

Storyline Accessibility Guide

Everything you need to understand, fix, and prevent the accessibility issues that show up again and again in Storyline courses. Pairs with the Storyline Accessibility Quick Checklist.

Reading time

Topics

Pairs with

~17 min

12

Quick Checklist

Why this matters

Every Storyline course you build will eventually be used by someone you did not picture while building it. A learner using a screen reader. Someone who cannot use a mouse. Someone who needs captions because they are in a loud office, or because they are deaf. Storyline does not make any of this automatic. It gives you the tools, but nothing here happens unless you turn it on and check it yourself.

The mistakes that show up again and again are not complicated. They are the same handful of things, missed alt text, no visible focus outline, quiz feedback a keyboard cannot reach, repeated on every course because nobody explained why they matter or how to check for them quickly.

That is what this guide is for. Each section below covers one thing to get right: why it matters, what commonly goes wrong, and exactly how to check and fix it in Storyline.

If you just need a fast checklist to run through before publishing, use the Storyline Accessibility Quick Checklist instead. Keep it open next to Storyline while you review a course. Come back here when you want to understand why an item on that checklist matters, or when something does not look right and you are not sure how to fix it.

Structure

Two related things. First, Storyline's Player Properties has a setting that turns on the accessibility features screen readers depend on, it is not automatic. Second, every slide has a title, and those titles should be unique and describe what is actually on the slide.

Why it matters. If the accessibility toggle is off, none of your other fixes matter, screen readers get nothing to work with regardless of how much alt text you wrote. Duplicate or vague slide titles make it impossible for a screen reader user to tell where they are in the course or find a specific slide again.

Common mistakes:

- Publishing a course without ever opening the accessibility settings
- Leaving the default slide titles Storyline assigns automatically
- Copy-pasting a slide and never renaming its title

How to check it. Open Player Properties and look at the Other tab. Then open Story View and scan every slide title at a glance, duplicates are easy to spot once they are all in front of you.

How to fix it in Storyline. File → Player Properties → Other → Accessibility, turn it on. For titles, double-click each slide's title in Story View and rename it to describe the content, not just "Slide 4".

✗ CONFUSING TITLES

"Slide 1", "Slide 2", "Slide 2"

A copied slide that never got renamed. Two slides with the same title.

✓ CLEAR TITLES

"Welcome and Overview",
"Identifying Team Conflict",
"Practice Scenario"

Each title describes what is actually on that slide.

Checklist reference: "Confirm accessibility features are turned on" and the duplicate-title check in Before publishing.

A11yCheck checks for both of these automatically during a scan.

Language

The language setting that tells a screen reader which pronunciation rules and voice to use for your course.

Why it matters. A screen reader set to the wrong language mispronounces almost everything, sometimes badly enough that the content is genuinely hard to follow. This happens most often when a course gets translated but the language setting does not get updated with it.

Common mistakes:

- Building a translated version of a course from an existing template and forgetting to change the language setting
- Assuming Storyline detects the language automatically, it does not

How to check it. Open Player Properties and check the Text Labels tab for the current language setting.

How to fix it in Storyline. File → Player Properties → Text Labels, set the correct language from the dropdown.

✗ MISMATCHED French narration, language setting: English A screen reader reads the French content using English pronunciation rules.	✓ MATCHED French narration, language setting: French The screen reader uses the correct pronunciation and voice.
---	---

Checklist reference: "Verify the course language is set correctly"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Audio

Two related checks. A course-wide setting that turns on closed captioning support, and, separately, whether each slide's narration actually has a transcript or captions attached.

Why it matters. Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners get nothing from narrated audio without captions or a transcript. Turning on the captioning feature and adding real captions are two different steps. Doing one without the other still leaves learners with no access.

Common mistakes:

- Turning on captioning in Player Properties and assuming that is the whole job, with no captions or transcript actually added to any slide
- Writing a transcript that is a rough summary instead of what was actually said

How to check it. Confirm the setting in Player Properties, then click through slides with narration and look for a caption track or transcript.

How to fix it in Storyline. Player Properties → Captions to enable the feature course-wide. For each narrated slide, add a transcript as a text box (Insert → Text Box) or attach a caption file to the audio object.

✗ INCOMPLETE Captioning: ON. Slide transcripts: none The feature is on, but no individual slide has captions or a transcript.	✓ COMPLETE Captioning: ON. Every narrated slide has a matching transcript The setting and the actual content both do their job.
---	---

Checklist reference: "Confirm closed captioning is turned on" and "this slide's narration has captions or a transcript"

A11yCheck checks for both of these automatically during a scan.

Video

Whether embedded video has its own captions, keyboard-accessible controls, and an audio description for anything important the narration does not already say.

Why it matters. The course-wide captioning setting does not create captions for embedded video, it needs its own caption track. Controls that only respond to a mouse block keyboard-only learners from pausing or replaying. And a video with no matching narration for what it shows leaves blind learners missing information a sighted learner gets automatically.

Common mistakes:

- Assuming Player Properties captioning also covers embedded video, it does not
- Using a custom-skinned video player without testing whether its controls can be reached with Tab
- Recording a screen demo where the meaning is all visual, with narration that never describes it

How to check it. Play each video and look for a caption or CC control. Stop using your mouse and confirm you can reach and operate play, pause, and volume with the keyboard. Then watch it with your eyes closed, if you lose important information, it needs an audio description.

How to fix it in Storyline. Right-click the video → Closed Captions to add a caption file, separate from the course-wide setting. Give it an accessible name the same way as an image, right-click → Size and Position → Accessibility tab. Where the narration doesn't cover the visuals, describe them in the narration or add a short description as a transcript.

x NO CAPTIONS Embedded video plays with no caption track Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners get no access to the video's audio.	✓ CAPTIONED Video has its own caption track added through Closed Captions The course-wide setting and the video's own captions both do their job.
--	---

Checklist reference: "Verify any video on this slide has captions"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Images

Whether meaningful images have alt text that describes them, and whether purely decorative images are marked so a screen reader skips them instead of announcing them.

Why it matters. Without alt text, a screen reader announces an image as just "image," or reads its filename aloud, meaningless to the learner. On the other side, if every decorative border and background shape gets read aloud too, the course becomes exhausting to listen to.

Common mistakes:

- Leaving alt text blank, or using the filename as alt text
- Writing alt text that just says "image" or "photo"
- Marking a genuinely informative image as decorative because it seemed faster

How to check it. Right-click each image and check its Accessibility tab. Ask whether the image is adding information, or just decoration.

How to fix it in Storyline. Right-click the image → Size and Position → Accessibility tab. Type a description for meaningful images, or check the box to mark it decorative.

✗ INACCESSIBLE <pre>alt = "quarterly-chart-final-v3.png"</pre> A screen reader announces the filename verbatim.	✓ ACCESSIBLE <pre>alt = "Bar chart showing a 20% increase in customer satisfaction"</pre> Describes what the image actually communicates.
--	--

Checklist reference: "Every meaningful image has alt text describing it" and "decorative images are marked to be skipped"

A11yCheck checks for both of these automatically during a scan.

Color and Contrast

Whether text is easy to read against its background, and whether any information, like a right or wrong answer, is shown using color as the only signal.

Why it matters. Low vision and colorblind learners can miss information that only exists as a color difference. Faint gray text on a white background is hard for almost everyone to read, not just people with a diagnosed vision impairment.

Common mistakes:

- Light gray text on a white or pale background because it looked clean in the design
- Marking correct answers in green and wrong answers in red with no other signal, like an icon or label

How to check it. Look at your text against its background and ask honestly whether it is easy to read. For color-only signals, imagine the course in grayscale, does the meaning survive?

How to fix it in Storyline. Increase the contrast between text and background color in the Format menu. For color-only feedback, add a checkmark or X icon, or the word "Correct" or "Incorrect," alongside the color.

x COLOR ONLY "Correct" shown as a plain green highlight A colorblind learner may not register the feedback at all.	✓ COLOR PLUS TEXT "Correct" shown as a green highlight with a checkmark and the word "Correct" The meaning survives even without color.
--	---

Checklist reference: "Text has enough contrast to read easily" and "color is not the only way information is shown"

A11yCheck checks for both of these automatically during a scan.

Motion

Whether anything on a slide flashes rapidly enough to be a seizure risk.

Why it matters. Content that flashes more than three times a second can trigger seizures in people with photosensitive epilepsy. This is one of the few accessibility issues that can cause direct physical harm, not just inconvenience.

Common mistakes:

- A blinking "New!" badge or attention animation added without thinking about flash rate
- Embedding a GIF or video without checking what it actually does on loop

How to check it. Watch each animated or blinking object for a few seconds. If you are counting flashes and losing track because it is too fast, that is already a warning sign.

How to fix it in Storyline. Slow the animation down in the Timeline, or replace a rapid blink effect with a subtler highlight, like a color change or a single pulse instead of a loop.

✗ RISKY A badge that flashes rapidly on a continuous loop Rapid, repeated flashing is a real seizure risk.	✓ SAFE A badge that appears once with a brief fade-in Gets attention without any flash risk.
---	---

Checklist reference: "Nothing on this slide flashes more than 3 times per second"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Timing

Whether a slide moves on by itself before the learner has had a chance to finish reading or listening.

Why it matters. Learners read and process information at different speeds. Auto-advance assumes everyone needs the same amount of time, and anyone who needs longer gets cut off with no way to catch up.

Common mistakes:

- Setting a slide to auto-advance because it feels smoother during a demo, without accounting for slower readers
- Auto-advancing a slide before its own narration has finished playing

How to check it. Check the slide's timeline and any triggers set to jump to the next slide automatically. Watch whether it moves on while there is still content on screen.

How to fix it in Storyline. Remove the auto-advance trigger and require the learner to click Next themselves. If you want a timed element, pair it with a visible Continue button instead of an automatic jump.

x AUTO-ADVANCE

Slide jumps to the next one as soon as the timeline ends

Cuts off anyone who reads slower than the timeline allows.

✓ LEARNER-PACED

Slide waits for the learner to click Next

Every learner gets as long as they need.

Checklist reference: "Confirm the slide does not auto-advance before the learner can finish it"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Keyboard Navigation

Whether every button, hotspot, and interactive object on a slide can be reached and used with only the Tab key, no mouse required.

Why it matters. Learners who cannot use a mouse, because of a motor disability, a temporary injury, or simply a broken trackpad, rely entirely on the keyboard. Any object that only responds to a mouse click is completely unusable to them.

Common mistakes:

- Custom hotspots or triggers built without testing whether Tab actually reaches them
- Assuming that because something is clickable, it is also reachable by keyboard, these are not the same thing in Storyline

How to check it. Stop using your mouse. Press Tab repeatedly through the slide and confirm you can reach and activate every interactive object.

How to fix it in Storyline. Custom objects sometimes need their focus order adjusted so Storyline includes them in the tab sequence. Check Slide → Tab Order and add any missing objects.

✗ MOUSE ONLY

A custom hotspot works with a click but is skipped when tabbing

Keyboard-only learners cannot reach this object at all.

✓ KEYBOARD REACHABLE

Every clickable object, including custom hotspots, gets reached with Tab alone

A full Tab-only pass reaches everything.

Checklist reference: "Press Tab through the slide and confirm every button and hotspot can be reached"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Focus

Whether it is visually obvious where keyboard focus currently is as you tab through a slide.

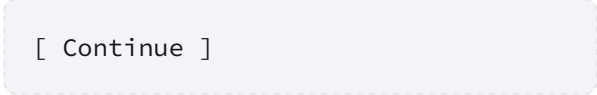
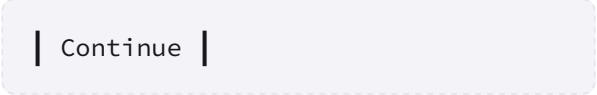
Why it matters. A sighted keyboard user needs to see where they are to navigate confidently. Without a visible outline, tabbing through a slide feels like operating blind, you can move focus around, but you cannot tell where it landed.

Common mistakes:

- Never enabling a focus outline in Player Properties, Storyline does not show one by default
- Setting an outline color too close to the background color to actually notice

How to check it. Tab through a slide and watch closely. If you cannot tell which object currently has focus without guessing, that is a fail.

How to fix it in Storyline. Player Properties → Colors and Effects, turn on the focus outline and make sure its color has enough contrast against every background used in the course.

✗ NO OUTLINE  Tabbing to the button produces no visible change.	✓ VISIBLE OUTLINE  A high-contrast outline appears the instant it receives focus.
---	--

Checklist reference: "Confirm a visible outline appears on whatever you tab to"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Reading Order

Whether the order a screen reader announces content in matches the order a sighted learner would naturally read it in.

Why it matters. Storyline lets you place objects anywhere on a slide, but that visual placement does not automatically set the order assistive technology uses. A screen reader user can end up hearing a button announced before the instructions that explain what it does.

Common mistakes:

- Adding a new object to a slide late and never checking where it landed in the tab order
- Assuming visual layout and reading order are the same thing, in Storyline they often are not

How to check it. Open the Tab Order panel and compare it against how the slide actually looks. Read the tab order top to bottom and ask if it makes sense as a sequence.

How to fix it in Storyline. Slide → Tab Order, drag items into the sequence that matches how a sighted learner would naturally read the slide, generally top to bottom, left to right.

✗ MISMATCHED Tab order: Continue button, Heading, Body text A keyboard user hears the button before knowing what it is for.	✓ MATCHED Tab order: Heading, Body text, Continue button The order matches how the slide reads visually.
---	--

Checklist reference: "Verify tab order matches the order things appear on the slide"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

Assessments

Whether quiz answer choices and feedback can be reached, selected, and read using only the keyboard.

Why it matters. A quiz that cannot be completed without a mouse blocks keyboard-only learners from finishing the course entirely, not just from a partial experience. Feedback that only appears visually, with nothing announced to a screen reader, leaves them unsure whether they even answered correctly.

Common mistakes:

- Custom-built quiz interactions that only ever get mouse-tested
- Feedback that appears as a color change or an image with no text a screen reader can announce

How to check it. Tab through a quiz slide. Confirm you can reach every answer choice, select one, submit, and that the feedback is something a screen reader would actually announce, not just a visual change.

How to fix it in Storyline. Use Storyline's built-in question slide types where possible, they handle keyboard access automatically. For custom-built quiz interactions, test the full sequence with Tab and add text-based feedback, not color alone.

✗ MOUSE ONLY	✓ KEYBOARD AND SCREEN READER FRIENDLY
Correct feedback shown as a green checkmark image with no text A screen reader user gets no indication of the result.	Feedback includes the word "Correct" alongside the icon Every learner, keyboard or screen reader, gets the same information.

Checklist reference: "Check that quiz answers and feedback are reachable with the keyboard"

A11yCheck checks for this automatically during a scan.

What's next

You do not need to memorize any of this. Keep the Storyline Accessibility Quick Checklist open next to Storyline while you review a course, it covers everything in this guide in a two-page working format built for speed, not explanation. Come back to this guide whenever you want the reasoning behind an item, or when something does not look right and you are not sure why.

Once your manual review is done, a free A11yCheck scan catches what is easy to miss by eye: small contrast differences, a slide you forgot to tab through, an image whose alt text got left blank in a rush.

This guide focuses on what shows up most in Storyline courses. A11yCheck's scan also checks mobile and responsive accessibility, like tap target size and orientation locking, that is a big enough topic to earn its own guide, so it is not covered here in depth.

Ready to check your work?

Run a free accessibility and course quality scan with A11yCheck. It takes about five minutes and catches what a manual pass can miss.

Run a free scan →



a11ycheck-dev.com