

Checking for Accessibility

How Microsoft education solutions compare with Google offerings in making learning accessible for all.

Objective

The goal of this paper is to evaluate the functionality and effectiveness of digital tools that check for accessibility using two of the most popular operating systems in K-12 education – Microsoft Windows* 11 and Google Chrome* OS (e.g., the Chromebook* solution) – using a typical classroom presentation available as an Open Education Resource (OER).

Key Findings

1. Microsoft 365 solutions such as Microsoft PowerPoint* include a built-in Accessibility Checker that works regardless of internet connection status (e.g., online or offline provide the same results).
2. Google Slides* does not include a native (e.g., built-in) tool to check the accessibility of a presentation and users must install a third-party Add-on or Browser Extension to complete the process.
3. One of the most popular Chrome Browser Extensions that checks for accessibility takes a minimum of 6 times more clicks to complete the same task as what is built into PowerPoint.
4. On a Chromebook, none of the accessibility tools tested in this report worked when the user was offline while the Microsoft solution worked the same offline as online.
5. The feedback and recommendations provided by the Microsoft Accessibility Checker were more detailed and comprehensive than the feedback provided by the Chrome Browser Extension.

Conclusion

With nearly a single click (actually three), students, educators, and administrators can check their presentations (along with documents and spreadsheets) to help make sure the content is easy for people of all abilities to read and edit using the built-in, first-party capabilities of Microsoft 365 solutions. The Google Workspaces for Education* equivalent, Google Slides, requires installing an Add-on that can take more time, more IT involvement, and potentially pose data security risks.

Given the increased use of Open Education Resources and various federal laws and requirements, the choice is clear: Microsoft education solutions such as the Accessibility Checker found in Word*, Excel*, PowerPoint, and OneNote*, save users time, suggest alt text to speed up the process of making files accessible to all, and work both online and offline making them a better choice to support learners anytime and anywhere.



Download a copy of the full report including a step-by-step description and analysis of Windows 11 and Chromebook tools to check for accessibility from the K-12 Blueprint.

k12blueprint.com/learning-next

