

Building Blocks to Creating Accessible Word Documents and PowerPoint Slides

There are simple techniques you can use to improve the accessibility of your documents as you create them. Use these best practices to greatly improve the accessibility of Word documents and PowerPoint slides for individuals with disabilities. Another benefit is that accessibility improvements made in the original will generally remain when converted to PDF or HTML.

This document is specific to Word and PowerPoint for Windows. Currently, the Windows Operating System (OS) offers content creators more opportunity to create accessible Word and PowerPoint content than the Mac OS. Please contact us with questions about using Word and PowerPoint for Mac.

Word

Headings

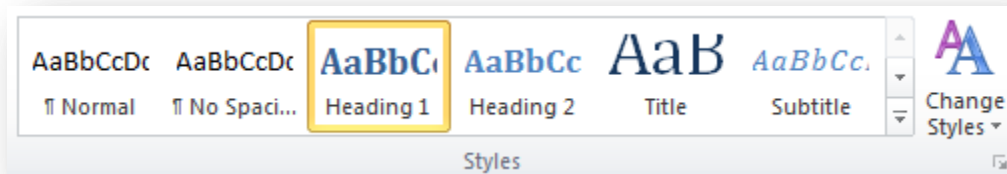
A good heading structure is probably the most important accessibility consideration. Use built-in Styles to identify Heading 1, Heading 2, etc., rather than simply increasing the font size and making it bold. This provides structure that is used to navigate through the document when using assistive technology like a screen reader.

Added benefits

- It is possible to generate a table of contents automatically using document headings
- Can update the look of headings by changing them in one location, then updating heading to match selection

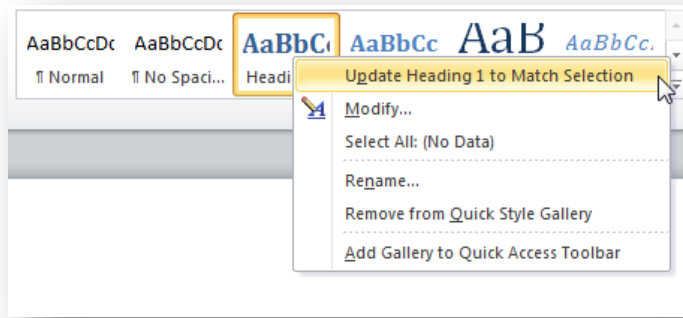
Word 2013 and 2010

Select the text, and then select the appropriate heading style from the Styles ribbon.



By default, Heading 1 and Heading 2 are available in the ribbon. Word will automatically add Heading 3 to the menu after Heading 2 is used in the document, and so on for additional heading levels.

If you have already formatted the text you want to make into a heading, and would like to preserve the appearance, **right-click** the heading level in the Styles ribbon and select **Update Heading to Match Selection**.

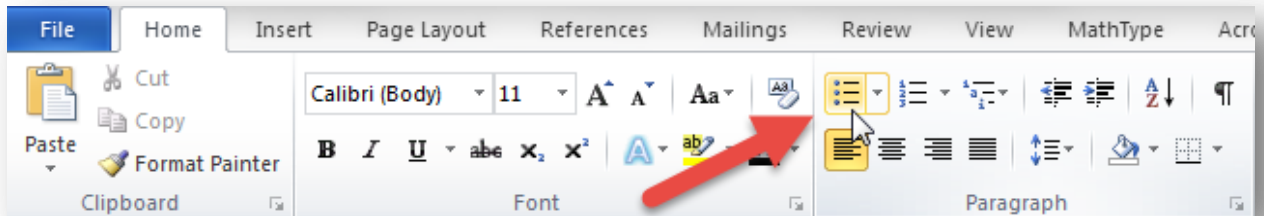


Lists

Use built-in features to create bulleted and numbered lists. This provides navigational structure that is important to users of assistive technology. Manually typing numbers or dashes before items is not sufficient.

Word 2013 and 2010

On the Home tab, select either bulleted or numbered list and begin typing the list. If you have already typed the text you want to make into a list, highlight the existing text and then select a bulleted or numbered list.

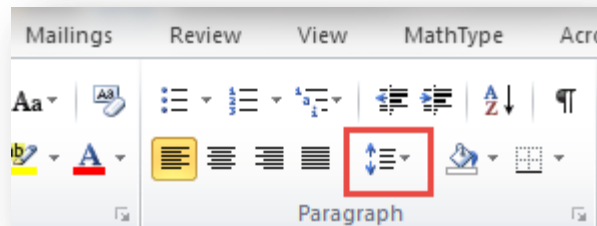


Spacing within lists

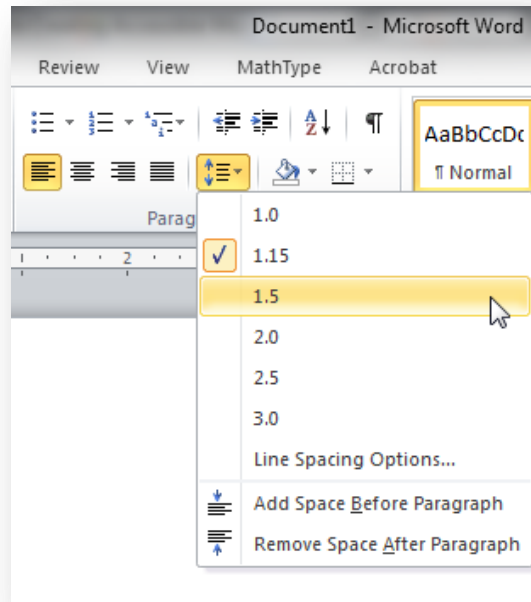
Avoid using a blank line to add space between list items – this can be confusing to a screen reader user. A screen reader reads a list of 4 items with a blank line between as 4 separate lists of 1 item. Instead, use the built-in **Line and Paragraph Spacing** feature.

Word 2013 and 2010

1. Select the list items
2. On the Home tab, select the **Line and Paragraph Spacing** tool



3. Select the desired spacing between list items



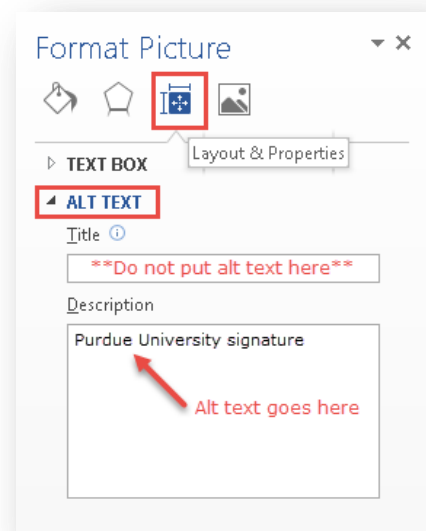
Images

Add alternative text (alt text) to images. Alt text is the way to convey information about images to users who can't see them.

Writing good alt text is a skill that can be developed. An excellent article on alt text is available at [WebAIM Alternative Text \(http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/\)](http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/).

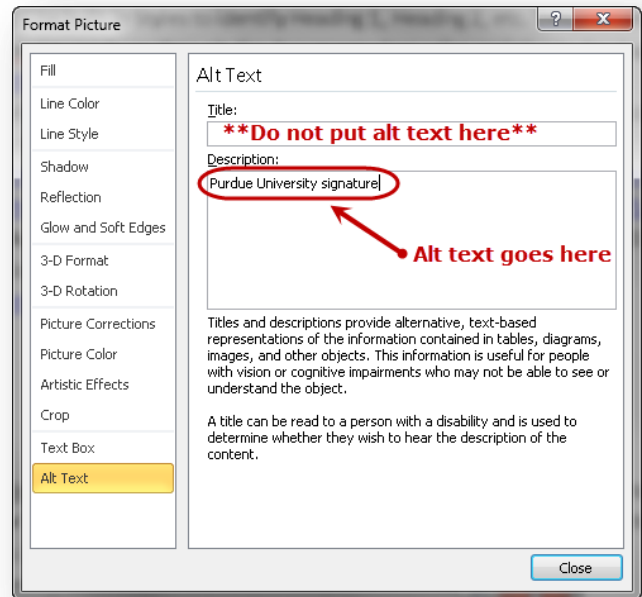
Word 2013

1. Right-click on the image and select **Format Picture**
2. Select **Layout and Properties** and then select **Alt Text**
3. Enter alt text into the **Description** field. Do not put alt text into the **Title** field.



Word 2010

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2. Select **Alt Text**
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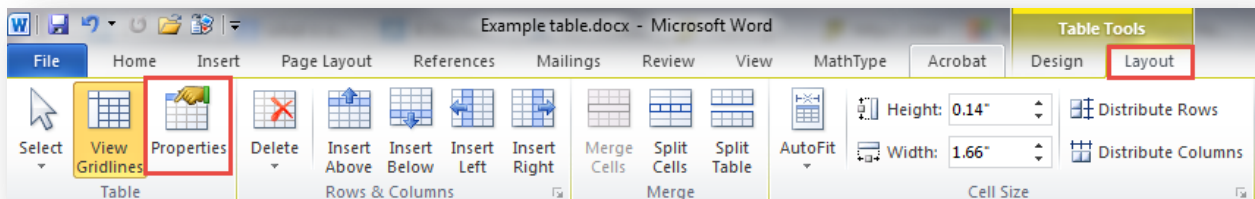


Tables

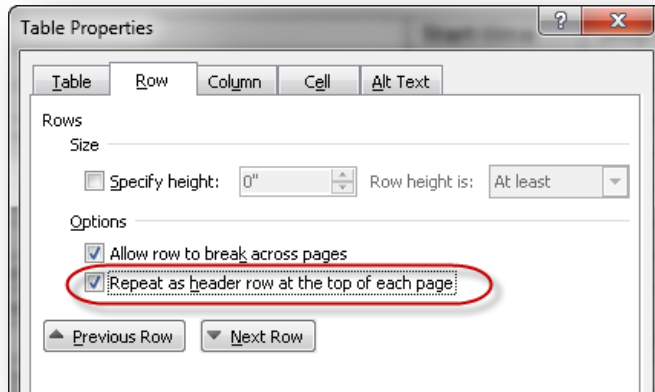
Use column headers in tables and explicitly identify the header row. Headers provide information necessary to navigating the table for users of assistive technology.

Word 2013 and 2010

1. Click anywhere in the header row
2. Select the **Layout** tab (look for the **Table Tools** section in the ribbon at the top of the page)
3. Select **Properties**

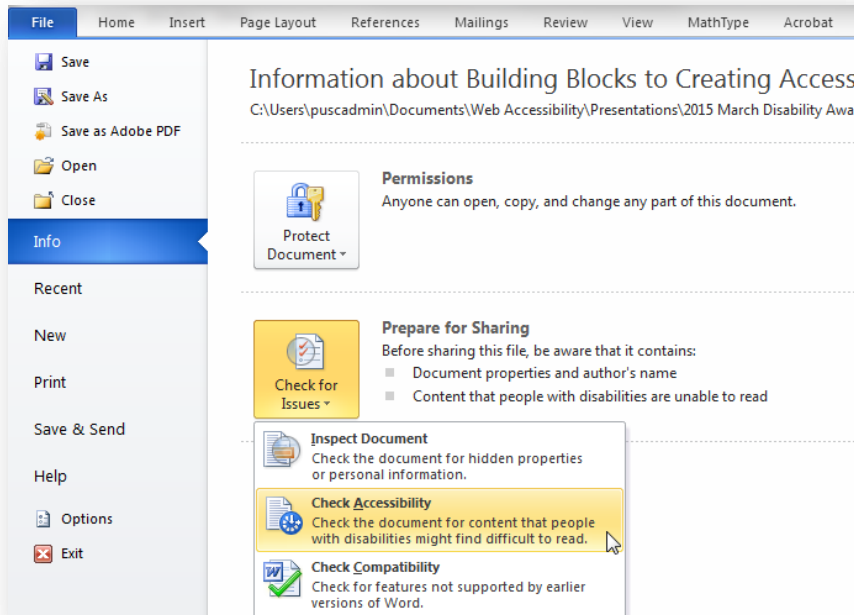


4. Select the checkbox “Repeat as header row at the top of each page”



Use Word Accessibility Checker

Word 2013 and 2010 have a built-in tool that checks your document for accessibility problems. The Accessibility Checker makes it much easier to identify and repair accessibility issues. To use the tool, select **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**.

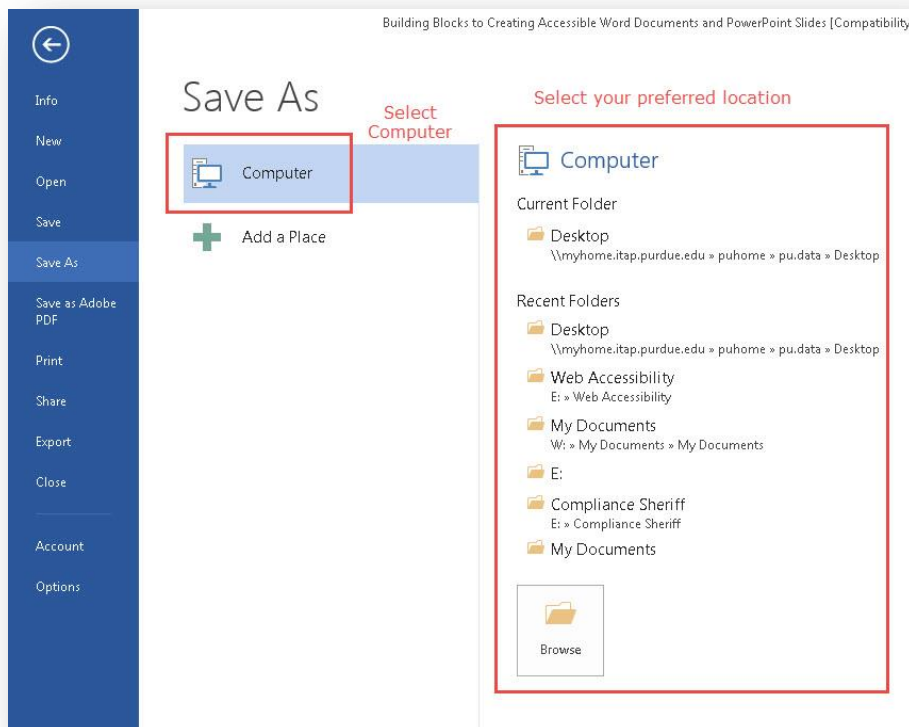


Save as Accessible PDF

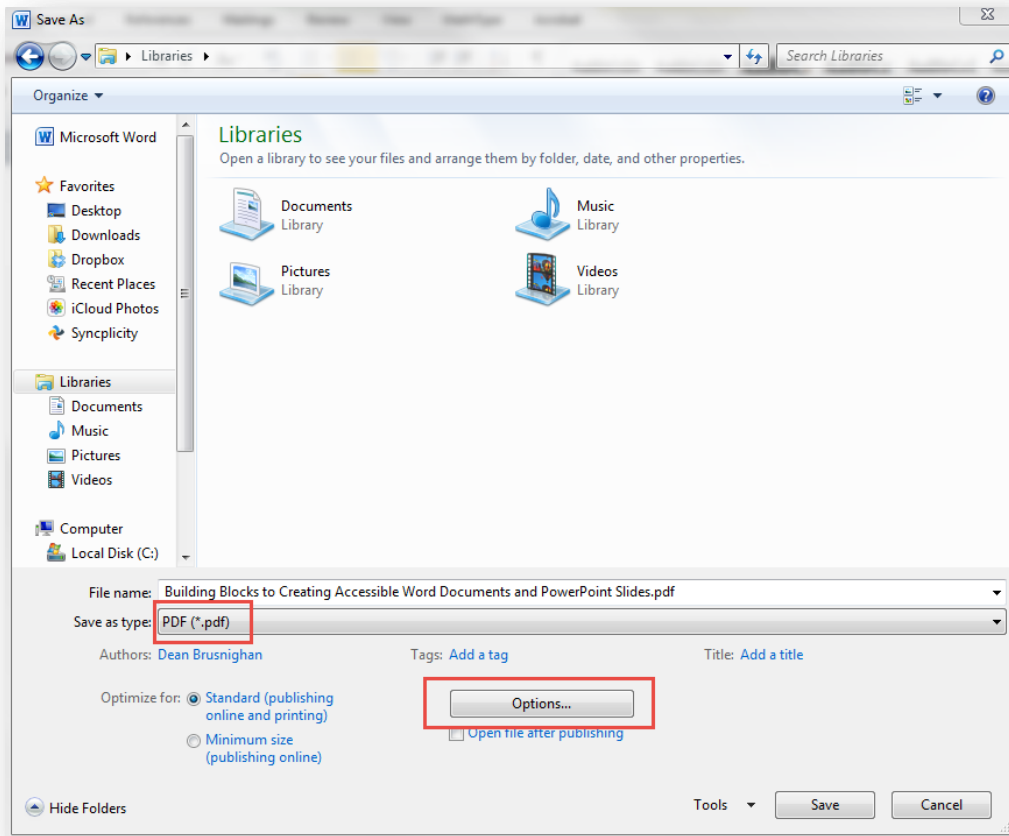
Not every method of saving creates an accessible PDF. In Word 2013, 2010 or 2007, if a PDF file is created by “printing to Adobe PDF”, it will not be tagged for accessibility. Use the following method to ensure accessibility features will remain when converted.

Word 2013

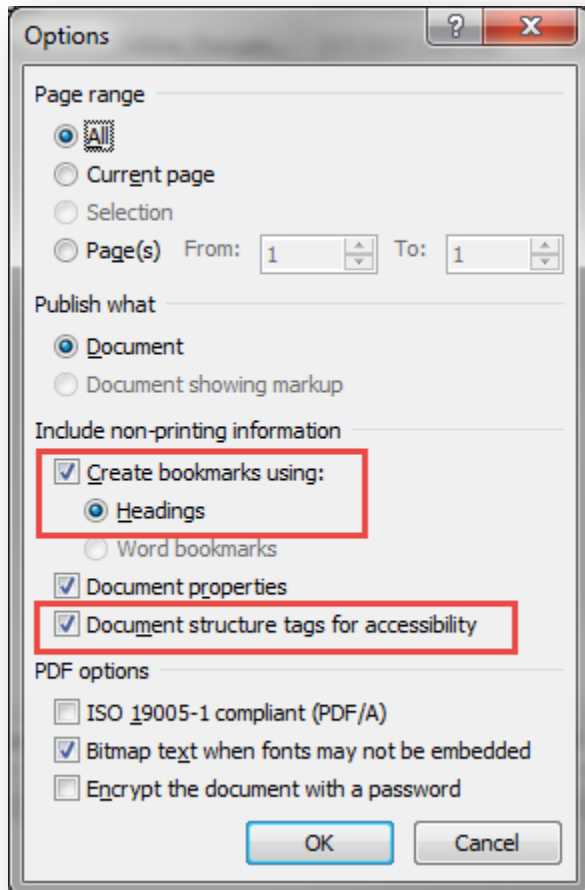
1. Follow the recommendations in this handout to create an accessible Word document
2. From the **File** menu, select **Save As**
3. Select the **Computer** option, then select your preferred location for saving the file



4. Choose to **Save as type: PDF**
5. Select the **Options** button



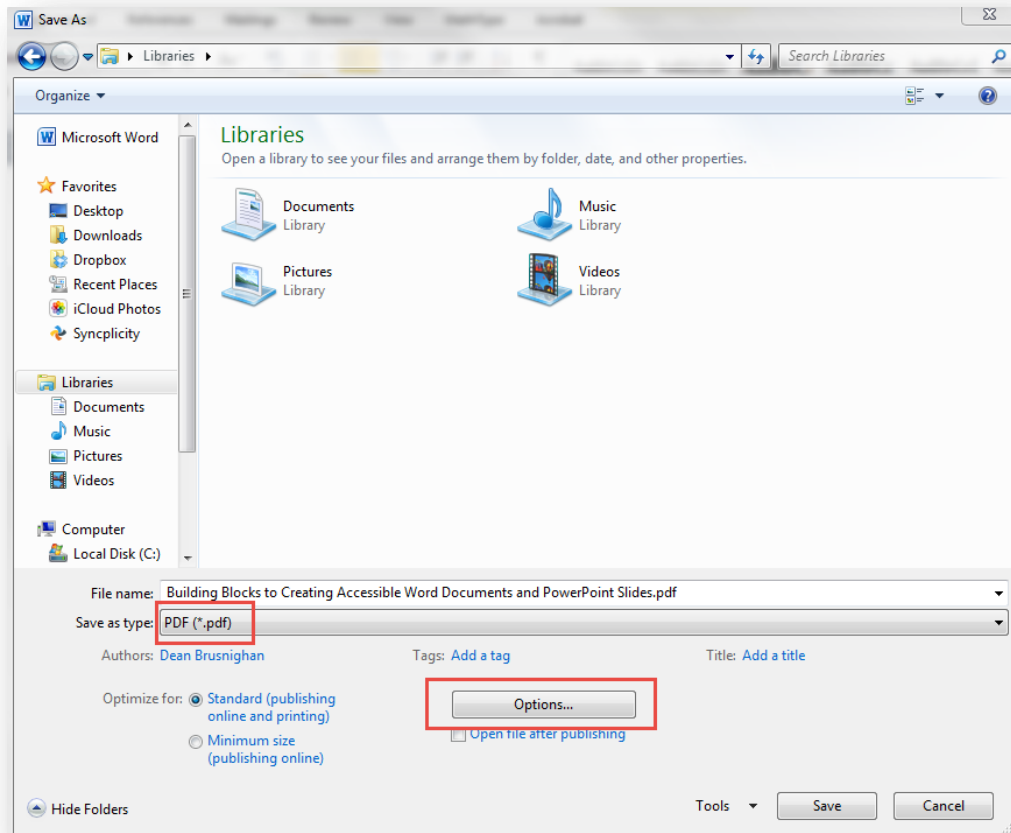
6. In the new **Options** window, ensure that the “**Document structure tags for accessibility**” option is checked
7. Select the option for “**Create bookmarks using:**”
8. Select the **Headings** option



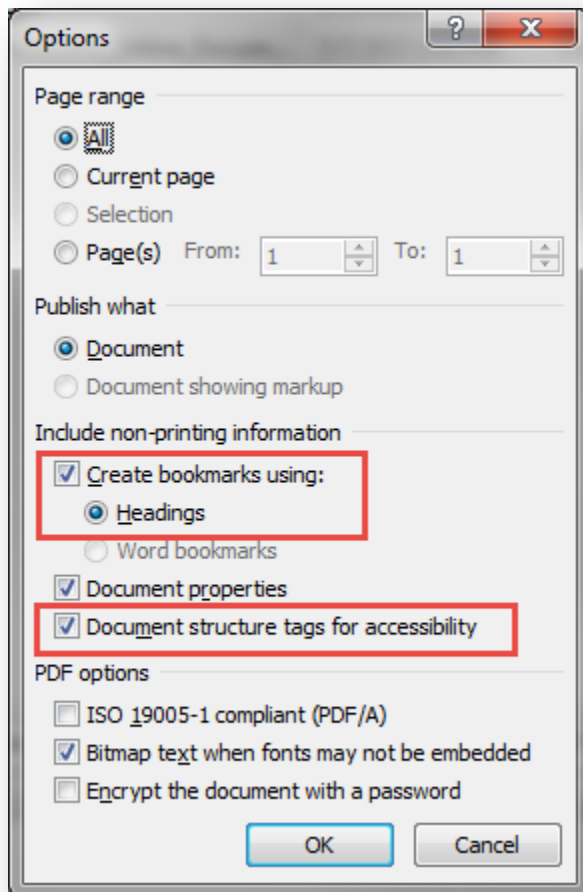
9. Select **OK** to close the Options window
10. Select **Save** to finish saving the file

Word 2010

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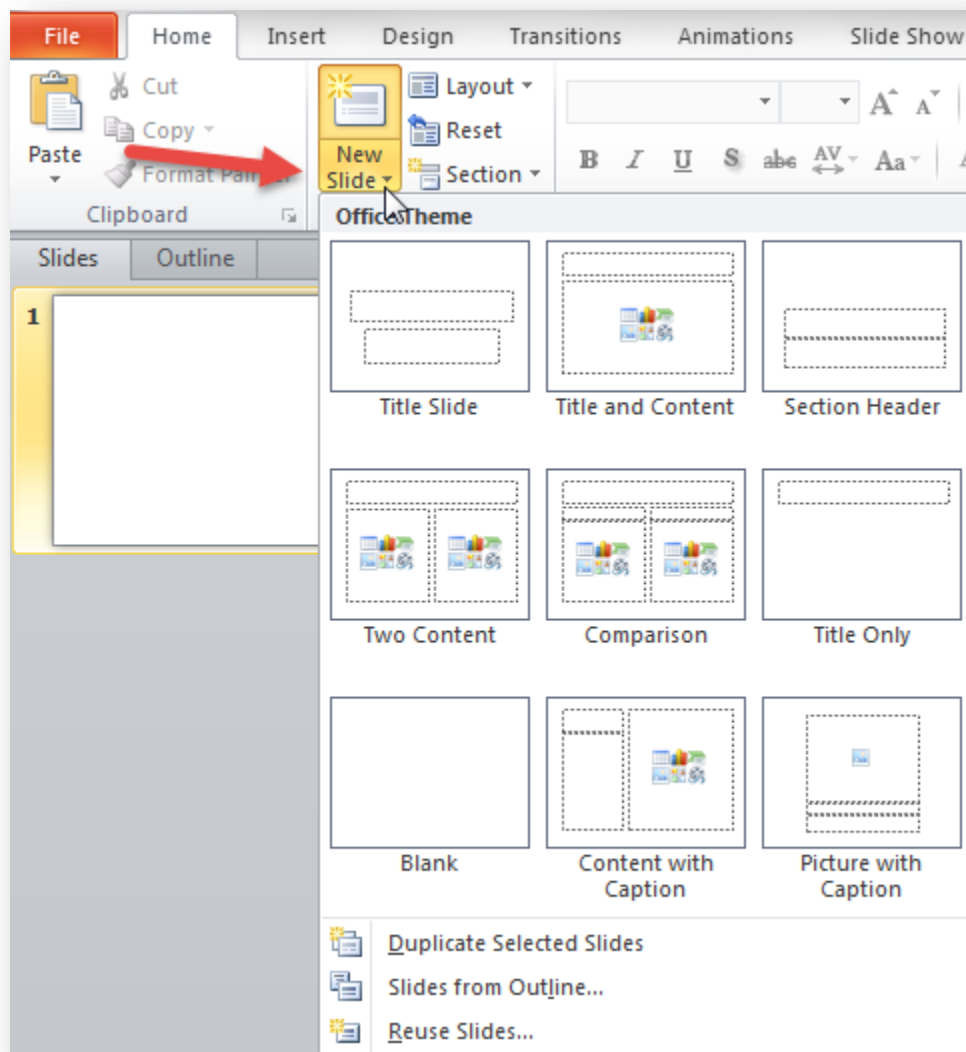
PowerPoint

Slide Layouts

The correct use of PowerPoint's slide layout templates is probably the most significant thing you can do to ensure that your content is accessible. The templates are accessible. Using them properly will ensure that your slides have correctly-structured headings, lists, and other features.

PowerPoint 2013 and 2010

Select **Home > New Slide** to open a menu of slide types.



Slide Titles

Slide titles are necessary to allow easy navigation through the slides by users of assistive technology.

- Make sure the slide title is entered into the title area of the layout
- Use unique titles for each slide

Slide Lists

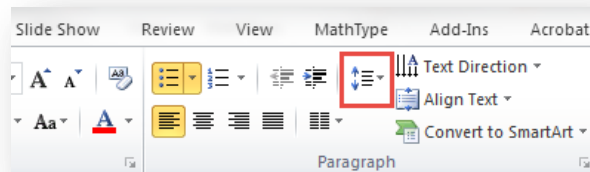
- Use slide template lists to ensure the list is accessible

Spacing within lists

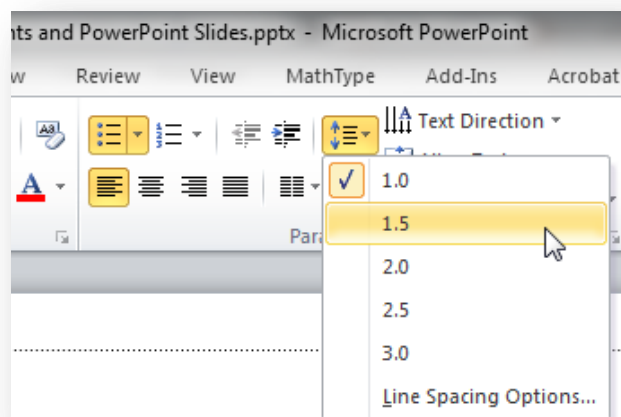
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PowerPoint 2013 and 2010

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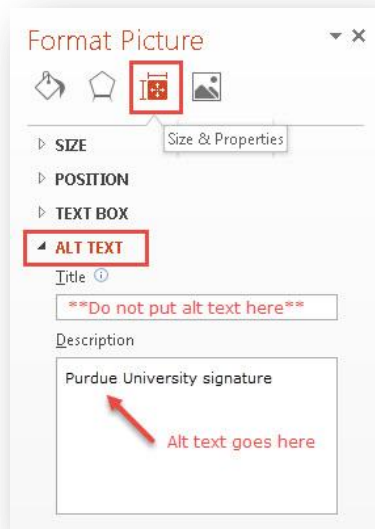


Slide Images

Add alternative text (alt text) to images. Alt text is the way to convey information about images to users who can't see them.

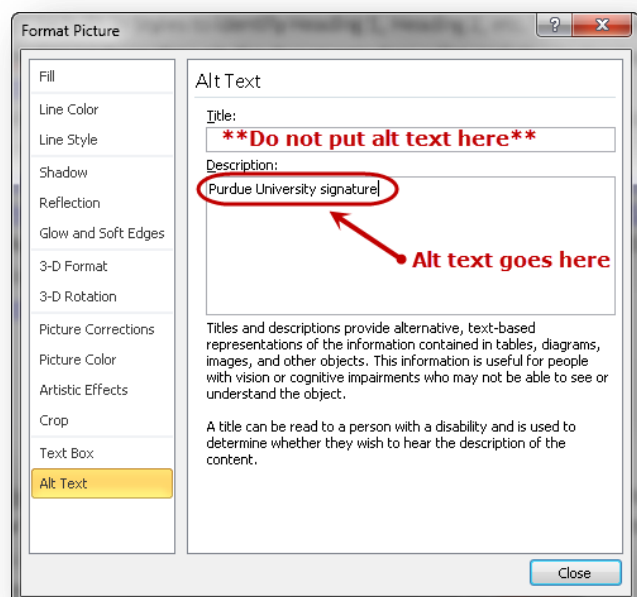
PowerPoint 2013

1. Right-click on the image and select **Format Picture**
2. Select **Size and Properties** and then select **Alt Text**
3. Enter alt text into the **Description** field. Do not put alt text into the **Title** field.



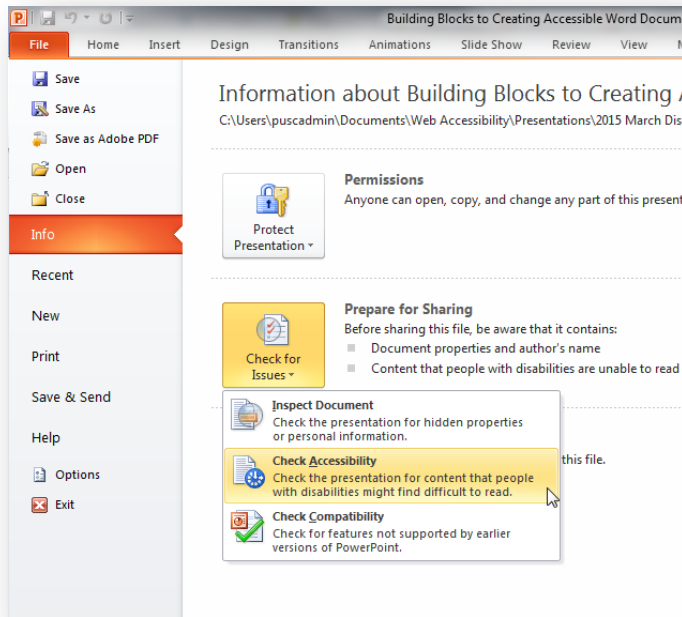
PowerPoint 2010

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Use PowerPoint Accessibility Checker

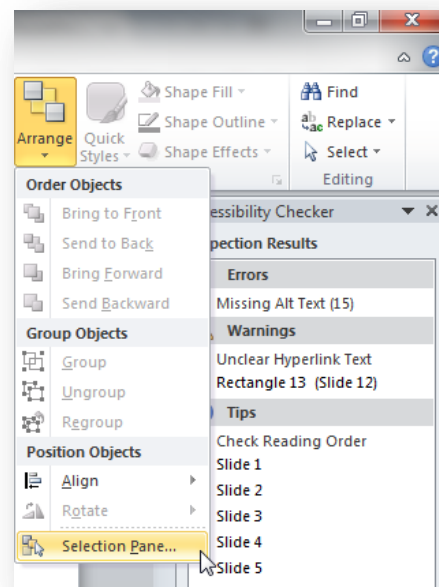
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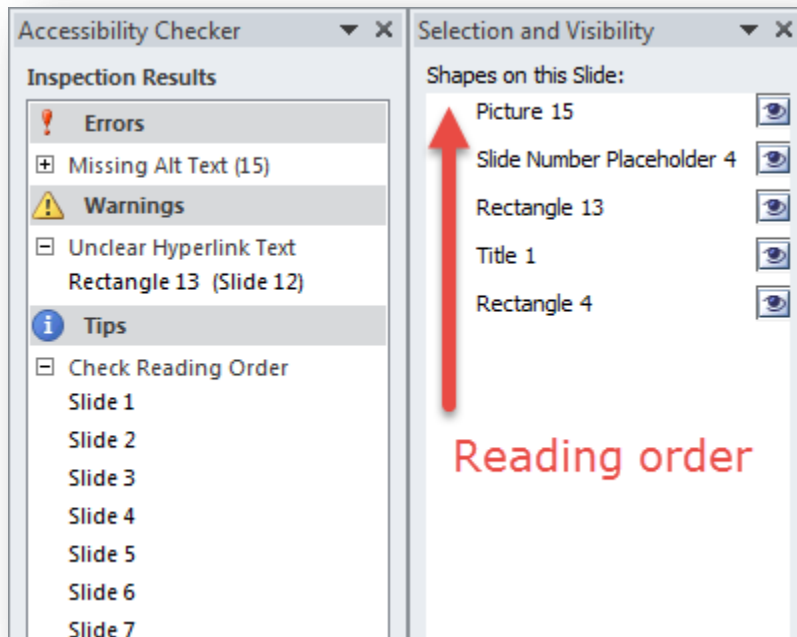
Check Reading Order

People who cannot view the slide will hear slide text, shapes, and content read back in a specific order. Verify that the reading order will make sense by following these steps:

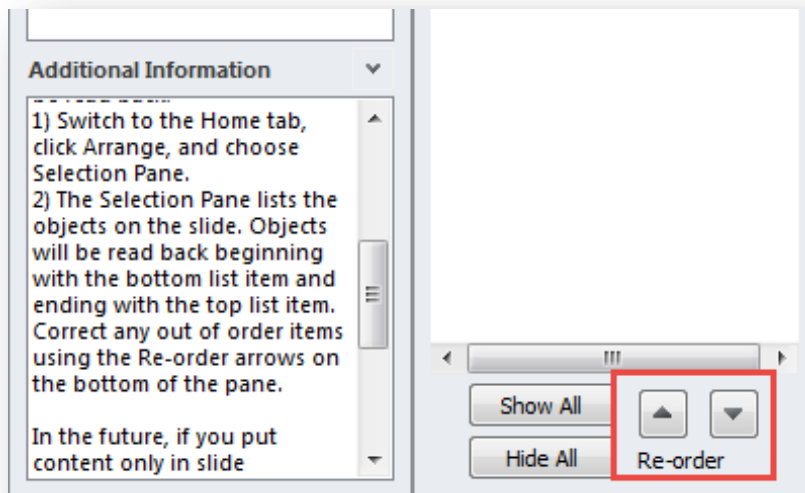
1. On the **Home** tab, select **Arrange** (found in the Drawing group) and choose **Selection Pane**



- The Selection Pane lists the objects on the slide. The reading order starts with the bottom list item and ends with the top list item.



- Correct any out of order items using the Re-order arrows at the bottom of the Selection Pane.

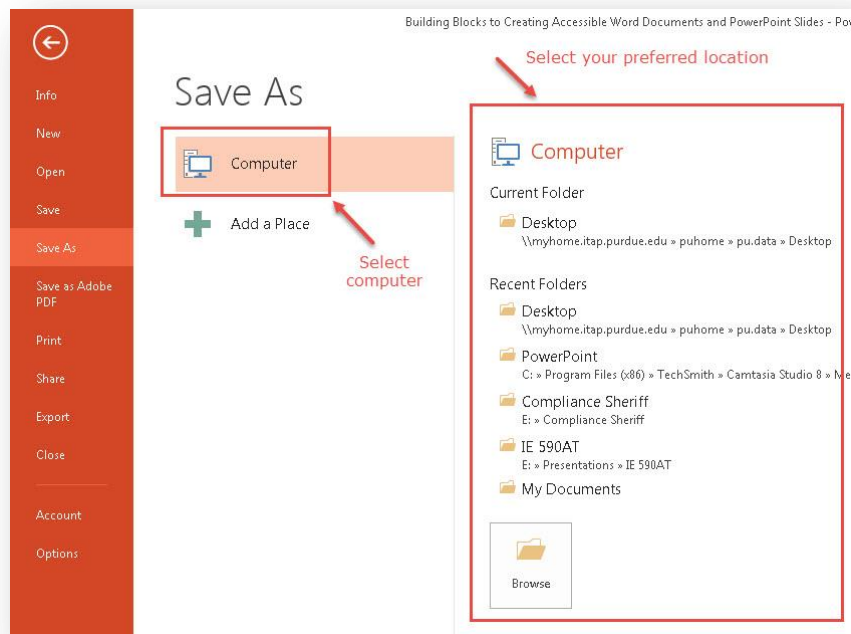


Save as Accessible PDF

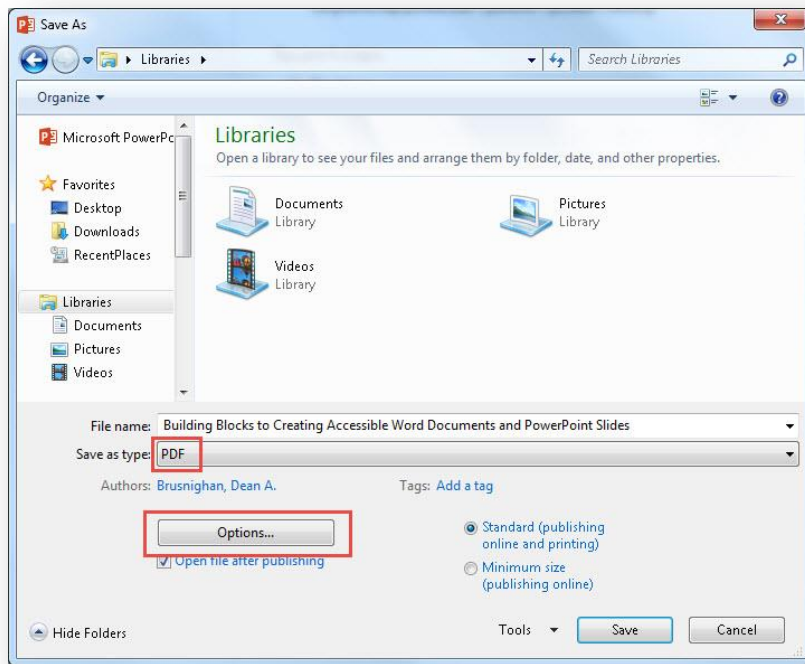
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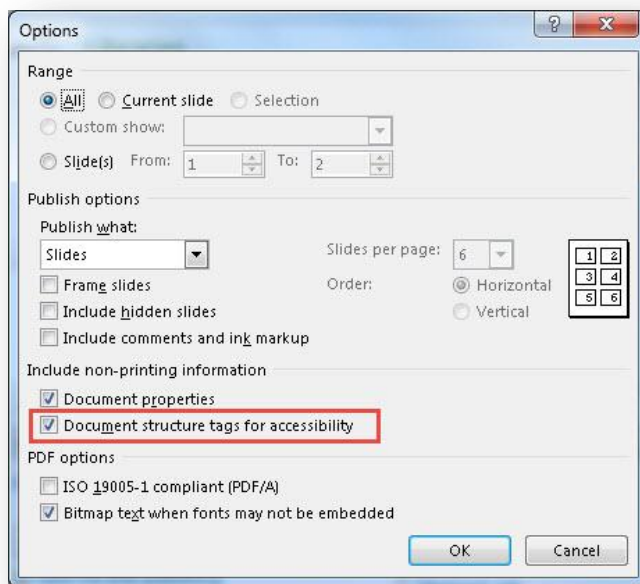
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2. From the **File** menu, select **Save As**
3. Select the **Computer** option, then select your preferred location for saving the file



4. Choose to **Save as type: PDF**
5. Select the **Options** button



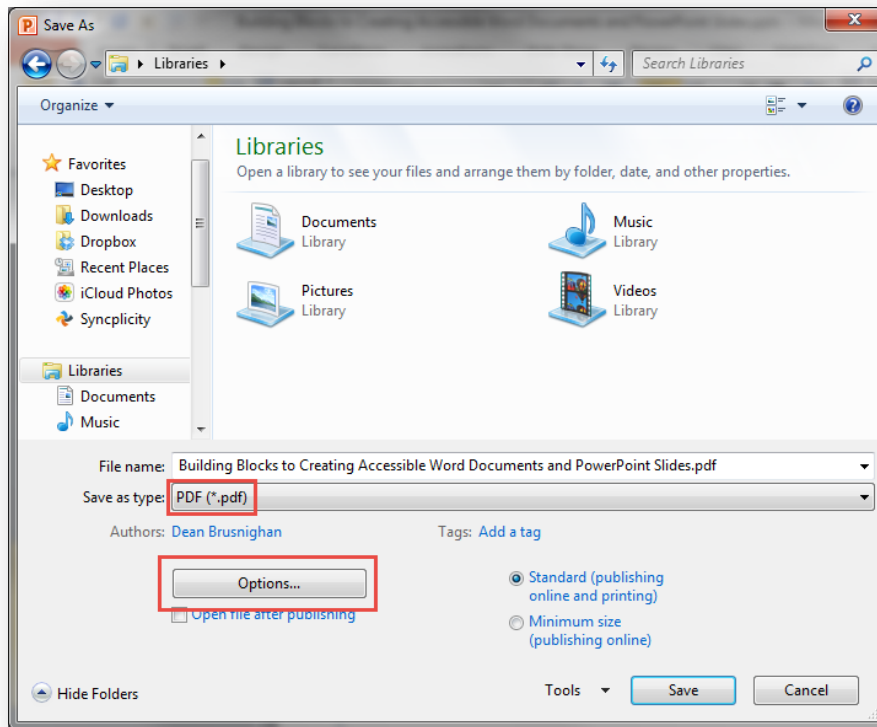
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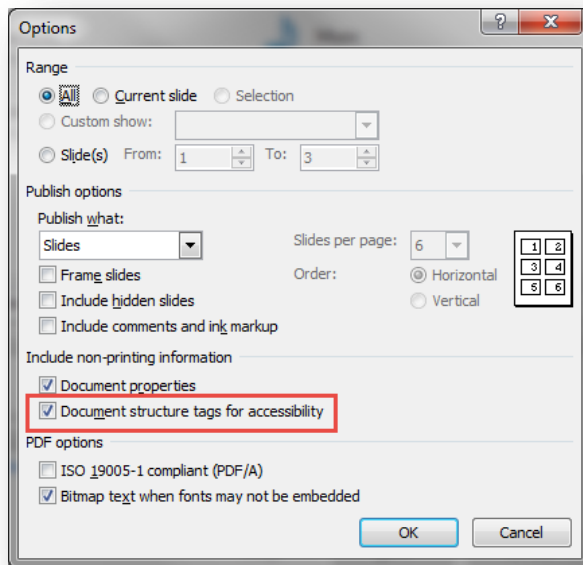
7. Select **OK** to close the Options window
8. Select **Save** to finish saving the file

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7. Select **Save** to finish saving the file

Definition

Screen reader: a software tool that reads aloud information on a computer screen. Typically used by individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Sources

The Web Accessibility Committee expresses our gratitude to these authors whose work has been referenced in this document:

- [Michigan State University \(http://webaccess.msu.edu/Tutorials/index.html\)](http://webaccess.msu.edu/Tutorials/index.html)
- [Penn State University AccessAbility \(http://accessibility.psu.edu/\)](http://accessibility.psu.edu/)
- [Purdue Web Accessibility Committee \(http://www.purdue.edu/webaccessibility/\)](http://www.purdue.edu/webaccessibility/)
- [WebAIM \(http://webaim.org/\)](http://webaim.org/)

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