

LAUSD Job Aid for Microsoft PowerPoint

Microsoft (MS) PowerPoint (PPT) allows users to create presentation slides, flyers, infographics and more. We will share how PPT can create appealing and fancy designs and templates all while preserving the accessible structure. It is important to keep digital accessibility in mind when creating and using any processing tool.

According to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all federal agencies are required by law to make electronic documents (including all digital content) accessible for people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities may request for digital content be provided in an alternate format which provides effective communication. Additionally, students, District employees and visitors who have disabilities can request reasonable accommodations to access digital content. All District employees are obligated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to follow the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG 2.0 Level AA; and WCAG 2.1 Level AA by April 24, 2026).

The District is committed to providing program accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities. By providing effective communication, Ethics and Compliance Monitoring (ECM) Legal Services Team fosters the maxim that *"Compliance ensures that students have the necessary tools to succeed."*

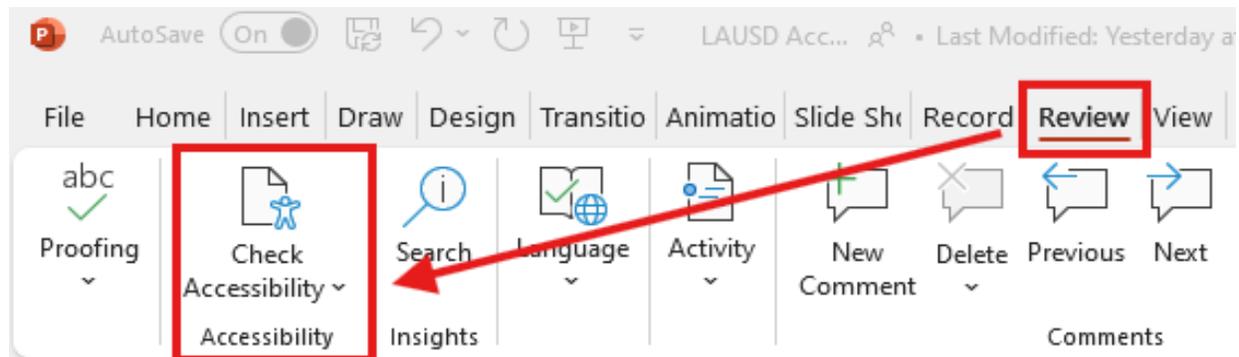
The purpose of this job aid is to share best practices for creating accessible PowerPoint presentations. Before creating and sharing PowerPoint files, please check that you have implemented the following accessibility best practices.

How to apply Accessibility to PPT?

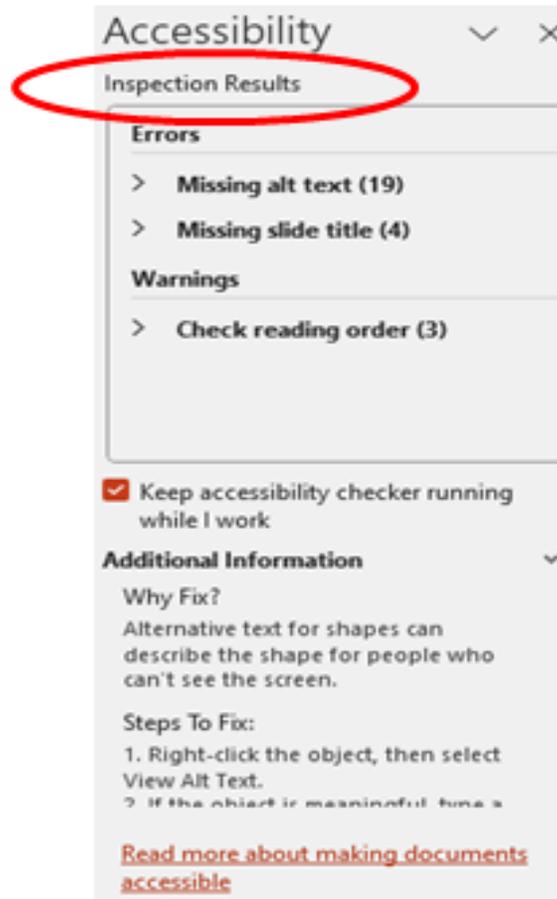
Accessibility should be a forethought when creating your PPT slides. Fortunately, all MS Office applications have a built-in [Accessibility Checker](#).

Step 1: Go to the **Review** tab and select the *Check Accessibility* feature:

Step 2: Select  **Check Accessibility** to open the **Accessibility** pane on the right.



Step 3: In the **Accessibility** pane, review and address the findings under **Inspection Results**. The accessibility checker will alert you to address any accessibility errors and warnings. As you create content, the accessibility checker will scan your content for the accessibility structure. This tool provides additional information on why the error should be fixed and step-by-step instructions on how to improve the accessibility of your electronic documents.



The accessibility checker will always warn you to manually check the Reading Order and Color Contrast. Sometimes the accessibility will detect hard to read text, but you should use an evaluation tool, such as a Color Contrast Analyser (CCA) to confirm the color ratio passes and meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA Guidelines.

Applying these best practices and making sure to use the accessibility checker will guide you in designing accessible PowerPoints. Remember to use the accessibility checker along the way and manually check the reading order by using a screen reader.

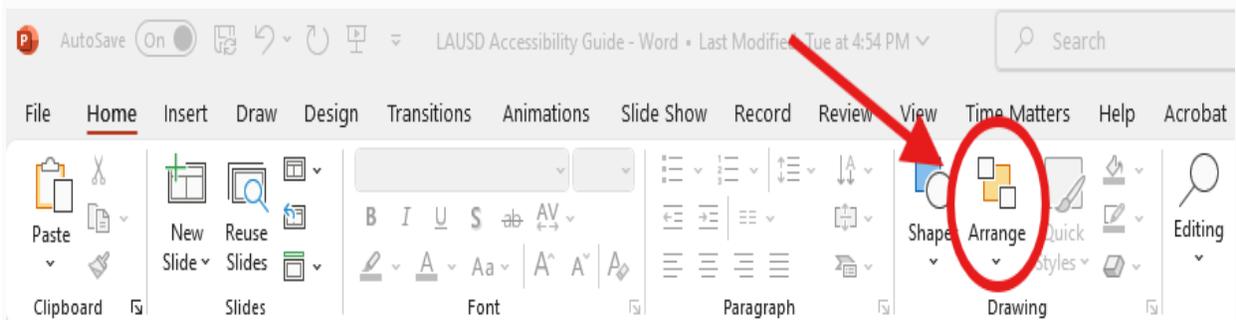
Blind or low vision individuals use assistive technology such as screen readers, magnifiers, braille keyboards, dictation software and more to access digital content. These [assistive technology devices and services](#) provide

independence and privacy for individuals with disabilities and offer inclusive learning. Applying these best practices to your PowerPoints will reduce accessibility barriers for everyone!

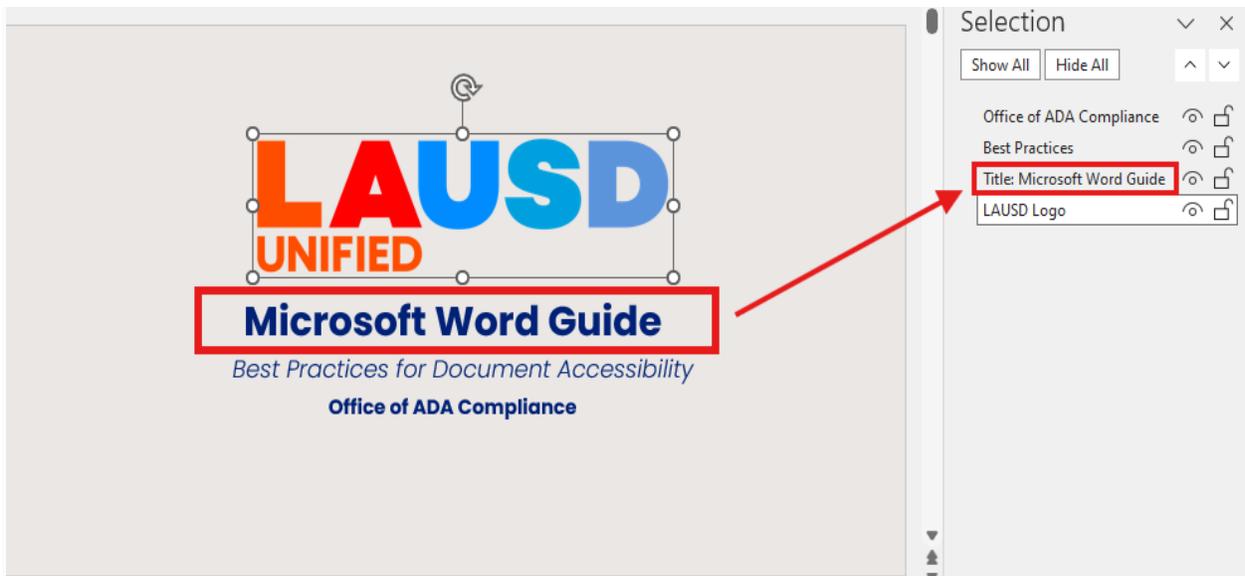
Best Practices for Creating Accessible Microsoft PowerPoints

Reading Order (Navigation)

When creating digital content, designers should check that the slides have an accessible reading order (including proper heading levels, list items, tables, etc.). Learn more about [Creating slides with an Accessible Reading Order](#). Avoid manually creating bullet points, numbered lists, and tables as they will not have the accessibility structure and screen readers will not effectively navigate the content. Instead, go to the **Home** tab and select the *Arrange* icon:



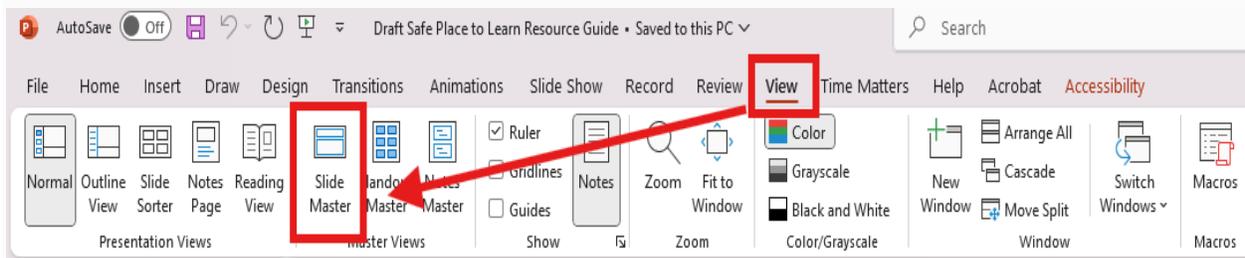
Then select the “Selection Pane” to edit the contents reading order. The reading order in PPT reads from bottom-to-top, however it will convert to read the text left-to-right and top-to-bottom if converted to PDF. Use the **File** tab and select “Save As” to preserve the accessible structure of your content. It is important to manually check the reading order structure before saving to confirm the screen reader is following the content accurately.



For images and elements that are solely used for visual esthetics, you will need to check “Mark as decorative” in the alt text menu. People using screen readers will be informed by the screen reader that the image is decorative, which lets them know they are not missing valuable information related to the visuals. All non-informational graphics can be moved to the bottom of the selection pane to help organize the reading order. If the image description (alt text) is not provided or the picture isn’t “marked as decorative”, then your PPT will not pass the accessibility checker.

Slide Master

It is recommended to create a *Slide Master* if you want to create a custom theme or various slide formats. To create a theme using the Slide, go to the **View** tab and select *Slide Master*:



The main slide will be used to set background elements on all other slides, but you can create other slide layouts to customize various slide formats.

Font

Use fonts that are easier to read for individuals with vision impairments. Ensure your font size is 12 points or larger. Avoid the use of all capital letters, excessive italics or underline.



Avoid using fancy fonts with curves or extensions at the end, also known as Serif fonts, because these are harder to read and difficult for the screen reader to recognize. Instead, you should use the [District's branding fonts](#) (Larsseit, Poppins, and Lato) or a San Serif font like Arial, Calibri or Verdana.

Bullets, Lists and Numbering

Most slide formats will include a textbox and additional textbox for listing items (such as bullet points or number items). If the slide you select does not include additional text formatting options, such as listing and numbers, you will need to go to the **Home** tab and select from the *Paragraph* section from the built-in listing formats. Avoid manually creating bullets or number lists because the screen reader will not associate the manual insertion and will ignore this formatting (Ex. If you have 10 list items the screen reader will read "List of ten" and proceed with saying "bullet 1 of 10 [content]... bullet 2 of 10" and so on). If you want to include other variations of slides in your presentation, you can edit the other slide formats. For additional information, read more about [What is a slide master?](#)

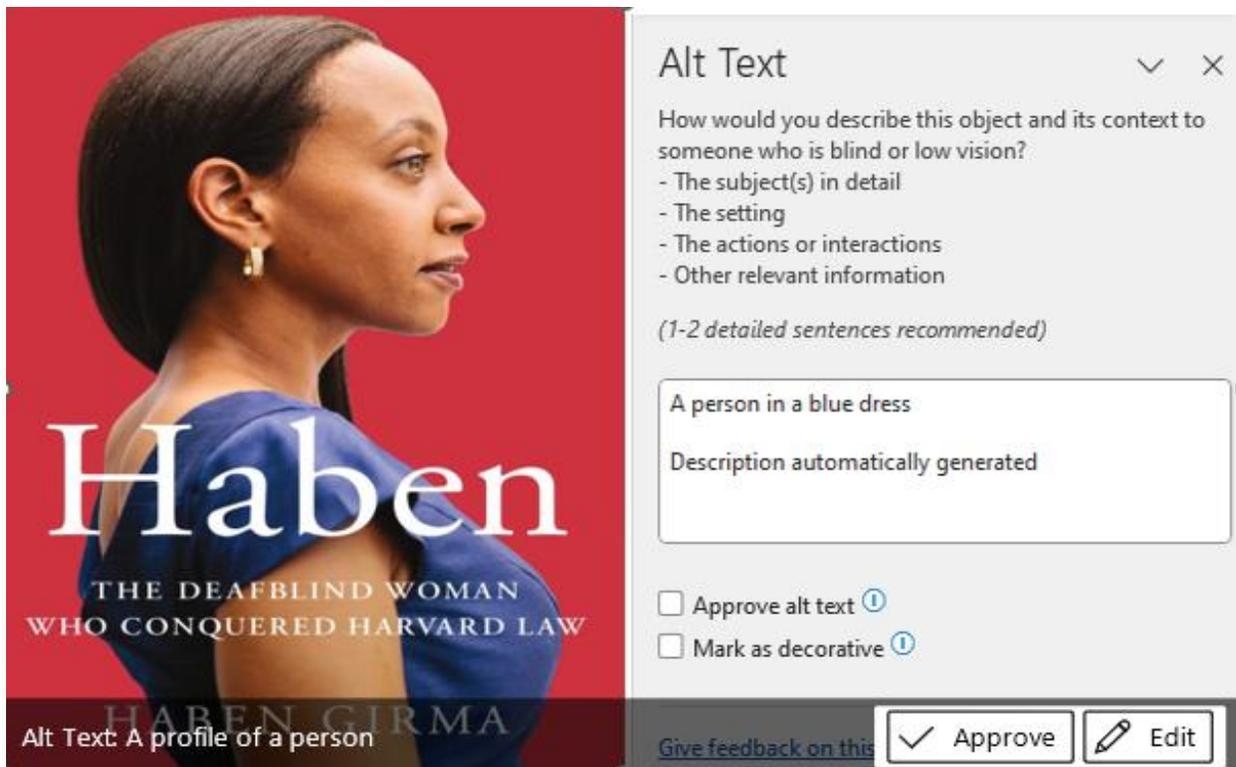
Note: All slides must have a Title (heading) to be accessible. Do not use blank slides that do not include the “Title” textbox.

Images Descriptions (Alt Text)

A description added to images is called [Alternative Text](#) or “alt text”. It provides inclusion for low vision or blind individuals using assistive technology such as a screen reader. For images that do not convey important meaning or messages, you can select “mark as decorative” under the alt text description box. If you use images with embedded text, make sure to include the exact text within your image description. As an example, we’ve provided an image below that shows the front cover of the book titled, “Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law” and it shows a side profile of the author Haben Girma wearing a blue garment with a red background.

Additionally, the image illustrates how you can add alt text to your images; by right clicking on the image and selecting **Edit Alt Text**. You can add a brief image description (1-2 sentences or 200 characters or less) including proper punctations.

Note: If using acronyms, it is best to spell out the full name first and use spacing or periods in between each letter of the acronym to guarantee that the screen reader pronounces the term correctly; for example, Los Angeles Unified School District should be spelled out first then use spacing or periods to separate each character (e.g. L A U S D or L.A.U.S.D.), or you can use the term “the District” which is commonly used in place of spelling out the full name of the school district.



There is an auto-generated alt text feature that can be edited to enhance the image description, but we recommend overriding the auto-generated alt text and including a meaningful description because the auto-generated alt text may be incorrect or vague as shown in the above example (Alt text reads: “A profile of a person.”). Because the title is embedded within this image and the screen reader is unable to decode the burnt in text, the text and a description recognizing the author would be adequate for adding alt text to this image.

Content creators are best at describing images. Adding images/graphics to your PowerPoint can be fun and beneficial for sharing relevant and essential information. Make sure to add alt text so that everyone has access to your content.

Captions (Subtitles)

Want to record your presentation and share it with others? By recording the presentation, it now becomes a video which requires closed captioning to be added; additionally, providing a written transcript is recommended. Microsoft

PPT allows you to transcribe your words as you present for real-time auto captioning. However, it is important to always do a manual check of the closed captions and make any necessary grammar corrections. You can choose the language you want to speak in, and the auto captions will add subtitles in the language you select. Read more on [how to enable captions and subtitles](#) when presenting.

Color contrast

Make sure there is enough color contrast is used between the foreground (text) color and background color. Test the colors used in your content with the [Color Contrast Analyser \(CCA\)](#). WCAG 2.0 Level AA requires a color contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text (12pt.) and 3:1 for large text (14pt or larger) fonts. It is best to check your color using the color picker or enter the colors in RGB hexadecimal format prior to exporting your design(s).

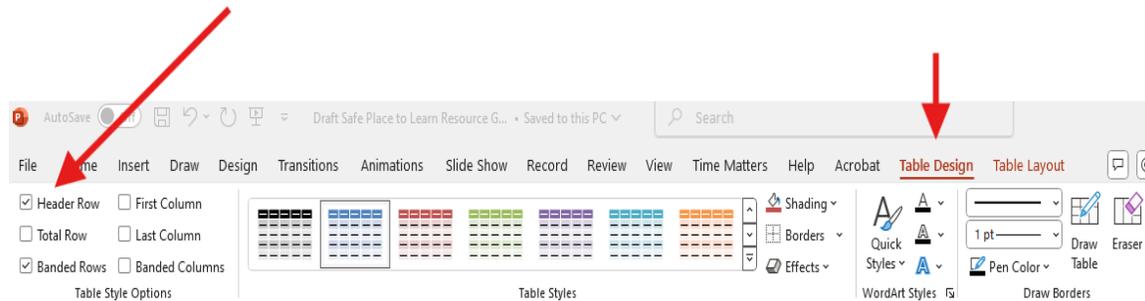


Feedback will be presented for all three required contrast calculations: link to body text, link to background and body text to background. Ensure your communication has high contrast between text and background colors. Avoid solely relying on color to convey information and ensure that there is a readable marker for color-blind users. Test results will show if the contrast passed or failed.

Tables

Avoid drawing or manually creating tables or lists. The screen reader will not associate the list items or tables rows with the table heading structure. Using the built in Table, List or Number features in PPT will guarantee that the screen reader will announce the correct information as shown on the slide; this

concept is known as the “Header Cell Association”. Once you use the **Insert** tab to create a table, remember to apply the *Header Row* which is located in the **Table Design** tab.



- *Simple Data Tables*: Information in a cell requires information from a row and or column header to describe the cell’s content.
- *Complex Data Table*: use information in a row and column to describe the cell’s content, however this table includes multilevel headings or merged or split cells.

Note: Multilevel headings and merged cells are inaccessible, so [avoid using complex data tables](#). Separating the tables or providing them outside of a table structure is advised.

Descriptive Links

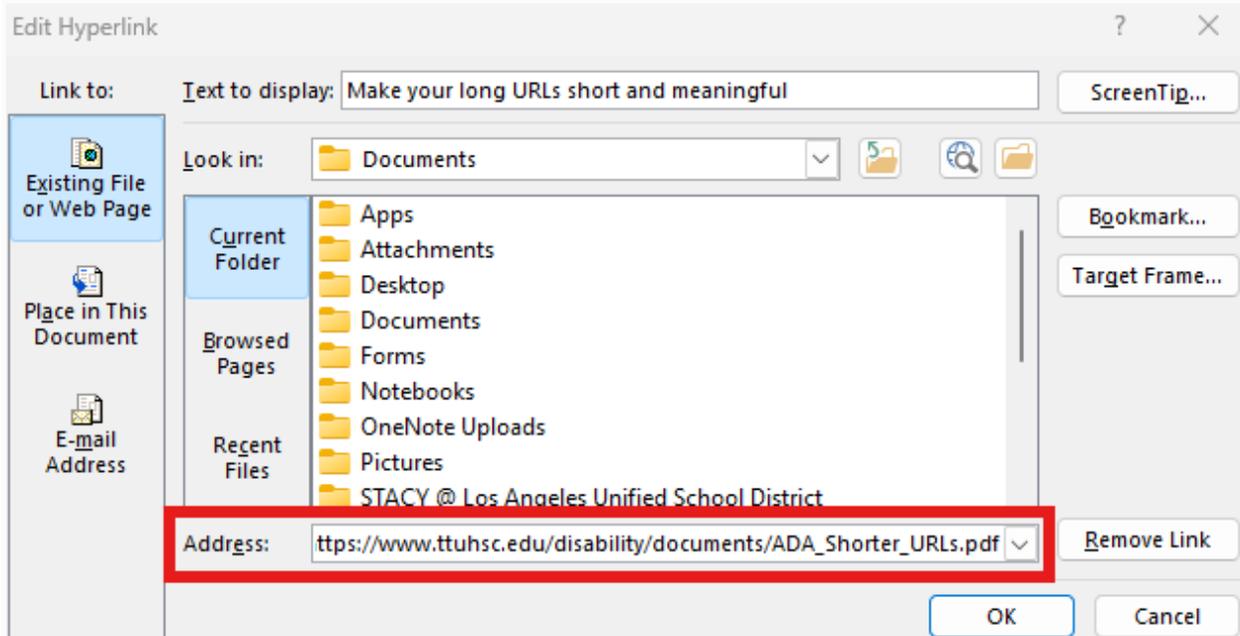
Phrases such as “click here” or “read more” are not inclusive for blind or low vision users. Use descriptive links to inform your audience where the link will direct them to; most links are random characters with no information on the destination of the website.

Here is how to create descriptive links (hyperlinks):

Step 1: Write a meaningful and descriptive phrase or title that relates to the website you are sharing (e.g. [Make your long URLs short and meaningful](#)).

Step 2: Highlight the text you wish to create a link for, then right-click on the highlighted text and select the Links option.

Step 3: Leave the Text to display as is, unless you would like to change the phrase that will appear as linked. Add the URL link to the *Address* section and select “OK” to save your hyperlink. You can also go to the **Insert** tab and select the Links option to create a hyperlink.



Note: Do not reuse the same phrases for hyperlinks in a document or webpage because screen reader users navigating the “List all links” menu will be confused if the links go to different locations but have the same link name.

Additionally, it is common practice for most hyperlinks to use underline and blue font color (text). Avoid underlining other text such as titles, as this may cause confusion for a screen reader to correctly distinguish between regular text and links. Do not place links within alt text because the alt text is only accessible for screen reader users, and it will read the characters individually.

Use link shorteners rather than long URLs which are meaningless for people, especially screen reader users. To create short links, go to [tinyURL](https://tinyurl.com) or bitly.com, which are free link shortener websites. Add the long URL and customize your link adding meaningful language that will inform the user of the website destination.

QR Codes

Often, QR Codes are added to PowerPoint slides to reference resources or other webpages. Be sure to add alt text to your QR Code so screen reader users are aware of what the QR Code is referencing. Additionally, you would be required to add a short link for individuals who may not use mobile devices or have access to take a picture of the QR Code.

Mobile Display

Some people may access your content via mobile devices. It is recommended to always check your content using a tablet or cellphone to ensure the content is readable.

Remember, creating accessible content benefits everyone! Make sure you apply these best practices to your PowerPoints. If you have additional questions or need ADA Technical Support, please contact the Office of ADA Compliance at ADA-info@lausd.net.