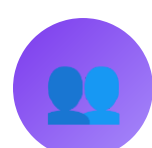


Accessibility Quick Guide

Essential Practices for Creating Inclusive Digital Learning Content

Digital accessibility ensures that all learners, including those with disabilities, can access, navigate, and interact with your course content. This guide provides practical, actionable steps to make your learning materials accessible from the start.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles



Multiple Means of Engagement

Provide options for how learners engage with content, sustain effort, and self-regulate their learning



Multiple Means of Representation

Present information in different formats to accommodate diverse learning preferences and abilities



Multiple Means of Action & Expression

Allow learners to demonstrate knowledge in various ways that align with their strengths

Content-Specific Accessibility Guidelines



Documents (Word, PDF, PowerPoint)

Use Built-In Styles

Apply Heading 1, Heading 2, etc. for document structure—never just bold/large text

Create Accessible Tables

Include header rows, avoid merged cells, keep tables simple

Check Reading Order

Use accessibility checker; ensure logical flow for screen readers

Add Alt Text to Images

Right-click image → Edit Alt Text. Describe image purpose, not just appearance

Use Descriptive Hyperlinks

Link text like "Download syllabus" not "click here" or raw URLs

Use Sufficient Contrast

Dark text on light background (or vice versa). Avoid light gray on white



Videos & Multimedia

Provide Captions

Add accurate closed captions for all spoken content—auto-captions need editing

Describe Visual Information

Use audio descriptions for important visual content not conveyed in dialogue

Provide Controls

Allow users to pause, stop, adjust volume, and control playback speed

Include Transcripts

Provide downloadable text transcripts for videos and audio files

Avoid Flashing Content

No content flashing more than 3 times per second (seizure risk)

Use High Contrast Overlays

When adding text to videos, use high-contrast backgrounds behind text



Web Content & LMS Pages

Use Semantic HTML

Use proper heading hierarchy (H1, H2, H3), lists, and semantic tags

Include Skip Navigation

Add "skip to main content" link for keyboard-only users

Ensure Keyboard Navigation

All interactive elements accessible via Tab key without mouse

Write Descriptive Link Text

"View assignment rubric" not "click here" or "more info"

Label Form Fields

Every input field needs a clear, associated label

Color + Text/Icons

Never use color alone to convey information; add text or icons



Images, Charts & Graphics

Write Meaningful Alt Text

Describe purpose/content, not "image of..." Keep under 150 characters

Describe Complex Graphics

For charts/diagrams, provide detailed text description or data table

Use High Color Contrast

Minimum 4.5:1 for normal text, 3:1 for large text

Mark Decorative Images

If image is purely decorative, mark as such (empty alt text)

Avoid Text in Images

Use actual text instead; if unavoidable, include all text in alt description

Don't Rely on Color Alone

Use patterns, labels, or icons alongside color coding

Essential Accessibility Checklist

All images have appropriate alt text or are marked decorative

Documents use proper heading structure (H1, H2, H3)

Links use descriptive text, not "click here"

Content is navigable by keyboard alone (no mouse required)

Information not conveyed by color alone

No flashing or blinking content (seizure prevention)

Videos include accurate captions and transcripts

Color contrast meets WCAG standards (4.5:1 minimum)

Tables include header rows and are kept simple

Forms have clear labels for all input fields

Fonts are readable (12pt minimum, sans-serif recommended)

Content tested with accessibility checker or screen reader

Accessibility Testing & Checking Tools

Microsoft Accessibility Checker

Built into Word, PowerPoint, Excel. Review → Check Accessibility. Identifies common issues with actionable fixes.

WAVE (Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool)

Browser extension that checks web pages for WCAG compliance. Shows errors visually on page.

NVDA or JAWS (Screen Readers)

Test your content with screen readers. NVDA is free; JAWS is industry standard.

Ally (LMS Integration)

Integrates with Canvas, Blackboard, etc. Provides accessibility scores and alternative formats.

Adobe Acrobat Pro Accessibility Tools

Check PDF accessibility, add tags, create accessible forms, and remediate documents.

Color Contrast Analyzer

Free tool to check if text/background color combinations meet WCAG standards.

YouTube Auto-Captioning + Editing

Auto-generate captions, then manually edit for accuracy. Download SRT files for other platforms.

Grackle Docs (Google Workspace)

Add-on for Google Docs/Slides that checks accessibility and helps remediate issues.

Common Accessibility Mistakes to Avoid

✗ "Click Here" Links

Screen readers read links out of context. Use descriptive link text instead.

✗ Manual Bold for Headings

Screen readers need proper heading tags (H1, H2). Bold text doesn't create structure.

✗ Unedited Auto-Captions

Auto-generated captions have 20-30% error rate. Always edit for accuracy.

✗ Complex Tables with Merged Cells

Screen readers struggle with complex tables. Keep tables simple with clear headers.

✗ PDFs from Image Scans

Scanned PDFs are just images. Use OCR to make text selectable and readable.

✗ Videos Without Captions

Excludes deaf/hard-of-hearing learners. Also helps ESL students and in noisy environments.

✗ Images of Text

Screen readers can't read text in images. Use actual text with formatting.

✗ Color-Only Information

"Red items are urgent" fails for colorblind users. Add text labels or icons.

✗ Low Contrast Text

Light gray on white is hard to read. Use dark text on light background (4.5:1 ratio).

✗ Unlabeled Form Fields

Every input needs a visible label, not just placeholder text.

✗ Flashing/Blinking Content

Can trigger seizures. Never flash content more than 3 times per second.

✗ Mouse-Only Navigation

All features must be accessible via keyboard. Test with Tab key only.

Quick Accessibility Wins

💡 **Use built-in tools:** Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, and most LMS platforms have accessibility checkers—use them!

💡 **Design accessible from the start:** It's easier to build accessibility in than retrofit later. Use templates with proper structure.

💡 **Test with keyboard only:** Unplug your mouse and navigate using only Tab, Enter, and arrow keys.

💡 **Provide multiple formats:** Offer content in different formats (text, audio, video) to accommodate diverse needs.

💡 **Keep it simple:** Clear language, simple layouts, and logical organization benefit everyone, not just users with disabilities.

💡 **Ask for feedback:** If possible, have users with disabilities test your content and provide input.

Key Accessibility Standards & Guidelines

WCAG 2.1

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

International standard for web accessibility. Three levels: A (minimum), AA (standard), AAA (enhanced)

Section 508

Rehabilitation Act (US)

US federal law requiring accessible technology for government agencies and contractors

ADA

Americans with Disabilities Act

US civil rights law prohibiting discrimination. Applies to educational institutions and digital content

Remember: Accessibility Benefits Everyone