

Guidelines for Accessible Presentations

Creating accessible presentations ensures that all attendees can engage with your content, regardless of disability, language background, technology, or viewing environment. Accessibility benefits everyone by making information easier to read, understand, and navigate.

Design Accessible Slides

Fonts

Choose clear, easy-to-read sans-serif fonts such as Arial, Aptos, Calibri, Helvetica, or Verdana.

Use a minimum font size of:

- **32 pt** for slide titles
- **24 pt** for body text

Additional recommendations:

- Use sentence case rather than ALL CAPITALS.
- Avoid decorative fonts.
- Limit the use of italics and avoid underlining except for hyperlinks.
- Do not use emojis as the sole method of conveying meaning.
- Ensure text remains legible on smaller screens and mobile devices.

Layout

A clear layout helps audiences focus on the key message.

- Aim for one main idea per slide.
- Use short bullet points rather than long paragraphs.
- Use PowerPoint's built-in layouts and heading structure.
- Leave sufficient white space around content.
- Minimise animations and slide transitions.
- Avoid placing important content where captions may appear during live events or recordings.

Colour and Contrast

Good colour choices improve readability and accessibility.

- Use high-contrast colour combinations.
- Avoid problematic combinations such as red and green.
- Ensure text is clearly visible against the background.
- Do not rely on colour alone to communicate meaning.
- Ensure charts and diagrams remain understandable when viewed in greyscale.
- Avoid patterned or busy backgrounds.

Make Visual Content Accessible

Visual elements should support understanding rather than create barriers.

Images, Charts and Diagrams

- Add alternative text (alt text) to meaningful images.
- Label graphs and charts directly where possible.
- Use simple, high-contrast graphics.
- Simplify complex diagrams by removing unnecessary detail and focusing on key messages.
- Avoid screenshots that contain important text.
- Explain abbreviations used in charts, diagrams, and tables.

Hyperlinks

Use descriptive link text so users understand where the link leads.

Avoid:

- Click here to download the guide.

Instead use:

- Download the Accessible Presentations Guide.

Tables

- Keep tables simple and clearly structured.
- Use clear row and column headings.
- Avoid merged cells where possible.

Deliver Your Presentation Accessibly

Many attendees may be using captions, interpretation services, translation tools, or listening in a language other than their first language.

Describe Visual Content When Presenting

Do not assume that everyone can see the screen clearly. Some attendees may be using screen readers, joining remotely, viewing on a small device, or relying on audio only.

Describe important visual information, trends, charts, and diagrams aloud.

Avoid:

- As you can see here...
- The blue line tells the story...

Instead use:

- This chart shows participation increasing from 20% in 2022 to 55% in 2025.
- The largest category is Archives, representing 45% of responses.

Providing verbal descriptions ensures that everyone receives the same information, regardless of how they access the presentation.

Introduce Yourself

When speaking, identify yourself clearly.

- State your name and role at the beginning of your presentation.
- During panel discussions or Q&A sessions, identify yourself before speaking.
- Consider sharing your pronouns if you are comfortable.
- Ensure your display name matches how you wish to be identified in captions and recordings.

Presentation example:

Hello, I'm Florence Hemmingway, Digital Archivist at the Higher Education Organisation. My pronouns are she/her.

Panel discussion example:

This is Florence speaking. I'd like to add a point about digital preservation.

Speak Clearly

Clear speech improves understanding for everyone.

- Speak slightly slower than your normal conversational pace.
- Use a good-quality microphone or headset when presenting online.
- Pause between key points.
- Repeat audience questions before answering them.
- Avoid speaking over other participants.
- Allow time for captions, interpreters, and translation tools to keep pace.

Use Plain Language

Plain language makes presentations easier to understand, translate, caption, and remember.

Recommended Practices

- Use everyday words where possible.
- Keep sentences short and direct.
- Explain acronyms, technical terms, and specialist language when first used.
- Use consistent terminology throughout.
- Prefer active voice.
- Focus on one key message at a time.

Avoid:

- Idioms and colloquialisms
- Regional expressions and slang
- Wordplay and puns
- Humour that relies on cultural knowledge
- Unexplained acronyms

Use clear, literal language that can be understood and translated accurately.

Avoid:

- We'll park that idea and circle back later.

Instead use:

- We'll return to that topic later in the session.

Use Accessible Multimedia

Any multimedia included in your presentation should be accessible to all attendees.

Videos and audio content should:

- Include accurate captions.
- Have clear audio quality.
- Be tested before the event.
- Include a transcript where possible.
- Include audio description when visual information is essential to understanding.
- Avoid autoplay where possible.
- Allow sufficient time for attendees to read captions and on-screen content.

Share Accessible Materials

Whenever possible, provide presentation materials in advance so attendees can review content using their preferred technologies and accessibility settings.

Provide materials in accessible formats such as:

- Accessible PowerPoint (.pptx)
- Accessible PDF (where required)

If supplementary resources are included, ensure they are also accessible and clearly labelled.

Presenter Checklist

Before submitting your presentation, confirm that:

- ☐ Font size is at least 24pt
- ☐ Colour contrast is sufficient
- ☐ Images contain alt text
- ☐ Hyperlinks use descriptive text
- ☐ Important visuals are described verbally
- ☐ Acronyms and specialist terms are explained
- ☐ [Plain English principles](#) have been followed?
- ☐ Videos are captioned
- ☐ The Accessibility Checker has been run
- ☐ Presentation materials support captions, interpretation and translation
- ☐ Slides have been submitted by the deadline
- ☐ Another person has checked the presentation for spelling errors

Accessibility Tools

Microsoft 365

- Accessibility Checker (built into PowerPoint, Word and Excel)

Testing Tools

- Accessibility Insights: <https://accessibilityinsights.io/>
- TheWCAG Accessibility Tools: <https://www.thewcag.com/tools>

Colour Contrast

- TheWCAG Colour Contrast Checker: <https://www.thewcag.com/tools/contrast-checker>

macOS Tools

- VoiceOver
- Accessibility Inspector
- Colour Filters and Contrast Settings

Inclusive Image Resources

Better Allies (n.d.) *Stock Photos and Illustrations*. Available at: <https://betterallies.com/photos/> (Accessed: 30 June 2026).

References

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Serrat, O. (2013) *Using Plain English*. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/using-plain-english/26339428> (Accessed: 29 July 2026).

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World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) (n.d.) *Description of Visual Information*. Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). Available at: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/media/av/description/> (Accessed: 30 June 2026) (edited)