Recommendations for Accessible Presentations

These recommendations will support you in creating optimal presentation experiences, with a focus on accessibility for those who use assistive technologies. Within the document, you will find recommendations to inform the design and review of digital presentation content for visual consistency, technical functionality, and best practices for employee development. Digital content includes any material generated in digital format and then shared, exported, or distributed either online or through printed copies (e.g., presentation slides and handouts).

Formatting Presentation Slides

General

- Use plain language:
  - Verify that the most important information appears first.
  - Use pronouns to address the audience ("you").
  - Write in the active voice (example: "Carmen sings the song" rather than "The song is sung by Carmen").
- Include the date of the presentation on the first slide.
- Choose videos that include closed captioning.

Organization and Styling

- Give each slide a unique slide title.
- Use clean, sans-serif fonts consistently throughout the presentation.
- Use a minimum of 22-point font.
- Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning.
- Use an accessibility checker whenever available.

Visual Content

- Use a contrast checker to verify that text and images of text have sufficient color contrast with the background.
- Tag images that convey meaning with "alt text" that describes the content of the image. Mark images that do not convey meaning as decorative. Learn more about adding alt text in PowerPoint.

- Use tables for data content rather than for layout. Avoid blank rows, merged cells, or split cells.
- Add text descriptions for tables, complex images, and graphics.

Accessible Presentation Delivery

General

- Use a microphone to amplify your voice and any questions from attendees.
- Verbally describe images, charts, and graphs.
- If using video, turn on closed captioning.

Language

- Be clear and consistent with instructions and expectations for any activities.
- Explain acronyms and terminology.

Virtual Presentations

- Avoid virtual backgrounds. If your presentation requires substantial physical gestures (e.g., hands), consider presenting against a blank wall for ease of viewing.
- If sharing your screen, verbalize what is on screen and in chat.
- Mute participants who are not speaking.

Formatting Handouts

General

- Use plain language:
  - Verify that the most important information appears first.
  - Use pronouns to address the audience ("you").
  - Write in the active voice (example: "Carmen sings the song" rather than "The song is sung by Carmen").
- Include the month and year of the latest update.
- Avoid including important information in the header and footer. Screen readers do not read headers and footers. Learn more about document accessibility in Microsoft Word.

Appearance and Organization

- Use heading structure, beginning with Heading 1 as the title and continuing chronologically with headings.
- Use clean, sans-serif fonts consistently throughout the document.
- Use a minimum of 11-point font.
- Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning.

Visual Content

- Use a contrast checker to verify that text and images of text have sufficient color contrast with the background.

- Tag images that convey meaning with "alt text" that describes the content of the image. Mark images that do not convey meaning as decorative. [Learn more about adding alt text in Microsoft Word](#).
- Use tables for data content rather than for layout. Avoid blank rows, merged cells, or split cells.
- Add text descriptions for tables, complex images, and graphics.
- Craft brief and meaningful link text. Instead of "[visit this site](#)," use visit "[Learning and Talent Development](#)."
- Use an [accessibility checker](#) whenever available.

For more information about digital accessibility, visit UW-Madison's Information Technology "[Make it Accessible" guide](#).