

# Accessibility Checks: PowerPoint



In accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all digital content must be carefully reviewed to ensure compliance with digital accessibility guidelines. This review requires a two-phase approach: first, complete a manual review to ensure the document is functional for all users, then use PowerPoint's automated Accessibility Checker to catch additional technical errors.

The following steps outline which accessibility standards must be checked manually and how to use PowerPoint's built-in tools to complete an automated review.

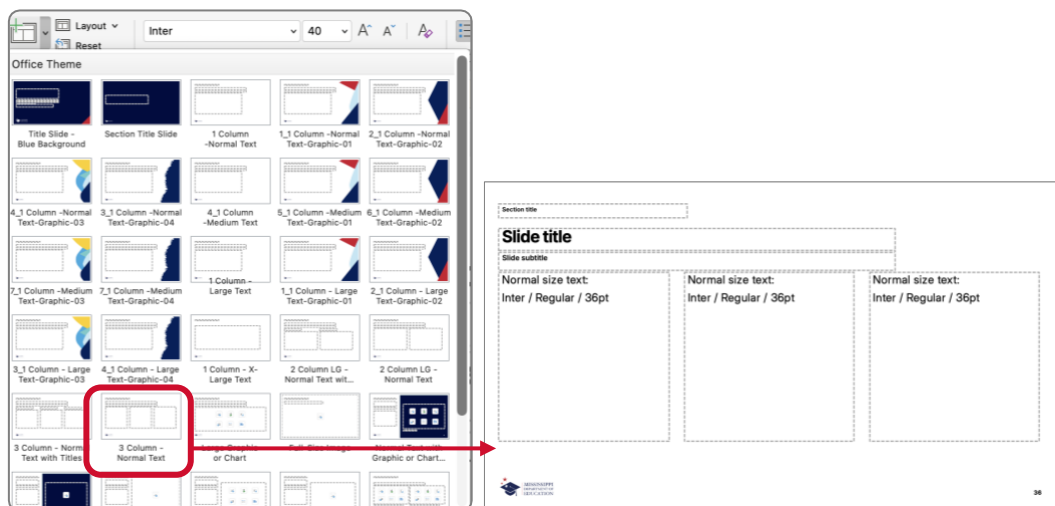
## 1: Manual Accessibility Checks

Manual checks require users to personally verify that the document's logic, layout, and visual elements meet accessibility standards.

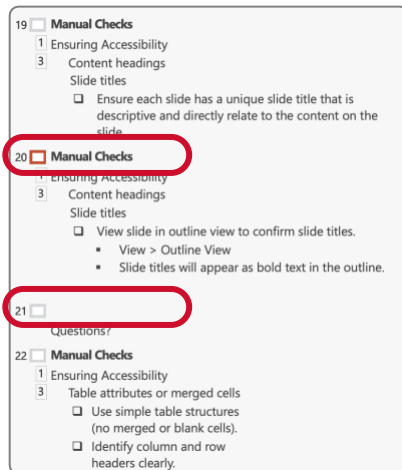
### Content headings [content boxes and slide titles]

Use built-in slide layouts within the MDE PowerPoint template to assist with organization for screen readers.

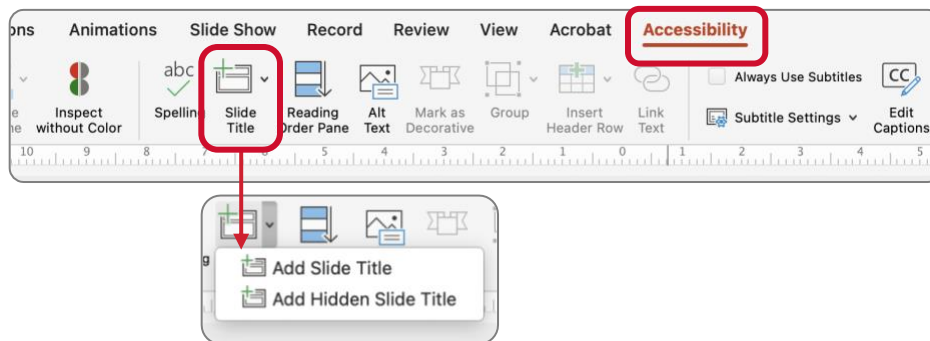
- Use **built-in slide layouts with content boxes** (e.g., slide title, slide subtitle, etc.) to ensure MDE branding and accessibility.



- Avoid manually adding text boxes when possible.
- Ensure each slide has a **unique**, descriptive **slide title** that directly relates to its content. Check the slide titles by viewing in outline mode. In the menu bar, select View > Outline View. An outline view of the slide deck will appear in the left pane of the PowerPoint Screen.
  - **Slide titles will appear as bold text next to the slide number** in the outline. Slides with missing titles will not display any text next to the slide number.



- Select View > Normal to return to normal view.
- Add **missing slide titles** or **create hidden titles** that will not be visible on the slide but will be read aloud by screen readers.
  - In the Accessibility ribbon, click the down arrow beside Slide Title. (If the Accessibility ribbon is not visible, select Tools from the menu bar, then Check Accessibility.)
  - Choose the desired action: **Add Slide title** or **Add Hidden Slide Title**.



- Repeat for each slide.

## Table attributes or merged cells

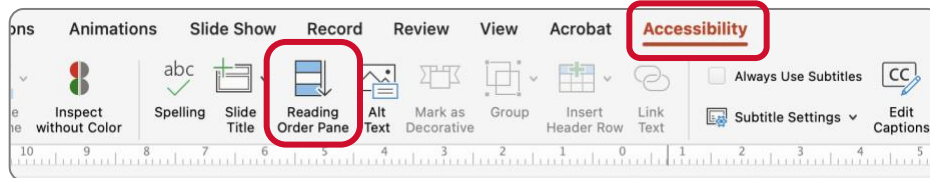
Table headers, columns, and rows should be identified for screen readers.

- Use simple table structures (no merged, split, or blank cells).
- Identify column and row headers clearly.
- Use the Header Row option and repeat headers on each page.
- Use table styles in the MDE PowerPoint template.

## Reading order

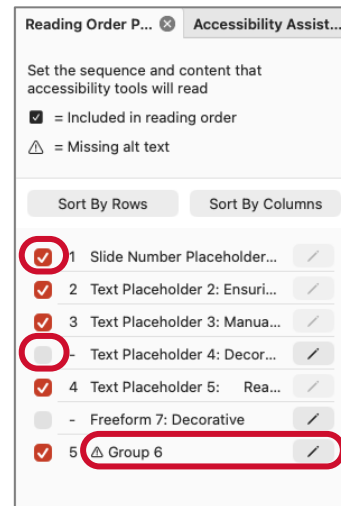
Screen readers announce content based on the order they are placed on the slide rather than visual layout. Incorrect reading order can lead to confusion and lost information.

- Identify the reading order in the reading order pane.
  1. In the Accessibility ribbon, click **Reading Order Pane**. (If the Accessibility ribbon is not visible, select Tools from the menu bar, then Check Accessibility.)



2. A reading order pane will appear on the right side of the screen. **Slide titles should always appear first in the reading pane**, and the slide number should appear last.

- **Checked items** will be read aloud by the screen reader in the order they appear in the pane.
- **Unchecked items** will be skipped by the screen reader and not read aloud.
- **Warning symbols** indicate graphics or images with missing alt text. Click the **pencil** to edit the alt text or mark the image as decorative so the screen reader skips it.
- Click on the content name to select it. Click and drag the content to reorder it or use the move buttons to adjust the reading order.

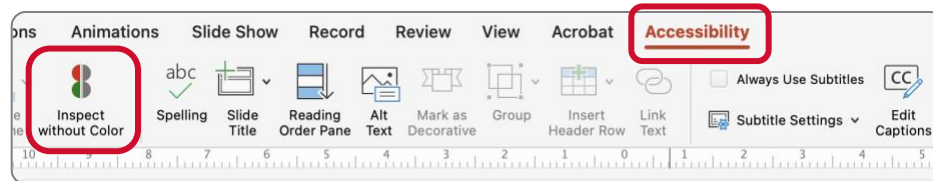


3. Repeat for each slide.

## Color Contrast

Individuals may struggle to read text if there is insufficient contrast between the text color and the background.

- If the text or background color deviates from the standard colors of black and white, check the color contrast with a [color contrast checker](#). (A contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 is required for normal-size text. See the Color Contrast Checker section below for more information on this process.)
- Avoid using only color to convey meaning. Inspect each slide without color to view it in
  - In the Accessibility ribbon, click **Inspect without Color**. (If the Accessibility ribbon is not visible, select Tools from the menu bar, then Check Accessibility.)



- Slides will be displayed in grayscale, helping identify areas where color alone was used to convey information or where color combinations are hard to distinguish.
  - When **color only** is used to convey information, add additional labels (text) that provide necessary information for screen readers.
  - Avoid color combinations such as **red and green** that can be difficult for people who are color blind to distinguish.
  - If the text is difficult to read in grayscale, it has **low contrast** against the background and needs to be adjusted.
- Review each slide.
- Click the **Inspect without Color** button again to return color to the slides.

## Text Size and spacing

Text size, line height, and space between paragraphs can impact the legibility of text.

- Use MDE Templates when possible to guide text size and spacing.
- Text should be at least 24 pt on slides, and line spacing should be at least 1.0.

## Transcripts and Closed Captioning

Information cannot only be conveyed through audio or visuals.

- If a video is included in the presentation, ensure it has closed captions and that they are visible when the video is playing.
- If only audio is included in the presentation, ensure a transcript is visible while the audio is playing.

## Flashes and Animations

- Limit movement and animations on slides or transitions between slides to avoid distractions.

## Hyperlink text and provide the purpose of the linked text

- If the resource will be accessed digitally (someone clicks a link to access the webpage), avoid listing the URL. (Ex: "[MSIS Resource Library](#)" instead of "<https://mdek12.org/msis/msis-resource-library/>" )
- Add descriptive link text to URLs. (Ex: "Review our MSIS resources in the [MSIS Resource Library](#)" instead of "click [here](#) to view more".)
- Avoid linking directly to a PDF within another document. Instead, link to the website or landing page where that file is located. This gives screen readers essential context about the file (like its size and purpose) before they commit to opening or downloading it.

## 2: Automated Accessibility Checker

Microsoft PowerPoint includes an integrated tool that flags common accessibility barriers. While this accessibility checker efficiently catches technical errors (such as missing alt-text), it cannot interpret context. As a result, the tool's findings often require manual review (completed in phase 1) to ensure the document is fully compliant and easy to navigate.

**Step 1:** Select **Accessibility** in the ribbon. (If the Accessibility ribbon is not visible, select Tools from the menu bar, then Check Accessibility.) Click "**Check Accessibility**".



The Accessibility Assistant will automatically check the slide deck for:

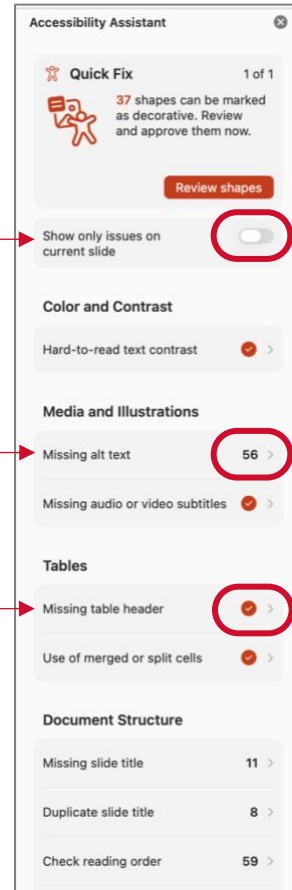
- **Color and Contrast**
- Media and Illustrations (**alt text**)
- **Tables** (header row, merged/split cells)
- Document structure (**missing and duplicate slide titles, reading order**)
- Document access (default settings should always result in a "pass" for this check)

The **Accessibility Assistant panel** will appear on the right side of the Microsoft PowerPoint document window.

Users can select to see issues that only apply to the current slide.

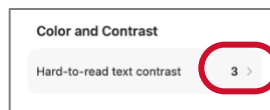
Accessibility checks with compliance issues will be indicated by the number of issues.

Accessibility checks with no compliance issues will show a check mark.

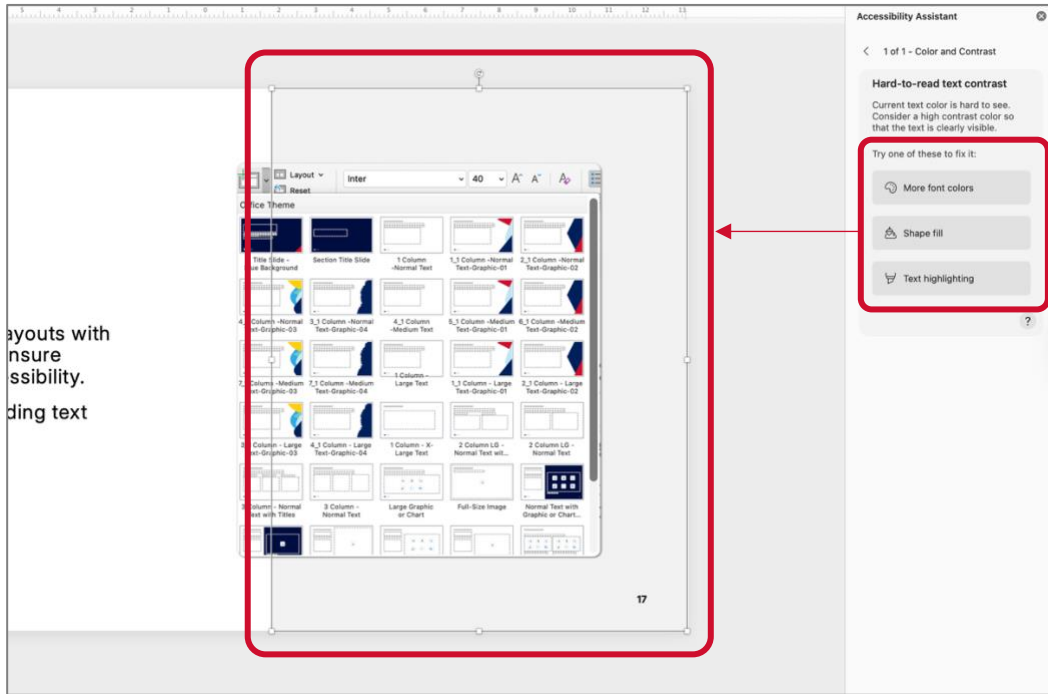


## Step 2: Resolve any **Color and Contrast** compliance issues.

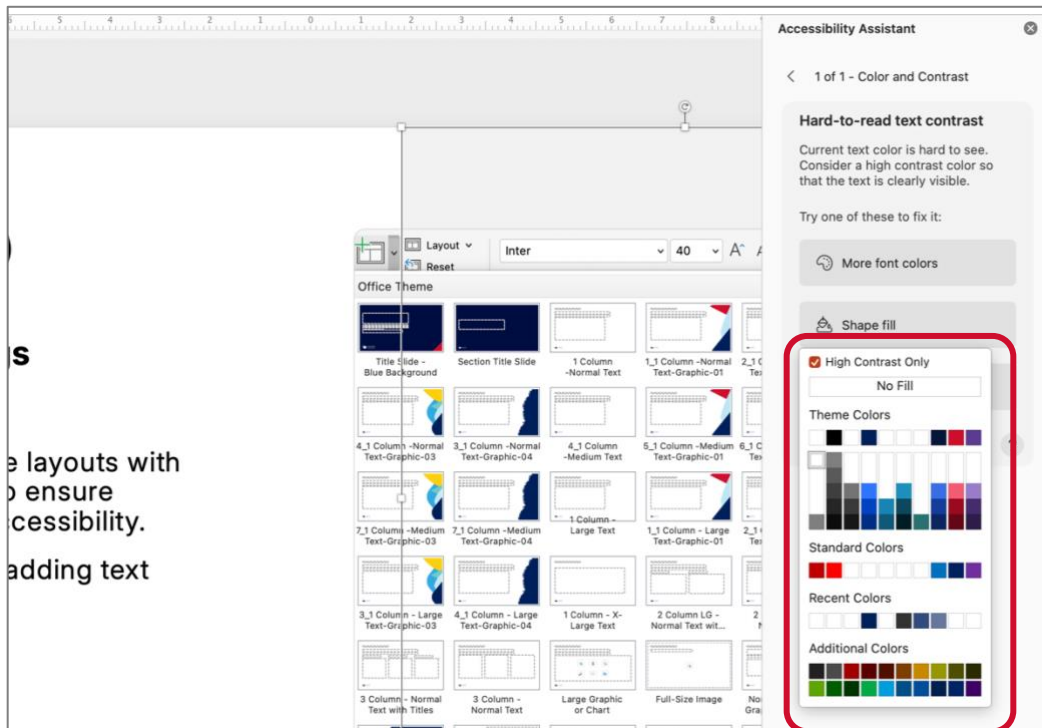
1. If Color and Contrast issues exist, click the arrow next to the number.



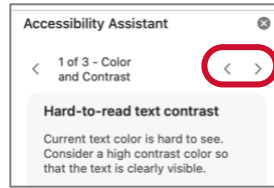
The Accessibility Assistant window shows the first compliance issue on the slide. The affected object in the slide will be highlighted.



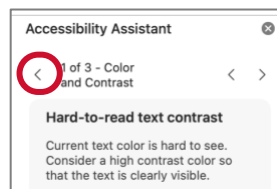
The Accessibility Assistant will provide alternative font, shape fill, or text highlight colors that meet color contrast requirements.



2. Click on one of the provided colors to apply it to the non-compliant object or text. (See the [MDE Brand Guidelines](#) for the hex codes of approved colors.)
3. Use the arrows to navigate through all compliance issues. Resolve each issue as needed.



4. Use the back arrow to return to the complete list of accessibility checks.

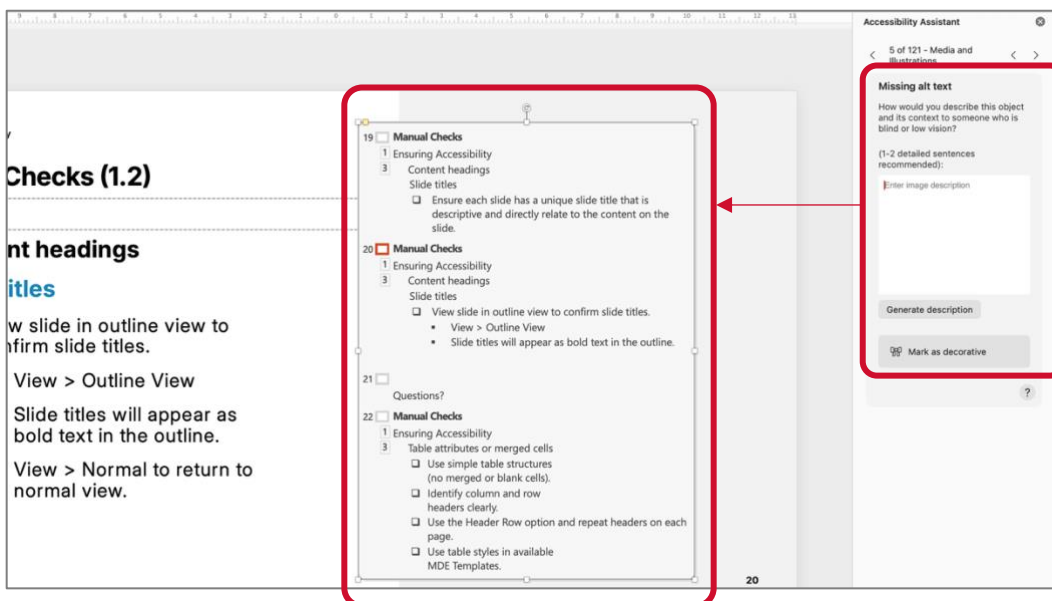


**Step 3:** Resolve any **Media and Illustration** compliance issues:

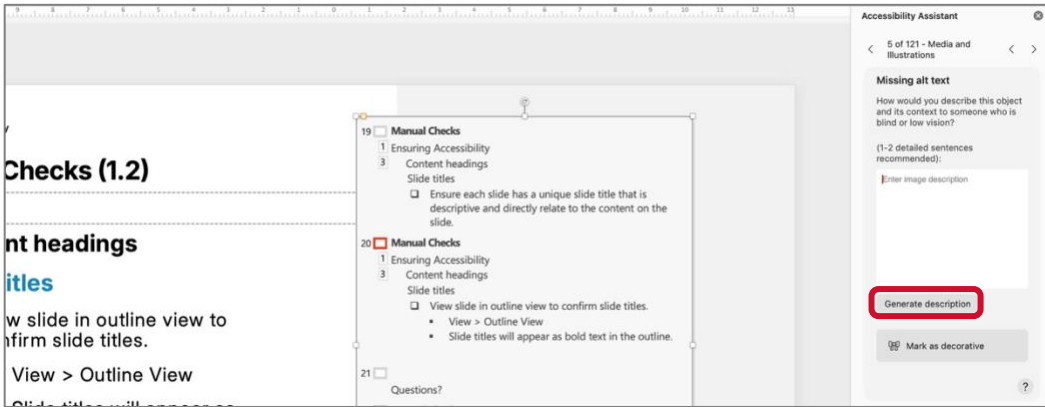
1. If Media and Illustration issues exist, click the arrow next to the number.



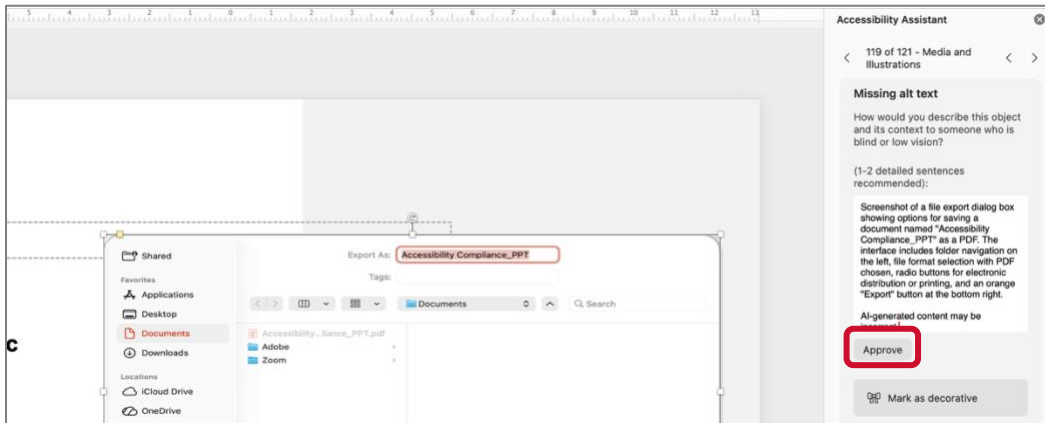
The Accessibility Assistant window shows the first compliance issue on the slide. The affected object in the slide will be highlighted.



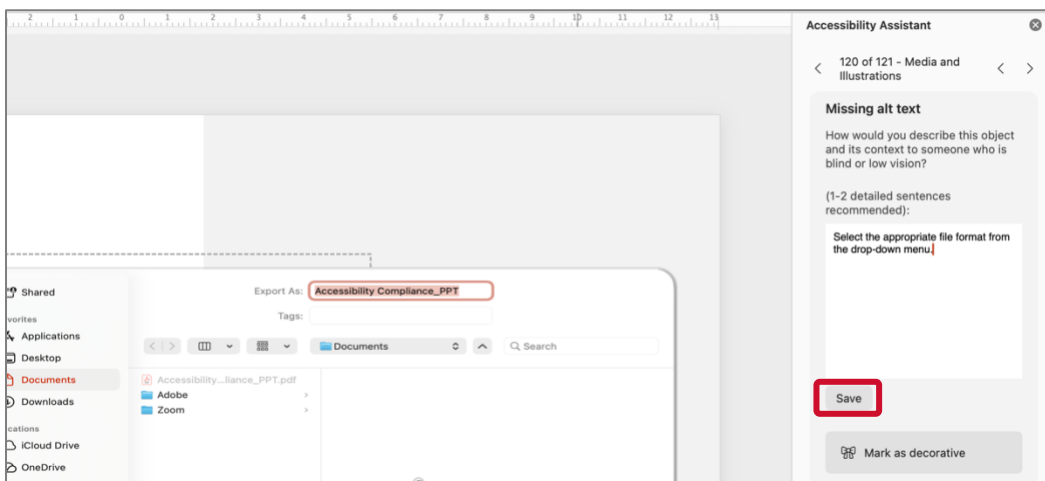
2. The alt text window will be blank if no alt text has been provided. Click **“Generate”** to have PowerPoint generate alt text. Carefully review the generated alt text for appropriateness. (See [Accessibility: Alt Text](#) for more information on writing appropriate alt text.)



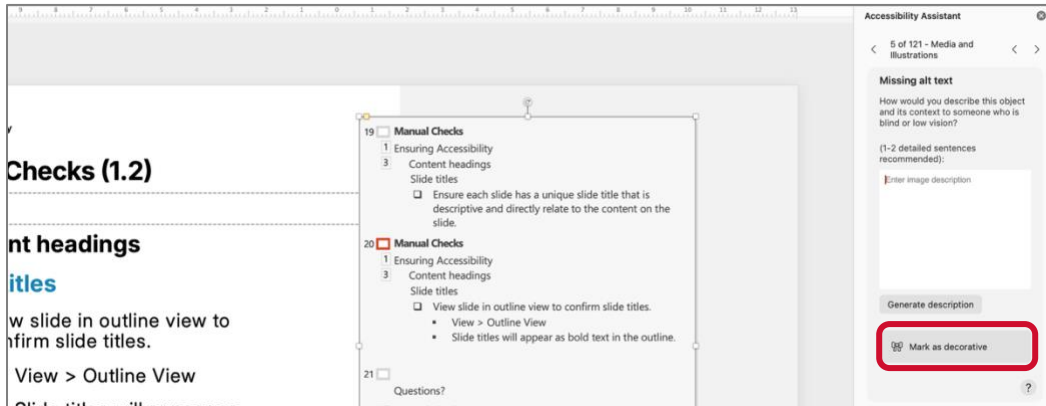
Edit the alt text as needed or click **“Approve”** if the text is acceptable.



3. If the “Generate” option is not available or you prefer to write your own, enter appropriate alt text, then click **“Save”**.



4. If the image is not informational or functional, choose **“Mark as decorative”** so that screen readers will skip it.



5. Use the arrows to navigate through all compliance issues. Resolve each issue as needed.



6. Use the back arrow to return to the complete list of accessibility checks.



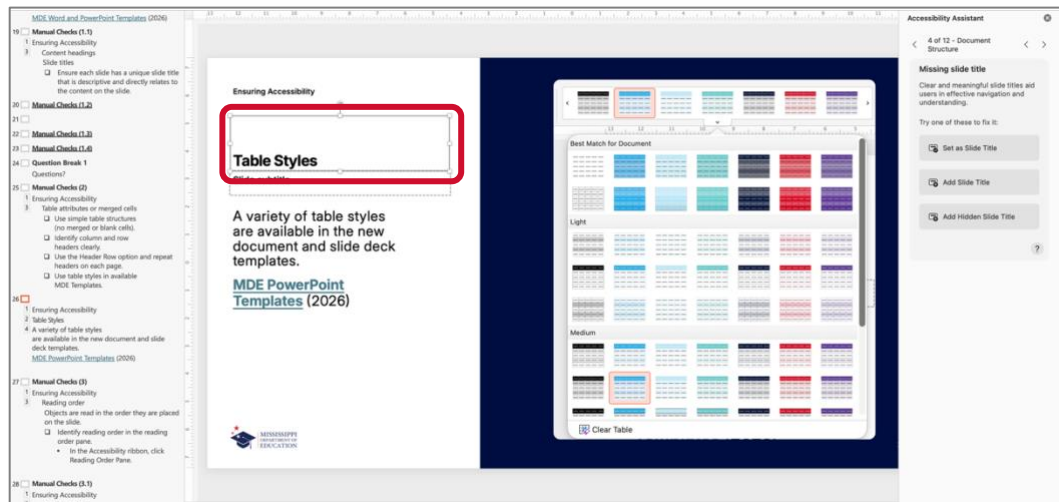
**Step 4:** Resolve any **Tables** compliance issues. If no issues are detected, **manually confirm** the Tables compliance checks, as the automatic checker does not always correctly detect table headers or merged/split cells. (This corresponds to Table Attributes or Merged Cells in the [Manual Checks section](#).)

**Step 5:** If Document Structure issues exist, click the arrow next to the number.

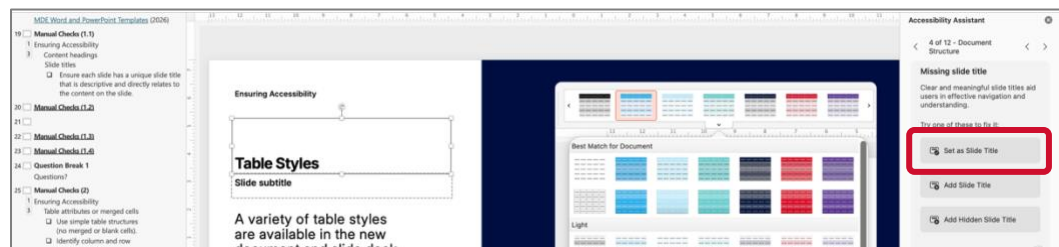
Document Structure	
Missing slide title	11 >
Duplicate slide title	8 >
Check reading order	59 >

## Missing Slide Title

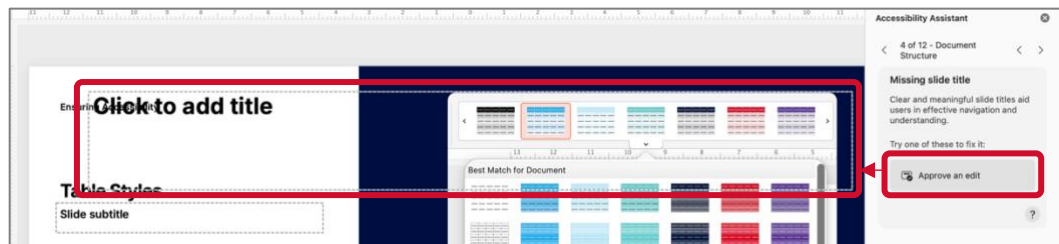
1. The Accessibility Assistant window displays the first compliance issue on the slide. The text box that PowerPoint recommends as the title slide will be selected.



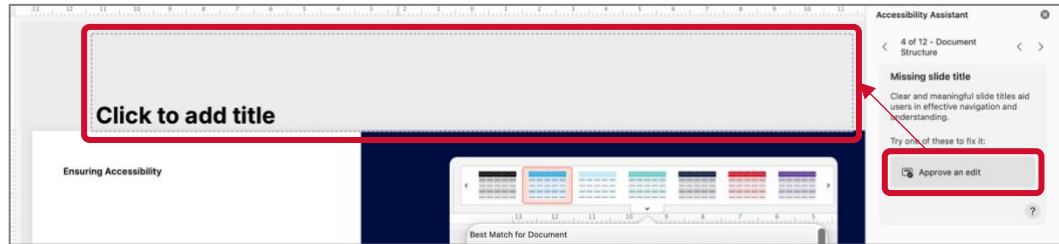
2. If the suggested text box should be set as the slide title, select **“Set as Slide Title.”**



3. If the suggested text box should not be the slide title, click **“Add a Slide Title.”** PowerPoint will insert a text box on the slide. **Enter desired slide title.** Click **“Approve edit.”**



- If a hidden slide title is desired (e.g., the text is not visible on the slide but spoken aloud by a screen reader), click **"Add a Hidden Slide Title."** PowerPoint will insert a text box at the top of the slide in the grey slide workspace. **Enter the desired hidden slide title.** Click **"Approve edit."**



- Use the arrows to navigate through all compliance issues. Resolve each issue as needed.



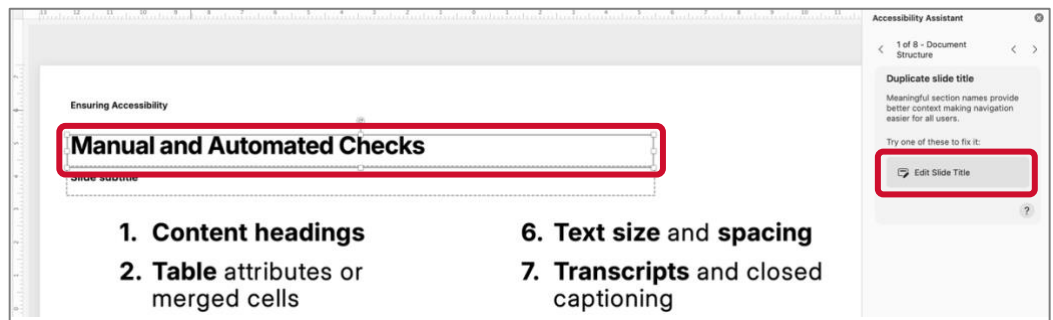
- Use the back arrow to return to the complete list of accessibility checks.



Document Structure	
Missing slide title	11 >
Duplicate slide title	8 >
Check reading order	59 >

### Duplicate Slide Title

- The Accessibility Assistant window displays the first compliance issue on the slide. The slide title will be selected. Click **"Edit Slide Title."**



2. **Enter a unique slide title.** If the topic of a slide continues to the next slide, add a number to the slide title using a consistent numbering convention (e.g., Manual and Automated Checks – 2 or Manual and Automated Checks, Part 2). Click **“Approve an edit.”**

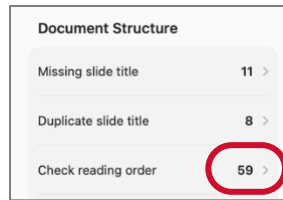


3. Use the arrows to navigate through all compliance issues. Resolve each issue as needed.



4. Use the back arrow to return to the complete list of accessibility checks.

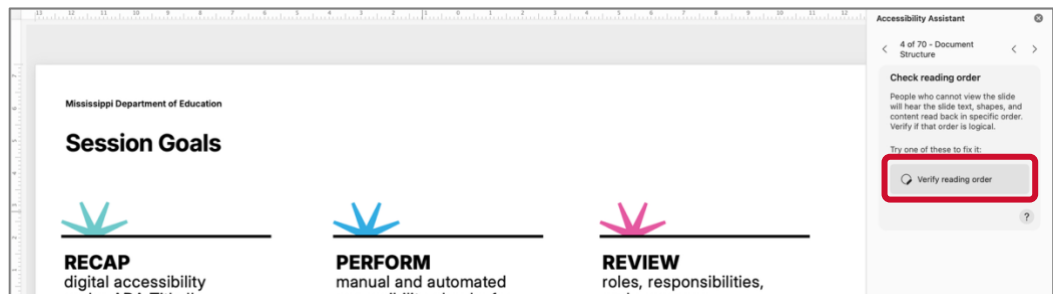




## Check Reading Order

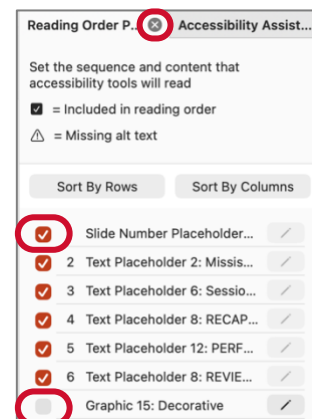
If the reading order has not been **manually set for the slide in the Reading Order Pane**, it will appear as an issue in the Accessibility Assistant window. (See Reading Order Pane in the [Manual Checks section](#) for more information.)

1. The Accessibility Assistant window displays the first compliance issue on the slide. Click **“Verify reading order.”**



2. The Reading Order Pane will open on the right side of the window. **Slide titles should always appear first in the reading pane**, and the slide number should appear last.

- **Checked items** will be read aloud by the screen reader in the order they appear in the pane.
- **Unchecked items** will be skipped by the screen reader and not read aloud.
- Click on the content name to select it. Click and drag the content to reorder it or use the move buttons to adjust the reading order.
- Click the X in the top right of the Reading Order Pane tab to close the Reading Order Pane and return to the Accessibility Assistant.



- Use the arrows to navigate through all compliance issues. Resolve each issue as needed.



- Use the back arrow to return to the complete list of accessibility checks.



**Step 6:** Resolve any **Document Access** compliance issues. (Document Access should always return a compliant check unless the document's default settings have been changed.)

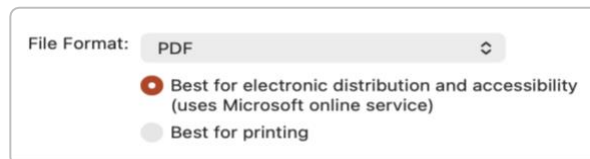
## 3: Save as an Accessible PDF

If the document will be shared as a PDF, use the Create PDF feature to generate an accessible PDF.

**Step 1:** Select **Acrobat** in the ribbon. Click **"Create PDF"**.



**Step 2:** If prompted, be sure to save the PDF with the **"Best for electronic distribution and accessibility"** selected.



**Step 3:** Check the PDF's accessibility in Adobe Acrobat. (See [Accessibility Checks: Acrobat](#).)