object, select **Edit Alt Text** and enter your description.

The more important an image's content is the more descriptive the alt text should be. If your poster's text already contains a detailed description, the alt text can simply identify the object so that the reader knows when it is being referred to.

Step 5: Reading Order

Screen readers read the elements of a poster in the order they were added to the slide, which might be very different from the correct reading order. To make sure everyone reads the contents in the order you intend, it may be necessary to adjust the order of the objects on the canvas.

To change the order of your objects, click the **Home** tab, choose the **Select** drop-down, click **Selection Pane**.
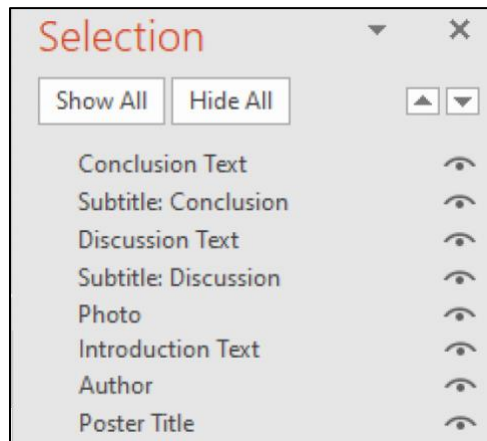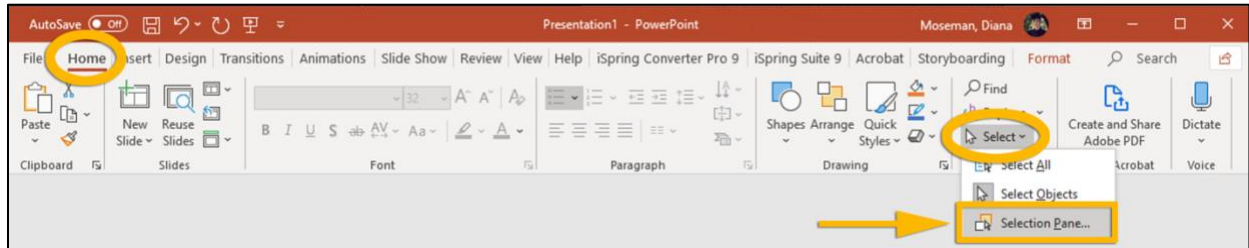
You can reorder the list by clicking on any object and using the arrow buttons or dragging an object to a different place in the list.

When an item is clicked, an "edit box" will display around that object in the design window. You may also double-click an item in the list to rename it.

IMPORTANT: Even though it seems counter-intuitive, the reading order in the Selection Pane should be arranged from the bottom up. The title should be at the bottom with content following it.

Step 6: Use the Accessibility Checker

Microsoft products have a built-in accessibility checker which can help the document author test the overall accessibility of the document. The checker provides Inspection Results, feedback about the importance of each item, and tips on how to repair issues.

Under the **Review** tab, choose **Check Accessibility**. Accessibility errors will be listed in the Inspection Results box.
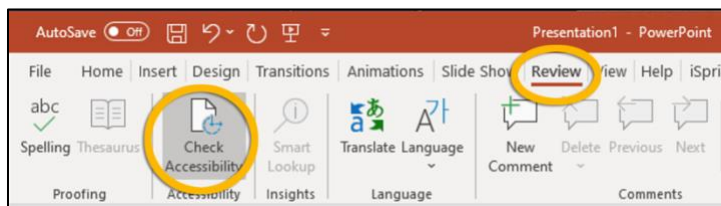
Step 7: Save as Adobe PDF

Under the PowerPoint File menu, choose Save as Adobe PDF. Most likely the PDF options are set by default as shown below but you can check these settings by clicking the **Options** button on the 'Save Adobe PDF File As' window.
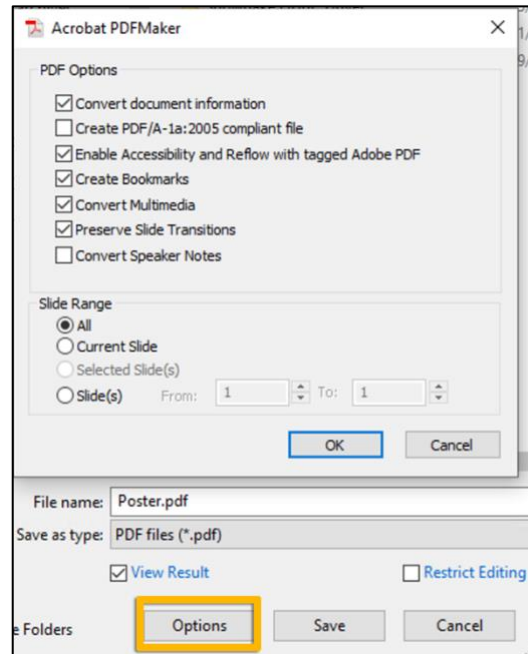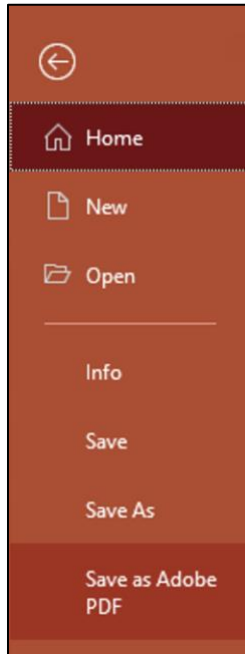
You are now ready to upload your poster in PDF format to Acadiate or share it with any other event you are presenting at.