

Universal Design in a Nutshell

Creating Accessible Slide Presentations

Creating a slideshow presentation so that it is accessible to all students regardless of physical, mental, or cognitive abilities helps to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to be engaged with the presentation. Planning for accessibility can benefit all students, including those without disabilities.

Three Ways to Get Started

1. Use the templates packaged with the slideshow software.

Templates offer a number of benefits. They establish a logical, hierarchical organizational structure, conveyed visually through titles, headings, and subheadings. Templates also use typefaces pre-selected for legibility. The layout of text in a template—along with sufficient white space—helps people with dyslexia or low vision to navigate the slide. The layout also provides visual signals about the content, including priority, importance, specificity, and subordination. For example, a Level-1 heading is usually larger and more prominent than a Level-2 heading, signaling that the Level-1 content is more general or more important than the Level-2 content.

2. Make text and visuals big enough to be legible from the back of the room.

Whenever possible, test drive your presentation in the room in which you will be presenting. Ideally, have a colleague view your slides from the back of the room, to see if all the content is discernable. Limit the amount of text on a single slide; large amounts of text will appear crowded and small. Keep bulleted or enumerated lists to three to five items. Use a common sans-serif font (such as Arial, Calibri, or Helvetica). When projected on a screen, sans-serif fonts are easier to read than serif fonts.

3. Use color carefully.

Use color with care—which often means *NOT* using color. For instance, you should avoid using color alone to emphasize text or to identify information as important. People with color blindness may not be able to see the color, so they will miss whatever emphasis or importance you've attached to the text. Also, avoid combining colors with insufficient contrast (e.g., yellow text on a white background). Using the templates in your slideshow software is one way to ensure sufficient color contrast, because each template has been designed by professionals for maximum clarity. Unsure about a color combination? WebAIM provides a color-contrast checker (<http://bit.ly/2qkrvGm>) for presentations and online content.

Want more help with universal design?

Visit idea.boisestate.edu

and contact the instructional design consultant assigned to your department.



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT



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Planning for Accessible Slideshows

Professor Acharya teaches a lower-division psychology course as a hybrid course, with about half of a semester's instruction taking place in a traditional classroom and the other half taking place online. Like many of her students—and millions of other people—Prof. Acharya wears glasses; she also has a mild case of dyslexia that becomes more pronounced when she is fatigued. She knows first-hand the challenge of trying to follow a slideshow presentation in a large lecture hall, a challenge made all the more difficult by slides featuring a half-dozen typefaces, blocks of dense text that her dyslexia causes to “swim together,” and a color scheme based on the university's team colors—blue and orange.

To spare her students this challenge, she has adopted simplicity as her motto. She uses a minimalist template from the many templates packaged with her slideshow software, relying on the expertise of the template's designers when it comes to color combinations, font size, slide layout, and other design considerations. Using a template helps her to create accessible slideshows, but it also frees her to concentrate on content while creating slideshows quickly.

Because her slideshows are available online, Prof. Archarya takes a few extra steps to ensure that they are accessible to students using screen readers. For instance, she provides alternative text for all visual content, and she avoids using text in an image (because screen readers can't read that text). She tests slides with an [accessibility checker](#) to ensure that a screen reader will navigate text and visual elements in the correct reading order. If a slideshow contains video, she provides a transcript or adds closed captioning to the video.

Resources

For more information on making your course materials, activities, and assessments accessible to all students, visit “[Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning at Boise State.](https://accessibility.boisestate.edu/)” (<https://accessibility.boisestate.edu/>)

Many organizers of academic conferences provide guidelines for creating accessible presentations and for delivering presentations in an accessible manner. Here is [one example](#) of such guidelines. (<http://bit.ly/2xWurPY>)

In “[How to Make Presentations Accessible to All,](#)” the Web Accessibility Initiative provides advice on planning, designing, and delivering accessible presentations. (<http://bit.ly/1pHJ3LI>)

For tips on making PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with low vision or people using screen readers, see “[Make Your PowerPoint Presentations Accessible.](#)” (<http://bit.ly/2vezETz>)

See also the companion piece “Delivering Accessible Presentations” in the Universal Design in a Nutshell Series.