

Making Accessible pdf Posters from MS Powerpoint 2007 Using Adobe Professional 8.0

These instructions are for converting posters or presentations authored in MS Powerpoint 2007 into electronically accessible pdfs that can be put online. These instructions are NOT for turning Powerpoint posters into pdfs that can be printed into large posters.

For an online pdf, it is acceptable to have a poster in dimensions that are suitable to on-screen viewing, eg 8.5 x 11 inches or 10 x 7.5 inches (a normal screen show in PowerPoint).

Make sure that your Adobe program is fully updated. You can download the patch for Adobe 8.1.2 at www.adobe.com/support. If you do not have Adobe Professional, go to Studio 6.

Making an accessible MS PowerPoint 2007 presentation

The important feature of an accessible pdf or PowerPoint is that screen-reading software can read all of your material in the order that you want it read. Making an accessible pdf starts with making an accessible PowerPoint presentation.

You can use slide layouts available in PowerPoint or you can use text boxes. However, **nothing must overlap** – that is, text boxes cannot overlap one another or a picture or diagram. Diagrams must not have separate parts; they must be one image that can be alt-tagged (see below for information about alt-tagging). Use the Paint program to create diagrams or to save your PowerPoint diagram as a .jpg image. To check for overlap, hold the Shift key and click on different elements in your poster – if their delineation boxes touch at all, the elements overlap and should be separated.

Use sans serif fonts and avoid using ornate fonts. They are hard to read both for screen-reading software and for people looking at your physical poster. For the same reason, avoid cluttering the poster with unnecessary elements. Use enough to make the poster look nice, but not more.

Creating alt-tags for graphics and pictures

While creating your poster, you need to put an alternative-text tag on each picture or graphic (including data charts and logos). To do this, right-click on each picture or graphic and go to "Size and Position." Click the "Alt-text" tab in the dialogue box. Write a brief description of the item in the comment box. Click "ok." This alternative text can be read aloud by screen-reading programs when the program detects a picture.

Sometimes, a picture that is copied and pasted from the internet cannot be alt-tagged because of corrupted codes in the picture's data. If this happens, the best thing to do is simply to choose a different picture or figure.

Designating a language

Open Adobe Professional 8.0. Click "Create pdf" in the top left corner, choose "from file," and browse for your PowerPoint file. Your PowerPoint will be opened and converted to a pdf. Either before or after saving your new pdf, open the File menu → Properties. Click on the "Advanced" tab at the rightmost side in the dialogue box. At the bottom of the Advanced dialogue box, choose "English" (or whatever language you are working in) from the drop-down language menu. Click ok. Save your file.

Choosing the order of reading

Usually, a screenreader cannot read text boxes and image alt-tags in the proper order at first. If text boxes and other poster elements overlap, the problem is much worse. First, ensure that no element in your poster overlaps another element and convert your poster to a pdf as described above.

In Adobe 8.0, click on the Advanced menu → Accessibility → Touchup Reading Order. Each element of your poster will be delineated and given a number, which is the reading order. Very likely, it won't be correct. In the bottom-right corner of the Touchup Reading Order dialogue box, click the button for "Show Order Panel." To change the order of reading, click-and-drag the cardboard box icon for an element to its proper place in your order. Save your poster, and close the reading order boxes.

To test the reading order, make sure your computer speakers are on. Click on the View menu → Read Out Loud → Activate read out loud. You may need to return to the View menu → Read Out Loud → Read This Page.