

Presenting Your Research in an Accessible Way with Microsoft PowerPoint

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Why this is important

As a researcher, one of the things you will likely do is to present your research ideas or findings to an audience. Some people in your audience might have impairments which thus requires you to produce the presentation in an accessible way.

Even if there is no one in the audience with an impairment, when you distribute the presentation later, someone with impairment may need to access it. It is therefore good to consider making the presentation accessible right from the start.

The following tips produced with the help of a Microsoft resource listed in the Resources section will help you produce a presentation that will reach a wider audience, thus communicating effectively.

Tips on producing accessible presentations with Microsoft PowerPoint

Use the Accessibility Checker

Before you begin typing, consider displaying the accessibility checker. This will show you any errors in the presentation as you type in and add visuals. Fixing the errors right away will be faster and easier than at the end.

To display the Accessibility Checker pane, use the following method (also shown in Figure 1):

1. Go to the **File** menu
2. Click the **Info** tab
3. In the **Inspect Presentation** section, click the **Check for Issues** drop down
4. Select **Check Accessibility** to display the Accessibility Checker pane

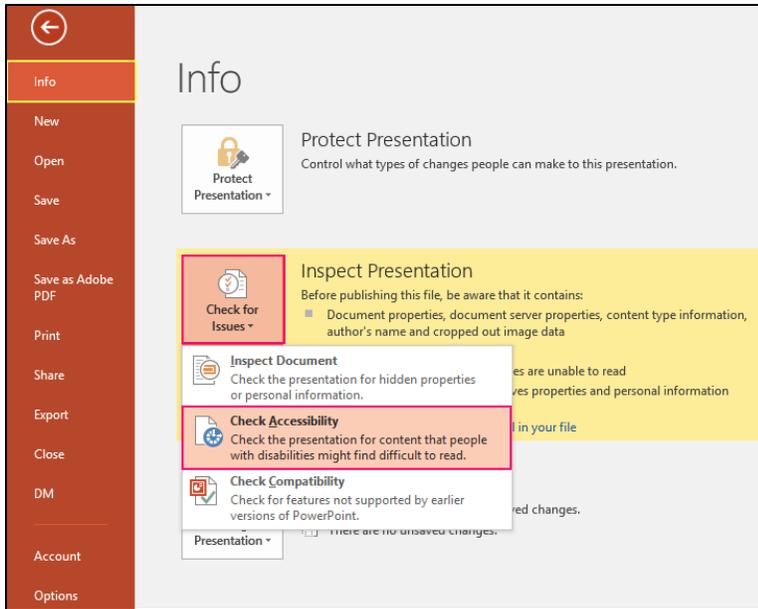


Figure 1. Displaying the Accessibility Checker pane in Microsoft PowerPoint

Include alternative text for all visuals

Screen reader users can understand an image if an alternative text (Alt Text) is included. If your visual does not have an alternative text, the Accessibility Checker will display an error as shown in Figure 2.

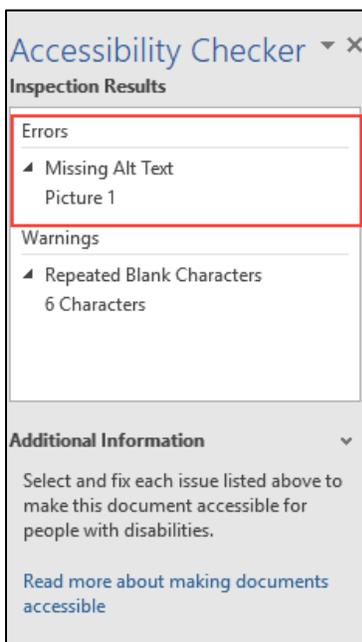


Figure 2. Accessibility Checker displaying an error due to the lack of Alt Text for an image

To add an Alt Text, **right click** the image and proceed as follows:

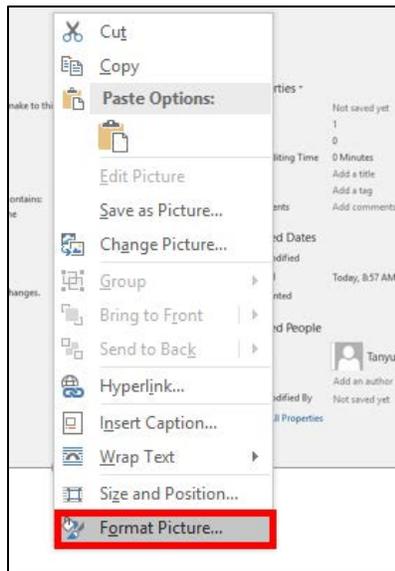


Figure 3. Opening the Format Picture pane

1. Select **Format Picture** (as shown in Figure 3). The Format Picture pane opens. When adding the Alt text for an object, you would select Format Object.
2. Select the **Size and Properties** icon
3. Enter a **Title** for the image, then a full **description** as shown in Figure 4. The title is read first then the screen reader user can decide whether to read the full description or not.

Although alternative texts are also required for text boxes, they are generally not accessible and should be avoided.

When inserting visuals, ensure that they are in line with text, to be accessible. Please note that visuals also include embedded content such as audio and video. Alternative texts should also be entered for Tables.

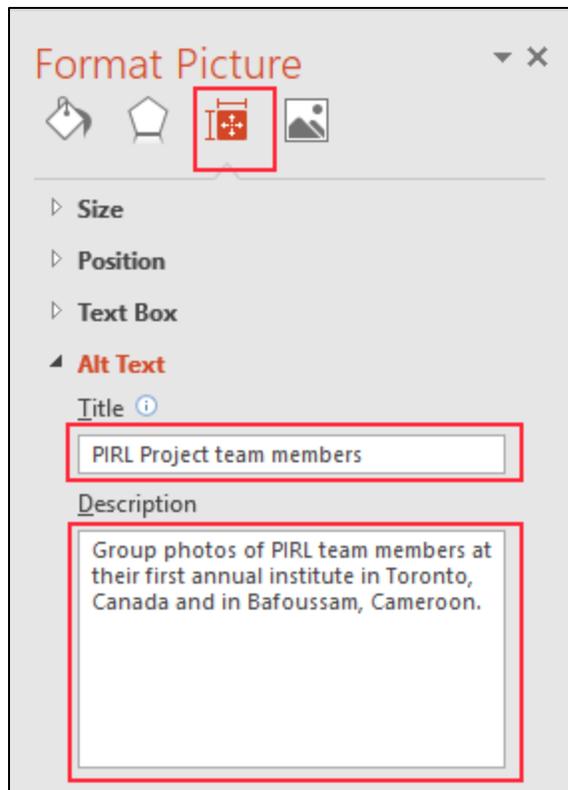


Figure 4. Adding Alt Text to an image

Use built-in designs

An important aspect of PowerPoint accessibility is the reading order. The slides in PowerPoint have been designed to maintain a logical reading order. So, when creating a new slide, it is important to use the built-in slide designs.

To add a new slide using the built-in design, proceed as follows:

1. Click the **View** menu (Figure 5)
2. In the **Presentation Views** group, select **Normal**
3. In the left hand pane displaying a preview of the slides, right click in the place where you want to add a new slide then select **New Slide**
4. Click the **Design** menu (Figure 6)
5. In the **Themes** section, select the slide you want to add.

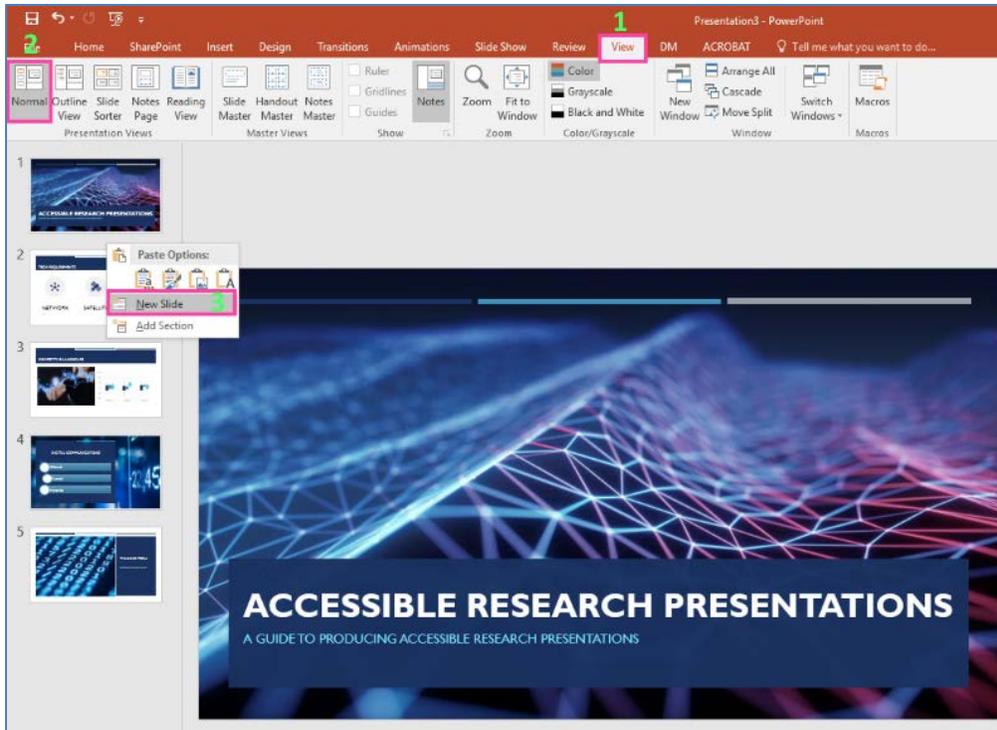


Figure 5. Adding a new slide in PowerPoint and using a built-in slide design

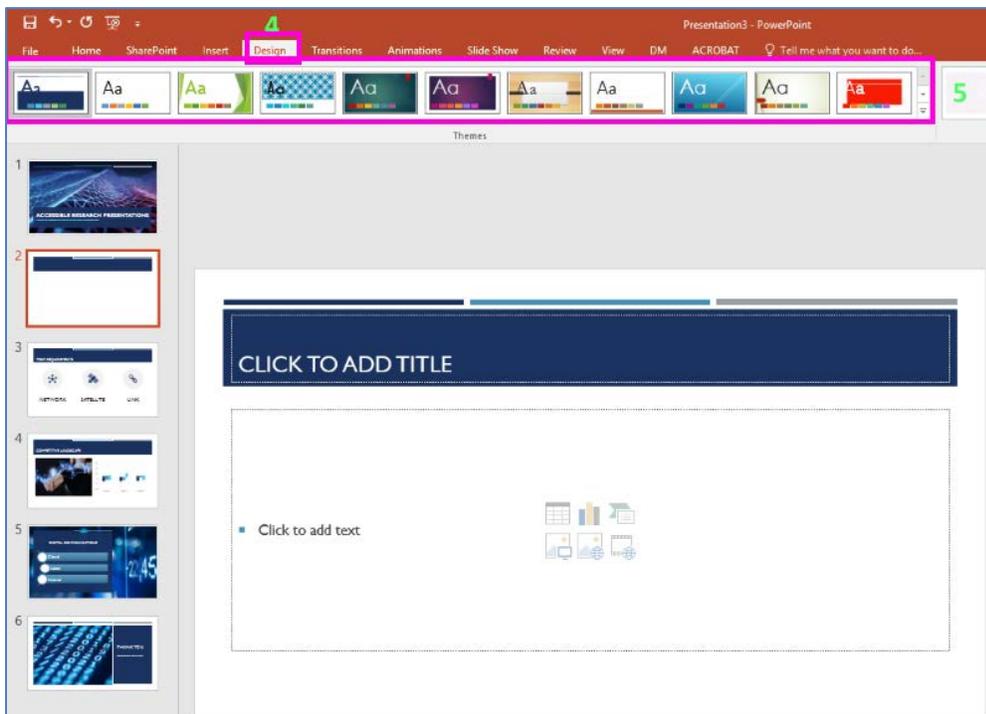


Figure 6. Microsoft PowerPoint 2016 built-in slide designs

Create simple data tables

Use tables to present data and when doing so, create simple, rather than complex tables. A simple table is one without merged cells. The table header rows must be identified to enable screen readers to better interpret the table.

To create a simple table and define the header rows, proceed as follows (also shown in Figure 7):

1. Click anywhere in the table
2. Go to the **Design** tab
3. In the **Table Style Options** section, select **Header Row**.

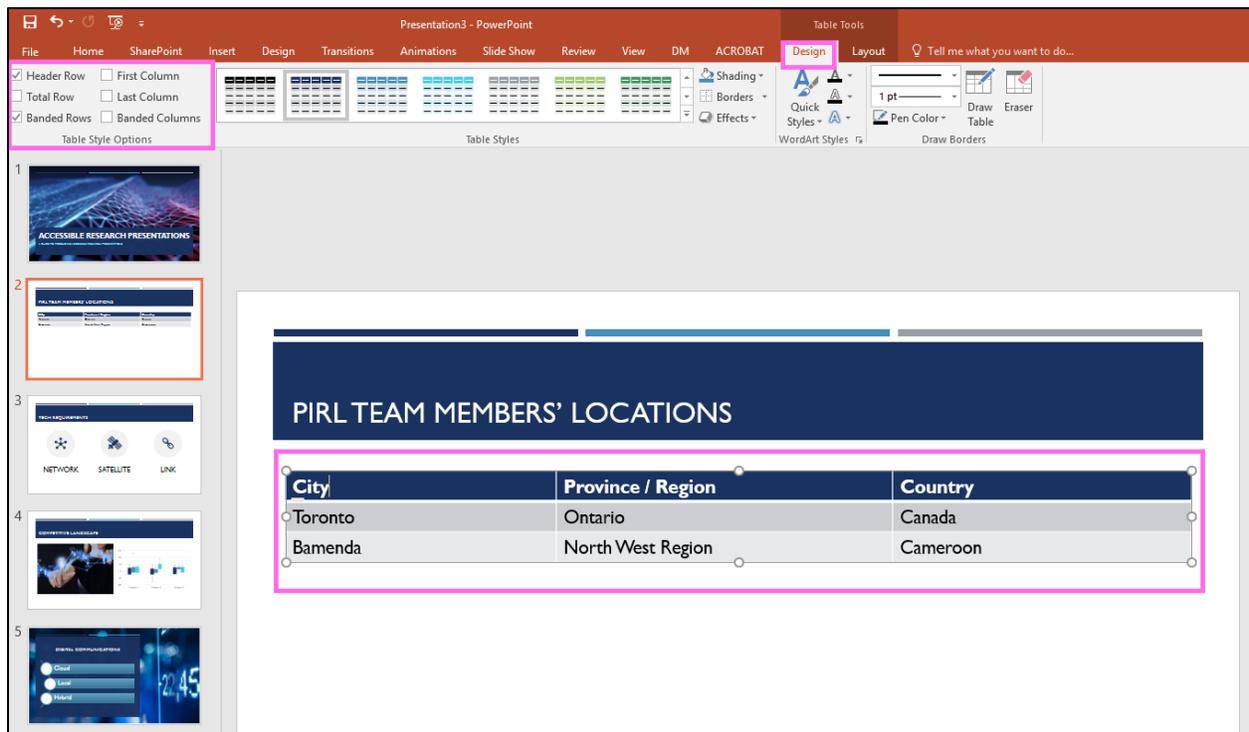


Figure 7. Adding a table header

Include meaningful hyperlinks

When creating a link in the document, include link text that helps users understand where the link leads them, thereby providing context. Link texts such as “Click here” do not provide context for the users.

To add a link, highlight the word or phrase you want to add a link to.

1. Go to the **Insert** Menu
2. In the Links group, select **Hyperlink**.
3. Paste the destination page link in the **Address** field.

4. Click **OK** (Figure 8).

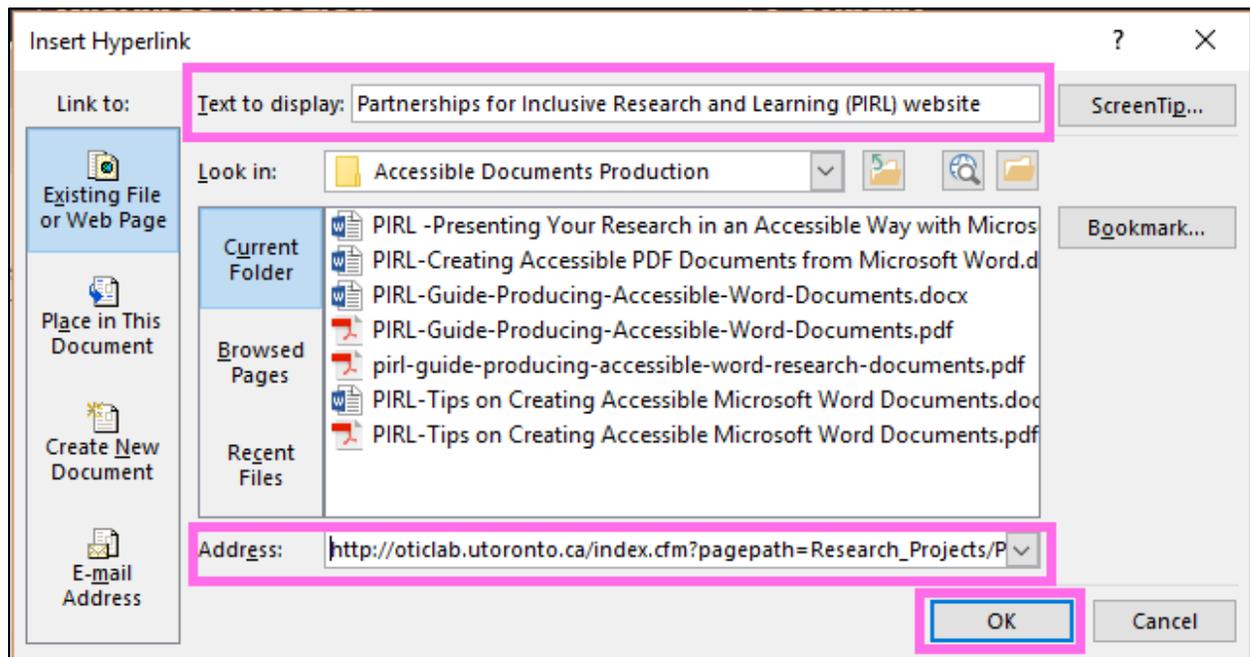


Figure 8. Adding meaningful hyperlinks

Use high colour contrast

For people with visual impairment, it is important to have an accessible contrast between the foreground and background colours.

Tools such as the [Colour Contrast Analyser](#) (downloadable) and [Colour Contrast Checker](#) (Web-based) can help with choosing an accessible colour contrast (Figure 9).

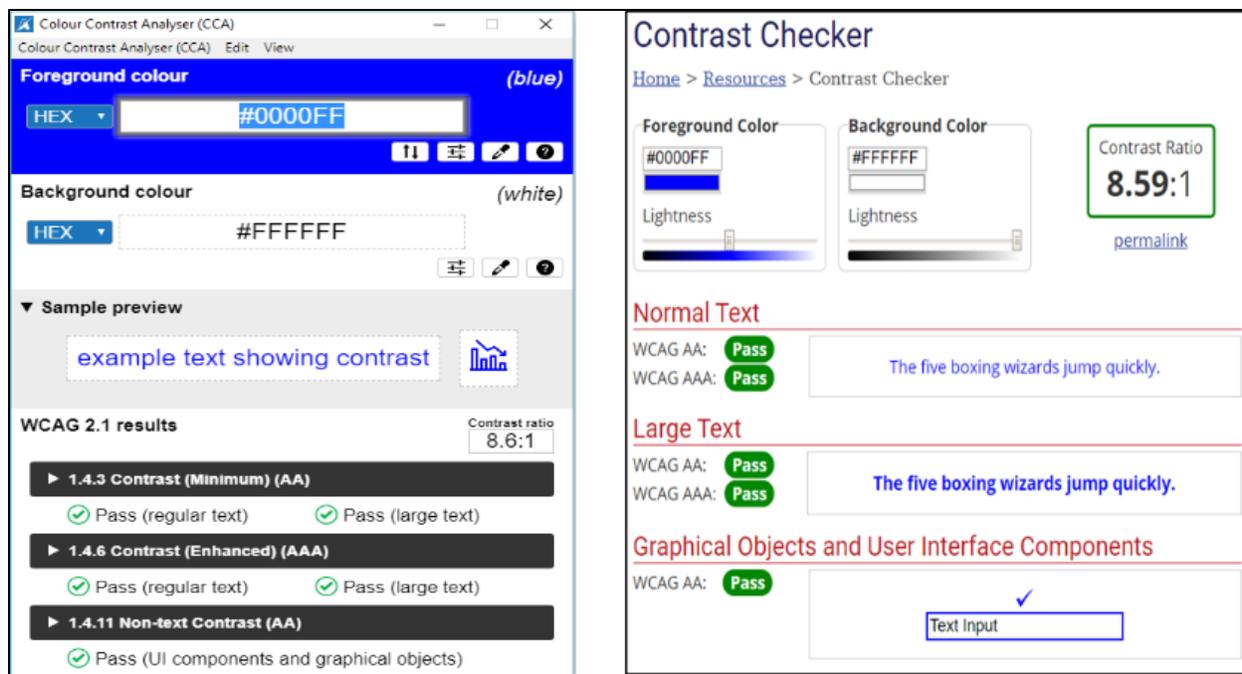


Figure 9. The Colour Contrast Analyser and Colour Contrast Checker tools

Generally, in preparing your presentation, avoid using colour as the only way to convey information. People who are colour blind will be excluded from the information.

Consider the following advice from Microsoft on the use of colour in presentations:

1. Avoid using orange, red, and green in your template and text.
2. Use texture in graphs, instead of color, to highlight points of interest.
3. Circle or use animation to highlight information, rather than relying on laser pointers or color.
4. Keep the overall contrast in your presentation high.

Use accessible fonts

It is important to be consistent in the use of fonts. It is also recommended to use the more legible sans serif fonts such as Arial, Helvetica and Verdana. A font size of at least 18 is recommended.

Other considerations for fonts include:

1. Do not write in all upper case letters
2. Consider using bold for emphasis rather than italics and underlining
3. Consider left aligning the text rather than justifying the text which is not accessible

Add a unique title to each slide

People using screen readers or those with low vision navigate the slides through the titles. Giving each slide a unique title helps with orientation.

To add a slide title, proceed as follows:

1. On the **Home** tab, in the Slides group, click **Reset** to restore slide placeholders for the selected slide.
2. Type a unique name in the slide **Title** text box.

If you do not want the title to be visible on your slide but still read by a screen reader, do the following:

1. On the **Home** tab, in the **Drawing** group, click the **Arrange** drop down.
2. Click **Selection Pane**, this displays the pane (Figure 10).
3. Click the eye icon next to the text box to toggle its visibility (Figure 11).

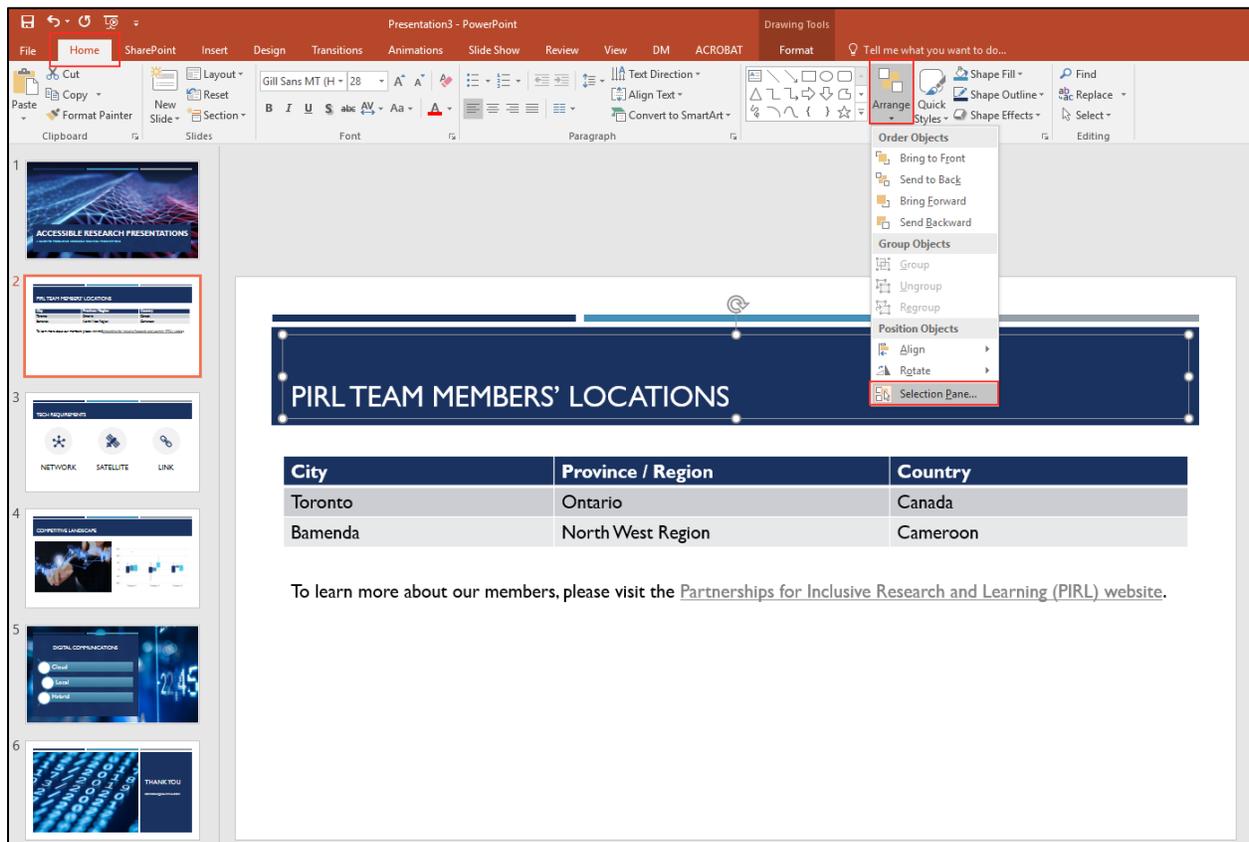


Figure 10. Displaying the Selection Pane

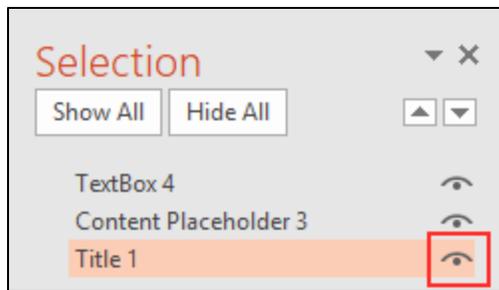


Figure 11. Hiding a slide title

Include closed captions for embedded audio or video

When you add an audio or a video in a presentation, make sure this content is also available in alternative formats, such as closed captions, transcripts, and Alt Text.

To find out how to do this, please see the Resources section for a link to the Microsoft website.

Provide a logical reading order

After you have finished your presentation, make sure the reading order is logical. This includes checking each slide and making sure the components will be read in the right order.

This is important for screen reader users. The screen reader should be able to read the slide in the order in which you intend. To ensure that this is the case, you will need to manually define the reading order.

To check the order in which your slide content will be read back, do the following:

1. Go to the **Home** tab, and click the **Arrange** dropdown in the **Drawing** group section
2. Click the **Selection Pane** (shown in Figure 11). The objects you see in the pane will be read beginning with the bottom one.
3. Correct the order by selecting the object and clicking the Re-order arrows or simply drag and drop the object to the desired location.

Resources

To further explore different aspects of Microsoft PowerPoint accessibility, please visit the page: [Make your PowerPoint accessible to people with disabilities](#).

Please note that this guide has been produced by consulting that Microsoft page which should have better details.