How to make your teaching with PowerPoint more accessible

This video will talk you through the steps you can take with your PowerPoints, to make them more accessible. It won't cover every possible scenario, but it will cover the majority of things you need to consider. Not all disabilities are visible. So you need to take this into account. Black text on a white background may seem to glare or even flash, making it difficult to focus on the words and can cause fatigue.

Here are some examples of how text can appear. In more extreme cases, words can seem to float around the page and it can become distorted. Some people find it easier to read text that is on pale-coloured backgrounds rather than white. Be aware of colour contrasts like green text on a red background, and don't choose a background that can cause distraction. You should use a sans serif font to create an easier reading experience. Try and use at least size 18 font, but this obviously depends on the size of the room you are teaching in. Avoid italics and capitals to emphasise words as these are more difficult to read. Also, avoid emphasising words with colour as colour blind people may not be able to see the colour distinction. Align sentences or bullet points to the left, rather than using centre justification as this has been proven to make reading easier. If there is a list, it should be made using bulleted list or numbered list buttons. Don't copy and paste the list from Word, as screen reading software won't recognise it as a list - it will read it out as a paragraph.

Pre-built Excel templates can improve accessibility in the content that you create. Microsoft have numerous accessible templates available to download. Templates make your page elements more accessible for screen readers and things like font sizes and colours will follow accessibility standards and good practice.

The title is usually the first thing that is read out by a screen reader. So make sure the title is descriptive and unique. Someone who uses a screen reader may rely on slide titles to help them scan through a presentation quickly, enabling them to go straight to the slide they want. It's like a table of contents for your presentation. So if you have duplicate slide titles, it can become confusing. Screen readers usually read out content in the order that it is added to the slide, which may not reflect the order you intended. You can use the accessibility checker or use the Tab key to check this. Each time you press the Tab key focus moves to the next object that a screen reader will read. Go to the "Home" tab, then "Arrange", then "Selection pane" to bring up the reading order. You can then use the up and down arrows to change the order. Note that the object at the bottom of the list is read first and the top of the list is read last. Links should be hidden behind descriptive text so try to avoid using words such as "click here". Also avoid having a web address showing as text to speech software will read the whole URL out. A screen reader doesn't read bullet points so add a full stop at the end of each one to prevent them being read out as one long sentence.

If the image is informative, right-click and add alt text or alternative text, which explains to people with screen readers what the image is. If an image is decorative then you can mark the Alt box as decorative, which saves you having to add an alt description, but try to avoid decorative images as they can be distracting. You can also add alt text to charts.

If you're using video or audio in your teaching, ensure captions are available. If you need to insert a table into your PowerPoint presentation, you'll need to create the table directly in PowerPoint in order for a screen reader to read out the data, rather than copying and pasting it as a picture from Word or Excel. You should also check that the header and first column row are checked to improve formatting. Try to limit the number of lines in each slide and leave plenty of space above and below each line. If you add lots of text to a slide, it makes it very difficult to read. Use bullet points rather than paragraphs. Try to apply the six by seven rule, which is six words per line and seven lines per slide maximum.

Before disseminating your presentation, launch the accessibility checker where you can review and fix any accessibility issues. Your Powerpoint presentation will then be accessible to everyone.