Guidelines For Accessible PowerPoint Presentations

This article offers guidance on ways to create Microsoft PowerPoint presentations to make them more accessible. Because many files are often viewed electronically, governments and industries around the world are implementing policies requiring electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities. For example, the amended Section 508 of the United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires Federal agencies to make all of their electronic and information technology accessible.
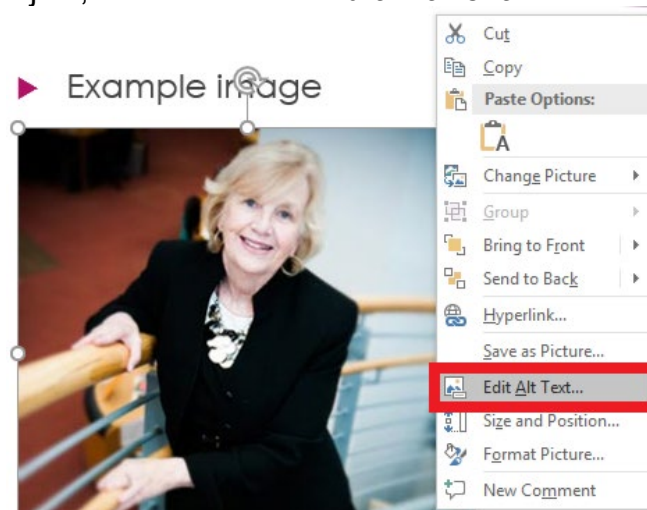
Add alternative text to images and objects

Alternative text (alt text or Alt Text) helps people using screen readers understand the content of images in your presentation. Alt text should be included for any of the following objects in your presentation:

- Pictures
- Clip Art
- Charts
- Tables
- Shapes (that don't contain text and are not in groups)
- SmartArt graphics
- Groups (all objects in this list, with the exception of shapes, should also have alt text when in groups)
- Embedded objects
- Video and audio files

Add alt text by doing the following:

1. Right click the image or object, and then select **Edit Alt Text**

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2. Enter a description of the image or object into the **Alt Text** box.

Tips:

o Use clear, but concise descriptions. For example, "a red Ferrari" tells the reader more about the image than "a car."

o If the image is non-instructional, consider removing the image or selecting **Mark as decorative.**
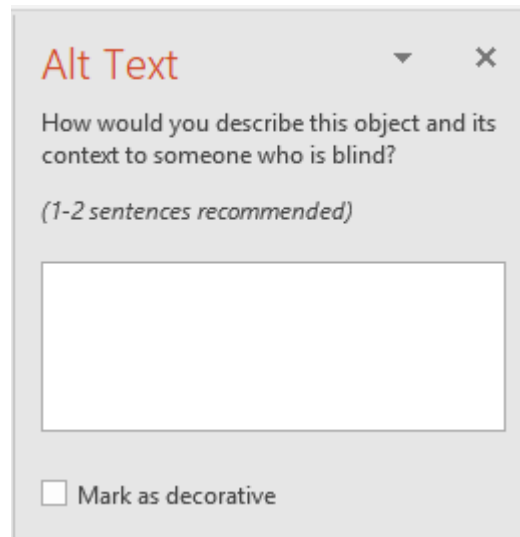
3. Click **the X** in upper right corner of Alt Text box to close.

Tables
Use simple table structure

By not using nested tables, or merged or split cells inside of data tables, the data is predictable and easy to navigate.

To test and simplify the table structure, do the following:

1. Select the first cell of the table.
2. Press the **Tab** key repeatedly to make sure that the focus moves across the row and then down to the first cell of the next row.

Avoid using blank cells for formatting in tables

Using blank cells to format your table could mislead someone using a screen reader to believe that there is nothing more in the table. You can fix this by deleting unnecessary blank cells.

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Avoid Merging or Splitting cells in tables

Merging or Splitting cells could interfere with the reading order, causing confusion for the learner using a screen reader.

Specify column header information in tables

In addition to adding alt text that describes the table, having clear column headings can help provide context and assist navigation of the table's contents.

[View examples of good and bad tables](#)

To specify a header row in your table, do the following:

1. Click anywhere in the table.
2. On the Table Tools **Design** tab, in the **Table Style Options** group, select the **Header Row** check box.
3. Add your header cells' information.
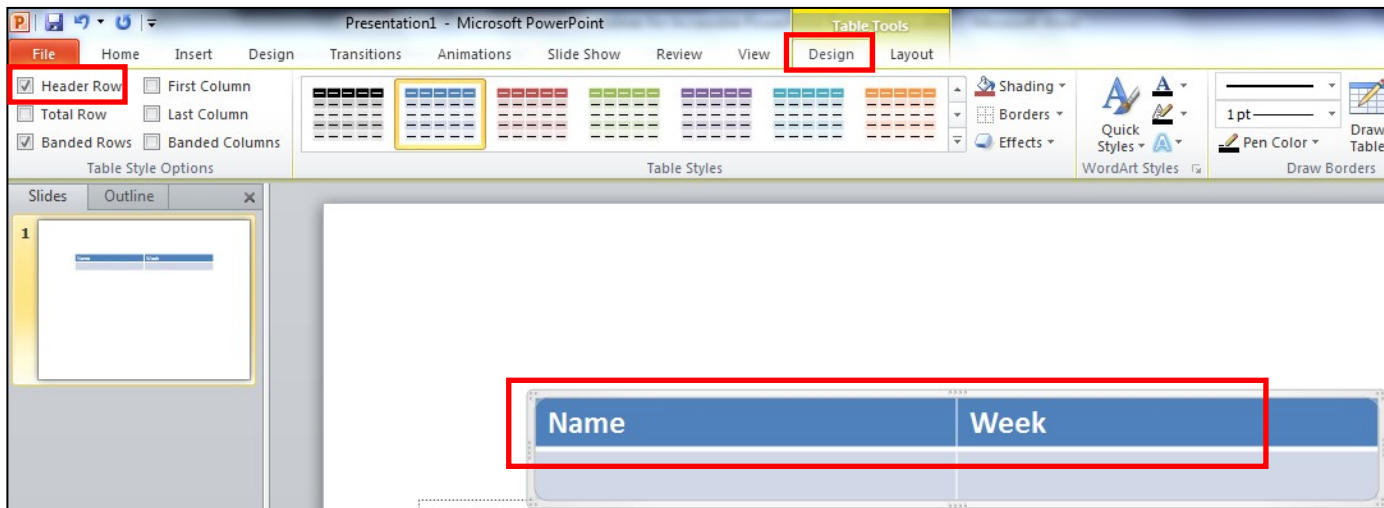
Provide ALT Text for your table

Right-click anywhere in the table and select **Edit Alt Text**. A new side window appears. Enter ALT Text to give a summary of what the table is about.

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Ensure that ALL slides have unique titles

Slide titles are used for navigation and selection by people who are not able to view the slide.

To add visible titles to your slides, do the following:

1. Select an appropriate slide **Layout**.

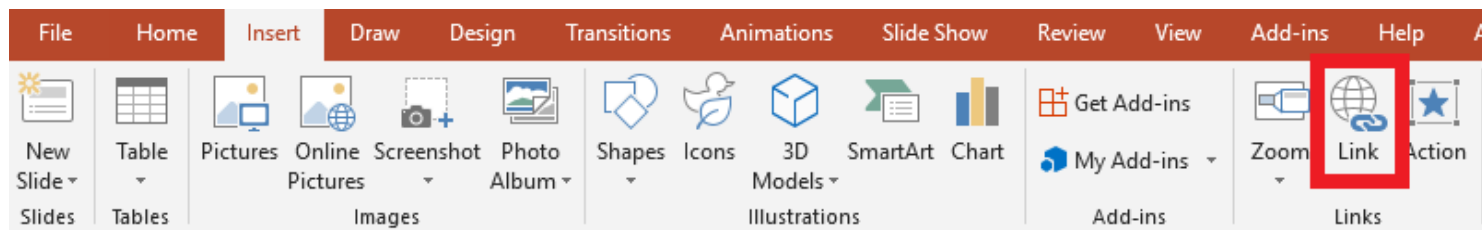2. Type a unique name in the **Title** text box.
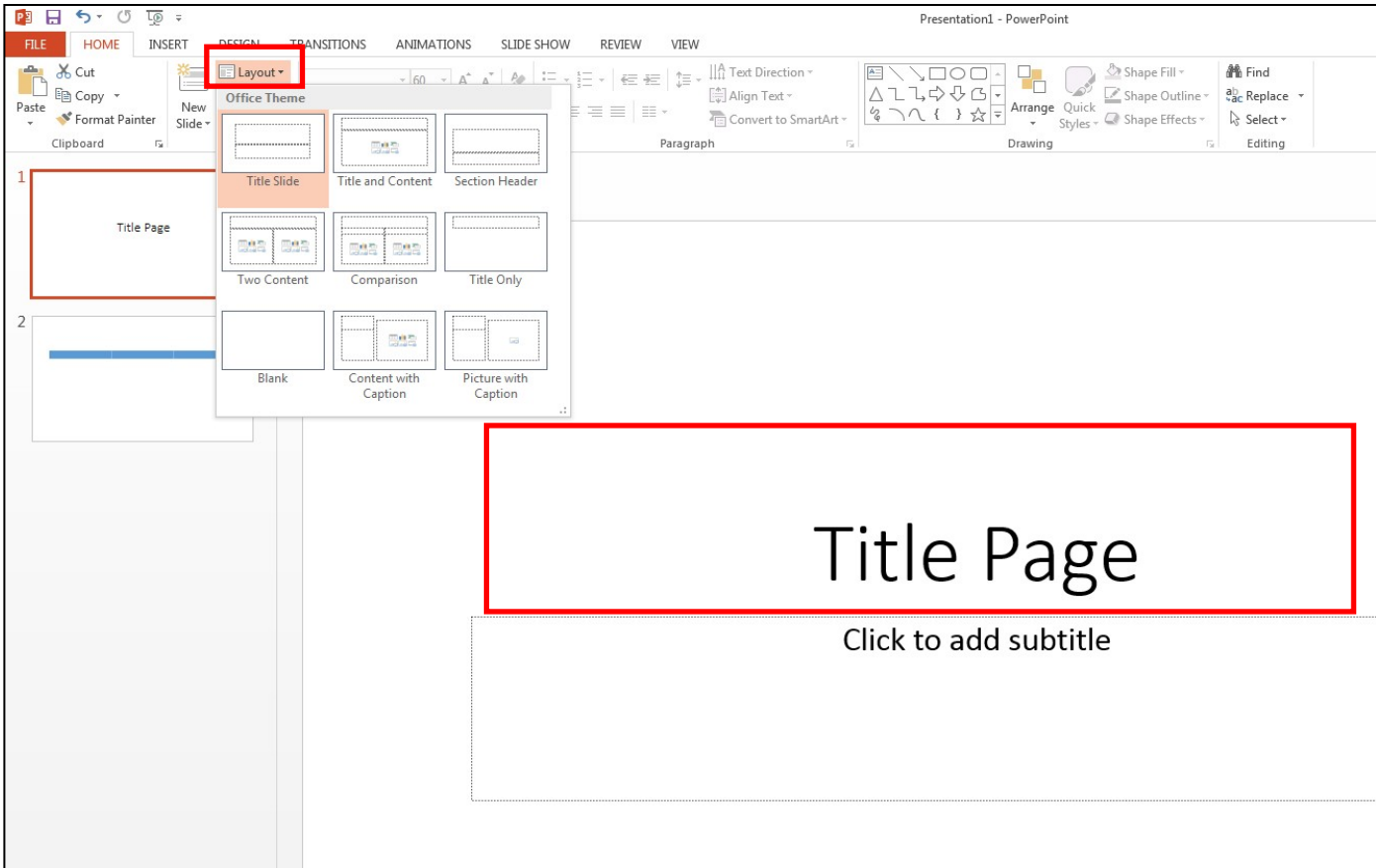
Proper Hyperlinks (Meaningful)

Make the hyperlinks that you use in your document clear, concise, and contextual so that a visually impaired person using screen reading technology knows where the link will take them.

**Correct**: Read more about [Red Rocks Community College](#)

Incorrect: To read more about Red Rocks Community College, [click here](#)

Incorrect: Read more about Red Rocks Community College: http://rrcc.edu/about-us

To create a proper hyperlink, select the text in the document, choose the **Insert** tab on the toolbar and select **Link**.

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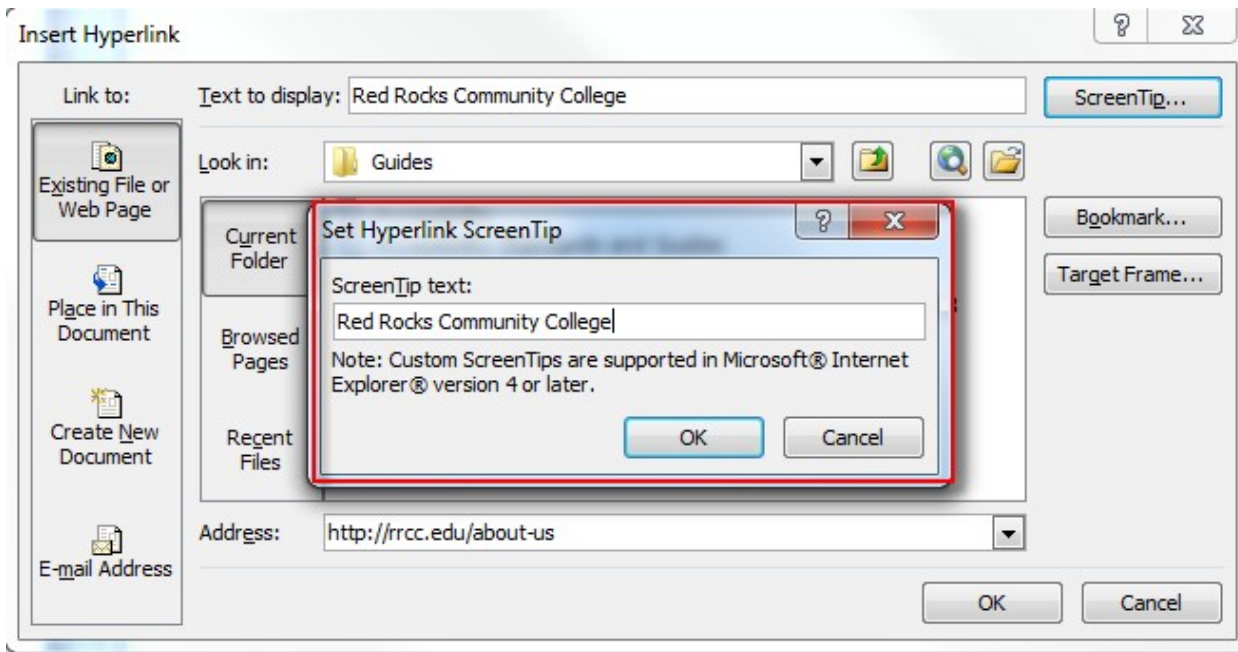elearning@rrcc.edu

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Provide a meaningful description of the hyperlink in the **Text to display** box and then add the URL in the **Address** box. Select **Ok** when you are done.
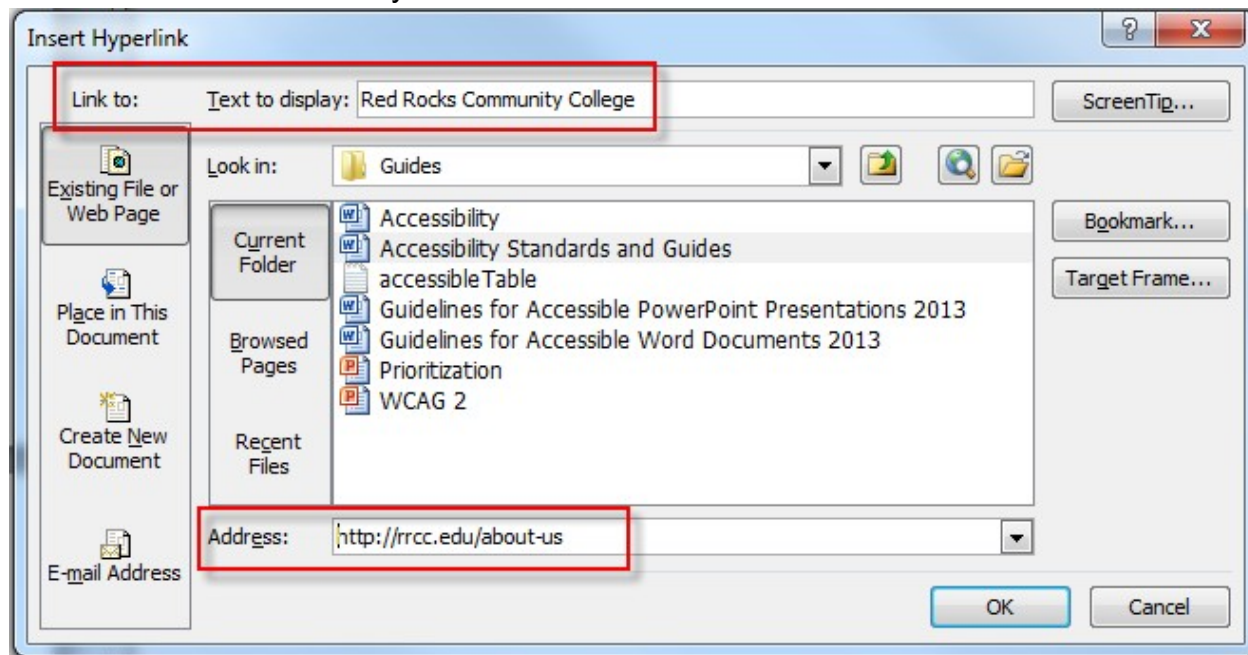
Alternately, you can include **ScreenTip** text that appears when your cursor hovers over a hyperlink, and can be used in a similar way to alt text. To add **ScreenTip** text, do the following:

1. Place your cursor in the hyperlink you want to add **ScreenTip** text to.
2. Click the **Insert** tab, in the **Links** group click **Link** to open the hyperlink dialog box.
3. Click **ScreenTip…**
4. Type in your text in the **ScreenTip text** box.
5. Click **OK**.

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Include closed captions for any audio or video

Whenever you use audio or video components in a presentation, ensure that the content is available in alternative formats for users with disabilities, such as closed captions, transcripts and alt text.

Ensure that the reading order of each slide is logical

People who cannot view the slide will hear slide text, shapes and content read back in a specific order. If you are using objects that are not part of the slide template, it is important to be sure that they will be read by a screen reader in the order that you intend them to be.

To check the order in which your slide content will be read back, do the following:
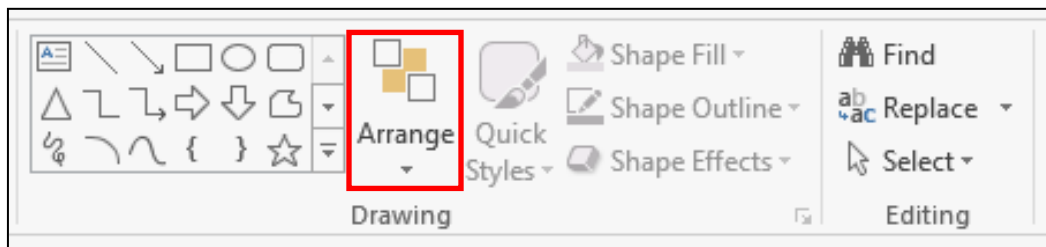
1. On the **Home** tab, in the **Drawing** group, click **Arrange** and then choose **Selection Pane**.
2. The **Selection Pane** lists the objects on the slide. Objects will be read back beginning with the bottom list item and ending with the top list item. Correct any out of order items using the **Re-order** arrows.

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Increase visibility for colorblind viewers

Colorblindness affects a significant number of people, most often as an inability to distinguish between red and green, or seeing red and green differently. When creating presentations, it's important to choose elements that increase visual contrast so viewers who cannot rely on color distinction can still understand what they're seeing. Some things you can do when building a slide deck include:

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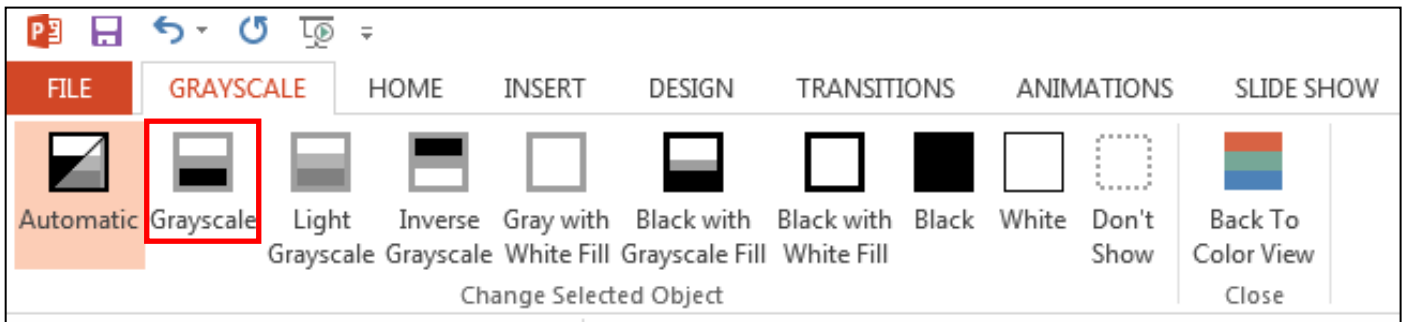- Keep the overall contrast in your presentation high.

Color:

- **Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning.** The use of color can enhance comprehension, but do not use color alone to convey information. That information may not be available to a person who is colorblind and will be unavailable to screen reader users.

- **Certain color contrasts may inhibit readability.** For instance, red/green contrast cannot be read correctly by a person who is colorblind. Prefer high-contrast color schemes such as black/white or black/yellow.

To get an idea of how a person who is colorblind will see your presentation, you can check the contrast by doing the following:

1. On the **View** tab, in the **Color/Grayscale** group, click **Grayscale**.
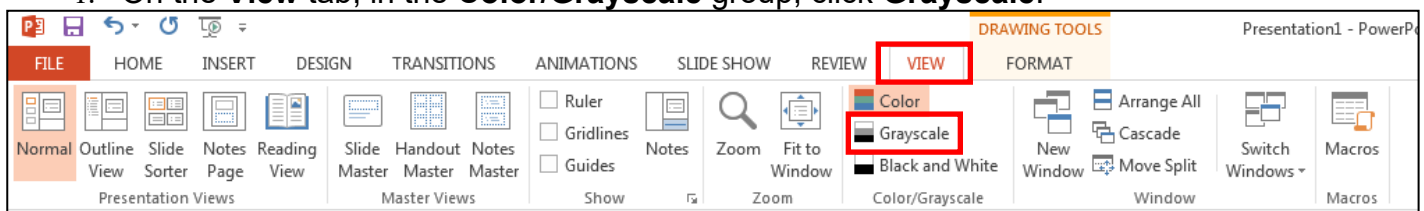
2. On the **Grayscale** tab, click **Grayscale** to see what slides look like when flattened to just their level of contrast.

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Use built in Accessibility Checker

Starting with Microsoft Office 2010 a new tool for PowerPoint, Word, and Excel called the **Accessibility Checker** is available that you can use to check your PowerPoint presentations for any issues that might make it challenging for a user with a disability.

To access the Accessibility Checker, do the following:

1. From the menu bar, select **File**, then **Check for Issues**, then **Accessibility Checker**.
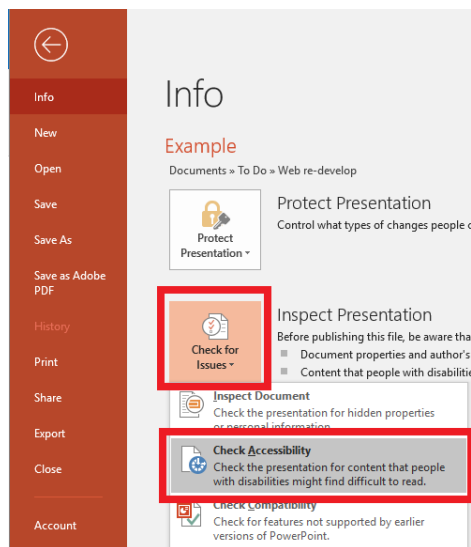
2. Fix the Errors and Warnings to resolve any accessibility issues.

    a. Clicking on the specific Error or Warning will bring you to that thing in the PowerPoint.

    b. Use the Additional Information found in the lower portion of the Accessibility Checker window, and the drop-down arrow next to the specific Error or Warning to help resolve.

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