Reaching All Learners
Designing Accessible Course Materials

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Collaborative Framework for Accessible Course Design
through Technology, Pedagogy, and Content

Faculty

Content
Discipline-Specific Instructional Materials

Pedagogy
Universal Design for Learning

Technology
WCAG 2.0, Section 508 Technical Standards

DESIGN
Why? When?

DEVELOP
How?

DELIVER
What?

UM3D Instructional Impact
um3d@memphis.edu
901.678.8900

Center for Teaching and Learning
helpdesk.memphis.edu
901.678.8888

“The purpose of education is not to make information accessible, but to teach students how to transform accessible information into usable knowledge.”


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Reaching All Learners

Creating an Accessible Syllabus

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The following elements are common items to consider when creating accessible documents like the course syllabus using MS Word, PDF or eCourseware HTML. These items ensure the ability of the learner to quickly find information whether reading it on the screen, on paper, or with an audio screen reader. The preferred format for a syllabus delivered online is eCourseware HTML.

**Heading Styles**
Syllabus section titles should properly use Heading styles to provide an outline structure.

**Table Captions and Headers**
Tables should only be used to organize columns of correlated information or data. Tables should also have a specified header row containing column labels.

**Alternative Text for Images**
Alternative text descriptions (alt-text or captions) are provided for any images which convey meaning.

**Links to Learner Resources**
Syllabus contains or links to relevant course-specific and campus resources such as the library, academic policies, and disability support services.
The example shown above is not accessible because of the following: Serif font (Times New Roman) was used for all text, the header font (Prefix 1010...) was increased to size 22 instead of using the Heading 1 style and the link to the email was not distinguished with appropriate descriptions.
Prefix 1010: Course Title Syllabus

Instructor: John Smith
Office location: Brister Hall 200
Telephone: 901-678-9999
E-mail: jsmith@memphis.edu (Opens local email client in new window)

Course Information

COURSE DESCRIPTION
A brief statement describing the nature of the course, what the student can expect to learn, and an overview of course activities such as teamwork, group projects, student web pages, etc.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
The course objectives should be stated clearly so that they can be related to the expected learning outcomes in each section or module of the course and to the goals of the overall assessment process.

Accessible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Met</th>
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<tbody>
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Creating an Accessible Syllabus using MS Word

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Headings

**Guideline: Apply heading and paragraph styles**

Good heading structure helps readers to understand how the document is organized. Assistive technology users can move between headings, which makes navigation usable and more efficient than without headings. Headings and subheadings should be identified as such using the built-in heading features of the authoring tool. *If you find yourself needing to use more than three levels of headings, you may want to revisit chunking the content for easier readability. Headings should form an outline of the page and be used in the table of contents (TOC) for long documents:

1. **Select the text** that you want to make into a heading.
2. Go to the **Home tab**.
3. In the Styles group, **choose the appropriate heading level** from the Styles gallery.
Creating an Accessible Syllabus using MS Word

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</table>

Fonts

Guideline: Use sans-serif fonts for all text.

Use sans-serif fonts for all text. These font types will help make your text more legible to all learners, including students with visual impairments. Common sans serif fonts include Arial, Calibri, Trebuchet, and Helvetica.

Serif fonts have semi-structural details or small decorative flourishes on the ends of some of the strokes that make up letters and symbols. It is this characteristic that makes the font in this font family difficult to read. Common Serif fonts include Times Roman, Courier, New Century Schoolbook, and Palatino.
Creating an Accessible Syllabus using MS Word

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Links

**Guideline: Avoid using “click here” to identify links**

All hyperlinks should be descriptive in nature, and provide students information about the linked website or resource. If you think students will be printing the document and you want them to have the URL, put the link in parentheses after the link, but don't hyperlink it. From the example, Email: jsmith@memphis.edu (Click to email Professor John Smith)

Screen reading software can pull up all of the links in a page to aid the learner in navigating the page more quickly. If a link pulled up by the screen reader is an ambiguous phrase like, “click here” the screen reader user will not know where that link goes.

**Prefix 1010: Course Title Syllabus**

Instructor: John Smith  
Office location: Brister Hall 200  
Telephone: 901-678-9999  
E-mail: Click Here

Course Information
Creating an Accessible Syllabus using eCourseware HTML

Module/Topic Headings

**Guideline: Provide descriptive module and topic headings.**

To create the framework for designing accessible modules and topics in eCourseware, it is important to provide descriptive module and topic headings. Providing module or topic descriptions, such as Week 1 and Week 2, can help students with the sequence of instruction, but they do not provide information about the content.
Creating an Accessible Syllabus using eCourseware HTML

<table>
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**eCourseware Create a File**

**Guideline:** Use the toolbar to format paragraph text and headings.

To create a file in eCourseware, you will need to:

1. Click Content
2. Create Module
3. Click New
4. Click Create a File
5. Draft document using the correct formatting of paragraph text and headings

![Edit HTML File](image)
Course Materials

The transferable skills required to make MS Word and eCourseware HTML files accessible apply to other document authoring tools. Course materials and handouts like PowerPoint presentations and PDF documents are important tools for instruction and powerful communication tools used in most courses.

Without careful consideration of the creation of these resources, we have found that they are often inaccessible to learners who are blind or visually impaired. In this section, we will focus on the guidelines for creating accessible course materials.

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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide captions or summaries to describe the content of of all tables.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid displaying tables as graphics.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating Accessible Course Materials Using MS PowerPoint

Today's Lecture


- Duis blandit nisi eu augue fringilla hendrerit.
- Donec sagittis massa leo, eu rhoncus erat aliquam eget.
- Duis imperdiet, diam et posuere congue, lacus nunc laoreet nisl, in lacinia erat nisi sit amet lacus.

Guideline | Met
--- | ---
Apply alternative text descriptions for all instructional and non-instructional graphics. | Yes  No  N/A
Avoid using color as the sole method of distinguishing different elements of an instructional graphic. | Yes  No  N/A
Avoid providing instructional text via a graphic. When text is necessary, use sans-serif fonts (i.e. Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Trebuchet) for all text. | Yes  No  N/A
Provide captions or summaries to describe the content of all tables. | Yes  No  N/A
Avoid displaying tables as graphics. | Yes  No  N/A
Creating Accessible Course Materials Using MS PowerPoint

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Images and Graphics (Graphs, Maps & Shapes)

**Guideline: Apply alternative text descriptions for all instructional and non-instructional graphics**

Alternative text descriptions of images (ALT text) allows screen reader users to benefit from the information being conveyed by an image. **Within MS PowerPoint:**

1. **Right-click on the image** and select **Format Picture**. A dialog box will appear.
2. Select **Alt Text** on the sidebar.
3. Enter appropriate alt text in the **Description field, (not the Title field)**. Appropriate alt text is a succinct description of why you are including the image.
4. **Click the Close button** (in MS PowerPoint 2010 for Windows) or **OK button** (in MS PowerPoint for Mac) when done.
Creating Accessible Course Materials Using MS PowerPoint

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Color

**Guideline: Avoid using color as the sole method of distinguishing different elements of an instructional graphic**

Don't use color alone to make a distinction, a comparison, or to set something off or apart from the rest of the image. If you categorize something by color alone, those who are color blind or blind will not be able to benefit from the information.

Text as Graphic

**Guideline: Avoid providing instructional text via a graphic.**

Text that is not directly related to an image or parts of an image should be provided in a readable format. Instructional text provided within an image alone will be inaccessible to students with visual impairments, and create barriers for all students accessing course materials in a variety of ways.

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Creating Accessible Course Materials Using MS PowerPoint

Specify column header information in Excel tables

**Guideline: Provide captions or summaries to describe the content of all tables**

Designating column headers in a data table (not a table used for layout) is essential to screen reader users understanding how the information is laid out.

1. Place cursor anywhere in the table.
2. Two Table Tool tabs will appear in the Ribbon.
3. Click on the Design table tool tab.
4. In the Table Style Options group, check the Header Row checkbox.
5. Now the cells in the top row of your table make up the headers for the columns below them.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heading 1</th>
<th>Heading 2</th>
<th>Heading 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data 1</td>
<td>Data 4</td>
<td>Data 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data 2</td>
<td>Data 5</td>
<td>Data 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data 3</td>
<td>Data 6</td>
<td>Data 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating Accessible Course Materials Using Adobe PDF

Adobe Systems PDF is a graphical file that is an exact image of a document originally created by another application (e.g., MS Word file) and then converted by other software (e.g., Adobe Acrobat) into PDF format. A PDF document can be viewed using a PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Reader), which allows users to view a PDF document, enter information (where applicable), and enlarge the viewing area of the document.

Automated Accessibility Testing is available in Acrobat Pro XI. To access this software, visit ITS Adobe documentation at http://www.memphis.edu/umtech/solutions/software/adobe.php. Acrobat includes a “Full Check” for accessibility. Different from previous versions, the Full Check no longer includes Section 508 criteria, but rather, uses a new set of standards Adobe has adopted to help deliver a more accessible experience.
Reaching All Learners

Resources for Designing Accessible Course Materials
Resources

General Media Conditions for Accessibility

The concepts for accessible digital information transcend any single authoring software application. Following are the universal access strategies for different types of digital media across all technology platforms:

- Text – Semantic Structure (Heading Styles, list styles, etc.)
- Images – Textual Descriptions
- Audio – Transcripts
- Video – Captions

Specific Media Format Considerations for Accessibility

MS Word

- Use the styles and formatting options to identify headings.
- Avoid using tables or text boxes to control layout and positioning of MS Word documents.
- Use the column tool for multi-column layouts.
- Include text descriptions when adding content-rich images.
- Specify column and row headers for data tables.
- Use the Accessibility Checker.

PowerPoint

- Use the PowerPoint templates within the application.
- Add your text descriptions to images.
- Use the OUTLINE view.
- Use the Accessibility Checker.
- If using audio narration, export to digital video and caption.
- Consider saving the presentation as an accessible PDF.
- If recording PowerPoint as a video, always provide a captioned version.
Resources

Excel

- Provide clear and meaningful labels for rows/columns.
- Include text descriptions for charts and graphs.
- Create a supplemental text document listing relevant formulas and/or macros.
- Highlight key data and use comment areas when available.
- Define parameters for datasets (ex: lowest/highest values, specific rows or columns that define the dataset).

PDF

- Start with accessible MS Office documents.
- Retain advanced tagging information.
- Use the “Create Accessible PDF’s “option from the “Action Wizards” menu.
- Use the Touch-up Reading Order Tool to edit specific content accessibility and heading hierarchy.
- Use the Order Panel to correct or establish correct sequencing of content.
- Reading order of PDF can be evaluated by using the “Save As...” and "Text (Accessible)" option.

HTML

- Use heading styles appropriately.
- Provide alternate text descriptions for images.
- Indicate headers for columns and rows of data tables.
- Do not nest data tables within other data tables.
- Include long descriptions for complex charts, graphics, illustrations, etc.
- Maintain acceptable color contrast to allow discrimination between foreground and background information.
- Preserve logical tab order for form fields and interactive content.
- Ensure correct sequencing of content.
- Support progressive enhancement for representation in mobile context.
Resources

Audio

- Transcript available

Digital Video

- Ensure that all audio content is represented by the captions.
- Follow recommended guidelines for captioning from the Digital Captioned Media Program: http://www.dcmp.org/captioningkey/
- Whenever possible, provide a separate text transcript for keyword searchability.

Software and other learning Technologies (MyLab, etc.)

Resources

Word Documents and Non-HTML Files


eCourseware/ HTML Files

- Brightspace Accessibility Topics for Learning - [https://documentation.desire2learn.com/en/Accessibility](https://documentation.desire2learn.com/en/Accessibility)

Images

- Add alternative text to a shape, picture, chart, table, SmartArt graphic, or other object - [https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Add-alternative-text-to-a-shape-picture-chart-table-SmartArt-graphic-or-other-object-44989b2a-903c-4d9a-b742-6a75b451c669](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Add-alternative-text-to-a-shape-picture-chart-table-SmartArt-graphic-or-other-object-44989b2a-903c-4d9a-b742-6a75b451c669)

Tables

Resources

Video & Audio

YouTube

- YouTube Captions and Subtitles (Video) - https://youtu.be/QRS8MkLhQmM
- YouTube Add Subtitles and Captions - https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734796?hl=en
- YouTube Edit or Remove Captions - https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734705

Ensemble Video

# Accessible Course Materials Checklist

The following checklist is designed to help faculty align course materials to accessibility standards. These guidelines address relevant components of the WCAG 2.0 Guidelines and have been aligned to recommendations within the Universal Design for Learning Principle Multiple Means of Representation.

## Documents and Non-HTML Files

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## Links

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<td>Provide links that are descriptive and distinguishable from other links.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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# Accessible Course Materials Checklist

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## Video and Audio

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<tr>
<td>Identify audio and video via accessible text.</td>
<td>Yes No N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide text transcripts for all audio and video content. Ensure video transcripts are descriptive.</td>
<td>Yes No N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide audio descriptions not in the original audio track for all visual content in videos.</td>
<td>Yes No N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all videos are captioned.</td>
<td>Yes No N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid flashing or blinking content in all videos.</td>
<td>Yes No N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

Accessibility. “Accessible” means that individuals with disabilities are able to independently engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services within the same time frame as individuals without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Accessible Informational Materials and Technology (AIMT). AIMTs are items created, purchased or identified, with accessibility in mind, to serve in instruction and/or communicate information both in the curricular and non-curricular setting. These items may include, but are not limited to: textbooks, library media, informational software content, eBooks, CD-ROM, DVDs, videos, slides, films, filmstrips, learning laboratories, recordings, manipulatives and consumables, ITV (Interactive Television), handouts, presentations, and syllabi.

Accessible course materials. Accessible course materials are a subset of AIMTs created, purchased or identified with accessibility in mind, to serve explicitly in instruction and communicate information in a curricular setting of the UofM. Designing such materials encourages thoughtful, proactive design of accessible learning environments.

Accommodation. An accommodation is provided on an individual basis to students with documented disabilities and may involve: additional exam time, classroom note-takers, faculty-provided written notes, assistance with learning strategies and study skills, alternative formats for exams, and adaptive technology and equipment.

Blended learning. Blended learning is defined on our campus as learning in which students are engaged in a course where up to 25% of instruction is delivered online. At UofM, blended instruction should be delivered through our learning management system (LMS) and a variety of tools within the LMS. All faculty should, at minimum, incorporate a welcome message on the homepage of their course; an accessible syllabus; and the gradebook as a means of helping students to monitor progress.

Learner diversity. Research in the cognitive sciences suggests the “average” or “typical” learner may not exist (Meyer at al., 2005); instead, learners may vary as significantly as the “the interactions among modules in our brains” (Gardner, 1983). Learner diversity (or learner variability) is a term inclusive of the broader body of learners at our institution as well as students who may be marginalized by a disability or specific learning need. “One of the clearest and most important revelations stemming from brain research is that there are no ‘regular’ students. The notion of broad categories of learners—smart, not smart; disabled, not disabled; regular, not regular—is a gross oversimplification that does not reflect reality. By categorizing students in this way, we miss many subtle and important qualities and focus instead on a single characteristic” (Meyer & Rose, 2005, p. 38).
**Glossary**

**Perceivable. Operable. Understandable. Robust. (POUR).** The POUR guidelines are intended to assist individuals developing web materials with alignment to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. The Accessible Course Materials checklist has been aligned to several of these key guidelines as relevant to course design.

**Students with disabilities (SWDs).** The Americans with Disabilities Act (2009) defines a person with a disability as: (a) someone who has an impairment that limits one or more major life activities; (b) an individual with a history or record of such impairments; or (c) an individual who is perceived to have such impairment. The types of disabilities exhibited among students in the postsecondary setting may include, but are not limited to: specific learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), mobility limitations, and mental illness/ psychological/ psychiatric conditions. Of the distribution of disabilities among students with disabilities at four-year institutions, specific learning disabilities and ADD/ADHD may be the most commonly reported.

**Transcripts and Captions.** A transcript provides a written version of content that has been presented in audio, visual or audiovisual format. Captions are words that are displayed on a screen to describe audio content.

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL).** According to UDL on Campus (2015), UDL is an “educational framework that guides the design of learning goals, materials, methods, and assessments as well as the policies surrounding these curricular elements with the diversity of learners in mind.” Universal Design for Learning is distinct from other areas of Universal Design (UD) in that it focuses explicitly on the learning process and addresses the following three principles: multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement. UDL focuses on the holistic design of accessible learning; for this reason, it is necessary to focus on accessible pedagogy, as well as accessible materials, when designing instruction.

**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.** According to W3C.org, WCAG 2.0 is “a stable, referenceable technical standard. It has 12 guidelines that are organized under 4 principles: perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. For each guideline, there are testable success criteria, which are at three levels: A, AA, and AAA.” The Accessible Course Materials checklist has been aligned to several of these key guidelines as relevant to course design.