

Digital Content Accessibility Checklist

CMU is required to comply with [federal accessibility standards](#) and as a faculty member there are ways you can support adherence to these standards. Below is information and helpful tips on how to make your course materials more accessible. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of compliance standards, but rather to provide an introduction to easy-to-adopt measures.

Color

Use color sparingly to ensure maximum viewability.

- Screen readers do not recognize color: don't use color as a distinguishing feature within text.
- Use color selectively. Overuse of color can be confusing and distracting.
- If you must use color, ensure sufficient contrast between text and background colors. Try this [Color Contrast Checker](#) to verify your selections.
- Avoid use of red or green to show emphasis along with these other [top colors color-blind students have difficulty seeing](#).

Text

- Use [these standard, easily legible fonts](#) in 12 point or larger size.
- Use bullets or numbering to organize content (this also helps increase readability).
- Do not underline text, which is suggestive of hyperlinks, and can confuse readers.
- Leave ample white space.
- Use paragraphs to break up large blocks of text.

Links

- Descriptively name all links: Avoid use of "click here" or "read more." For example: [Register for our upcoming events](#) in place of "For more information on our upcoming events [click here](#)."
- Descriptive links indicate why the user should click on them.
- Use high contrast between link color and background. (See [Color](#) for details).
- Always [set links to open in a new window](#).

Accessible Documents

Using an appropriate structure for documents will ensure accessibility.

- Use [uniform heading structure](#): headings organize content and provide the ability to directly jump to content. Keep headings simple.
- Use [heading style tags](#) (Heading 1 once per document, Heading 2 for main headings, Heading 3 - Heading 5 for sub headings).
- Run the [Microsoft Accessibility Checker](#) (PC) on completed documents. [For a Mac, use the accessibility checker](#) built into each software program.
- Accessibility for PDF documents can be tricky – there are right ways and wrong ways to export a document to PDF. To ensure this is done correctly, from the Microsoft Word File menu:
 - Select Save As Type -> PDF
 - Select "Options" & ensure "Documents Structure Tags for Accessibility" is checked.

Images & Complex Visuals

Screen readers use alternative text (alt text) to provide users with information about images and complex visuals (tables, charts, graphics, etc.). When incorporating these items into your documents, follow these accessibility guidelines:

- [Provide brief alternative text descriptions](#) (ALT text) for all images.
- For complex visuals and detailed informational images, a longer text description may be needed, which can be linked to in Blackboard from the “Advanced” tab when inserting an image.
- Do not enter “Image Of” as assistive tools already know the object is an image. Be concise, clear, and descriptive. See an example of an alt text for the picture to the right.
- Do not use the same alt text for every image (e.g. “image illustrating associated text”).
- Use lists instead of tables. Tables are accessible but more difficult to navigate and understand.
- If tables are desired, use the [Creating Accessible Tables in Blackboard](#).
- [Keep tables simple](#). Avoid tables embedded within a table, merged cells, and empty cells.

Organizing Your Blackboard Course Shell

Course Menu Buttons

- Use a high contrast between text color and background color (do not use patterned buttons).
- Remove or hide buttons/tools that are not used.

Shell/Course Layout

- Implement consistent navigation and menu-structure for students to easily navigate the course.
- Follow the 3-click rule; no more than three clicks to get to the needed information.
- Minimizing page scrolling increases ease of accessibility via keyboard navigation.

Multimedia and Video

When recording multimedia content for your course, keep the following accessibility guidelines in mind:

- Be descriptive when referencing images on slides.
- Add closed-captioning using Panopto's [Auto-Speech Recognition](#) (ASR) capability. ASR is a great starting point so all you need to do is edit the machine captioning to be 100% accurate using Panopto's online caption editor.
- Provide a transcript as a text-only option for your students.

To learn more about Universal Design for Learning (UDL), [auto-enroll in our self-paced Accessibility Workshop](#).

Visit [CMU's Student Disability Services' web site](#) about their services to your students
<https://www.cmich.edu/ess/studentaffairs/SDS/Pages/default.aspx>

Adapted from [Hartford University's Accessibility Checklist](#).

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