

Quick Guide to Online Course Accessibility

Why is Accessibility Important?

The University of Florida is committed to providing all students with accessible websites and course content. Recent court cases and U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights investigations of higher education institutions to ensure their commitment to the accessibility of university websites, course materials, and online content.

So what does this mean to the online course instructor who already has a heavy workload? With features built into Canvas, as well as other instructional tools, creating an accessible course is easier than ever! This guide will show you the basics of accessible online course design. For additional details you can also visit the faculty and staff page at accessibility.ufl.edu.

Areas of Need

Students may request accommodation in one of the areas outlined below. Students requesting accommodation are interviewed by the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students are provided with a letter to give to the instructor. The letter provides information regarding the required accommodation such as [note takers](#), [memory aid accommodations](#) and others mentioned below. Contact the DRC immediately if you have any questions.

Hearing

- Provide text alternatives for non-text material.
- Closed Captions (CC) or transcripts are required for audio and video material.
 - Any student needing CC accommodation must make an appointment with the DRC immediately to make arrangements.
 - Include this information in your syllabus as per the [UF Syllabus Policy](#).
 - It is critical for students to be able to access course material as soon as possible.
- Real-time captioning for web conference or chat sessions can be arranged through the DRC.
- Pro-active captioning for large enrollment courses that are 80% or more online can be arranged through [John Jordi](#) in Distance and Continuing Education.
- For more information visit the [Teaching Students with Hearing Loss Fact Sheet](#).

Vision

- All websites and course content should be accessible to screen reader and screen magnification software (i.e. JAWS and MAGic.)
 - Support for screen readers is consistent with best practices for website usability.
- Review conferencing and chat tools to ensure that students can read and respond.
- For more information visit the [Teaching Students with Visual Impairment or Blindness Fact Sheet](#).

Mobility

- All content on web and course sites can be accessed using keyboard, speech input, and assistive devices (head pointer and sip and puff switch.)
- Conferencing and chat tools make it possible for students to interact and respond.

Cognition

- Websites and course sites have consistent and easy to navigation.
- Websites and course sites are compatible with screen reader and screen magnification software.
- Conferencing and chat tools make it possible for students to interact and respond.
- State your conventions:
 - Present information consistently such as links are usually blue and underlined. If yours are different name this convention so students know what to look for.
 - Provide students with a clear place to focus and a distinct path to navigate
 - Some students will need extra time on quizzes and exams. To give students extra time on a canvas quiz visit the [Canvas accessibility page](#).
- For more information visit the [Communication and Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Fact Sheet](#).

Course Site Design

At one time, it took some expertise in writing .html and .css code to create an accessible course site. However, with the features in Canvas, anyone can create an accessible course fairly quickly. The Canvas course management system was certified by the [National Federation of the Blind](#) to be equally accessible to blind and sighted users.

The recommendations listed below make it possible for screen reader users to access material efficiently. These same practices support assistive devices and general usability. Before we get started, it would be helpful for you to see how a screen reader works: [Screen Reader Demo](#)

Avoid “Click Here”

Screen reader users can use the Tab key to skip from link to link. That means that the user won't hear what the link is if the text describing the link is not used as the link text. What does this mean to you? Avoid using “click here,” “link” or <http://www.thisisthelink123445.com> as the link.

Poor Link Example:

"Donald Tapscott, in his paper "Growing Up Digital,"
http://www.ncsu.edu/meridian/jan98/feat_6/digital.html says these students..."

[Listen to bad example audio from screen reader](#)

Good Link Example:

"Donald Tapscott, in his paper "[Growing Up Digital](#)," says these students..."

[Listen to good example audio from screen reader](#)

Alternative Text

Every image in your course needs to have “Alt text.” This will allow the screen reader to identify or describe the image. Avoid repeating text that may be next to the image. Avoid using phrases such as “click this image to . . .” To add Alt Text to your Canvas images, simply click on the “**Embed image**” icon in the content editing window (it's a picture of a tree) and it will open a dialog box where you can type the description.

Attributes

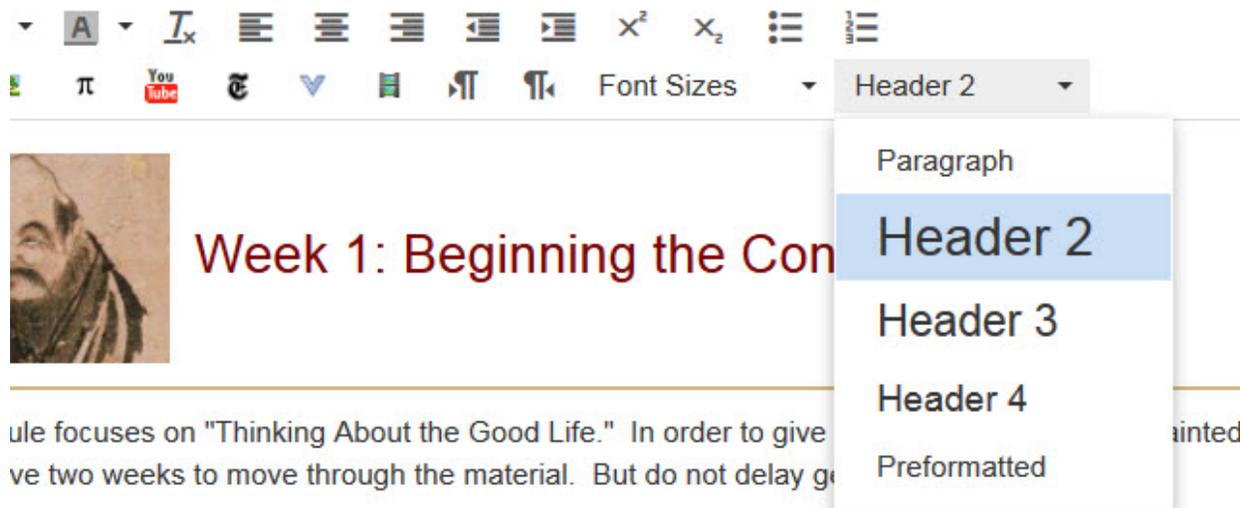
Alt text	<input type="text" value="LaoTzu"/>
	Describe the image to improve accessibility
Dimensions	<input type="text" value="200"/> x <input type="text" value="100"/>
	Aspect ratio will be preserved

When possible, avoid using text as part of the image itself as it may become pixelated and difficult to read when it is enlarged using a screen magnifier.

Headings and Subheadings

Screen reader users have the ability to navigate through pages by skipping from heading to subheadings. This means that they don't have to listen to all of the page content to find what they need. But to do this, headings and subheadings need to be "tagged." Page titles are generally <h1> and the major section headings are <h2> and then they can go down to <h4> or <h5>.

Do not use font size or bold to create your headings. Instead, highlight the text for the heading and choose the heading level from the menu at the top of your Canvas content editor.



Color

Avoid using color alone to communicate meaning. There are different types of color-blindness, some people have difficulty seeing reds, others do not see green and still others cannot see blue. Provide notations in addition to using color. Instead of using color for meaning within text, consider using italics or bold. Avoid using underlining for meaning as web convention indicates that underlined text is a link. Underlined text that is not a link may cause people to e-mail you about the broken link in your class!

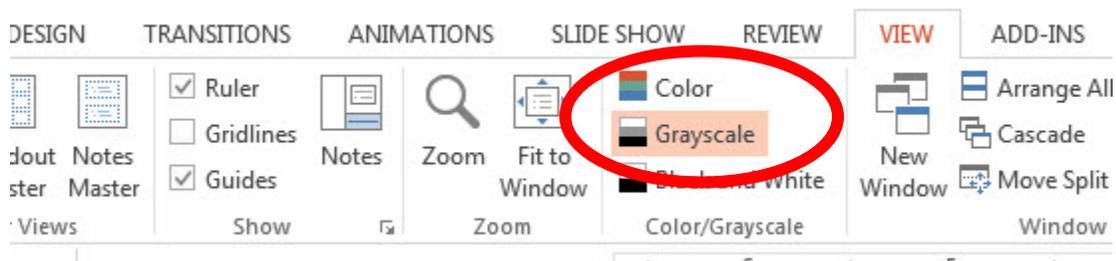
Contrast

People with low vision can have a difficult time viewing websites with low contrast. You can test your page by reducing the contrast on your monitor or looking at your monitor through a piece of tracing paper. The example below could be problematic for both someone with low vision as well as someone who is color-blind.

Orange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ireland : protestants (religious)• USA : halloween (with black), cheap goods• Hinduism : saffron (peachy orange) is a sacred color• Feng Shui : Yang, Earth, purpose, strengthens concentration
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PowerPoint

Don't forget to check your PowerPoints! Poor PowerPoint contrast is a big contributor to accessibility issues in courses! You can check your PowerPoint contrast by choosing **View > Grayscale**. Note that this does not allow you to see the slide master background.



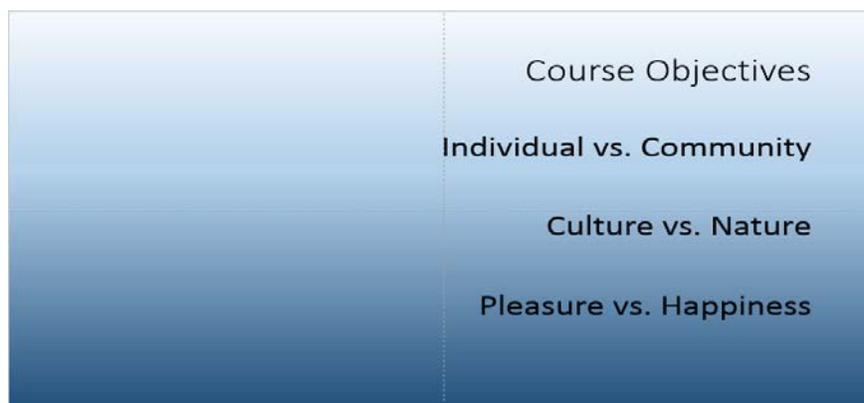
Beware of gradients in PowerPoint! This can result in text color that is perfectly readable in one section of the PowerPoint yet difficult to read in another section. This can be problematic for sighted students and impossible for low-vision students.

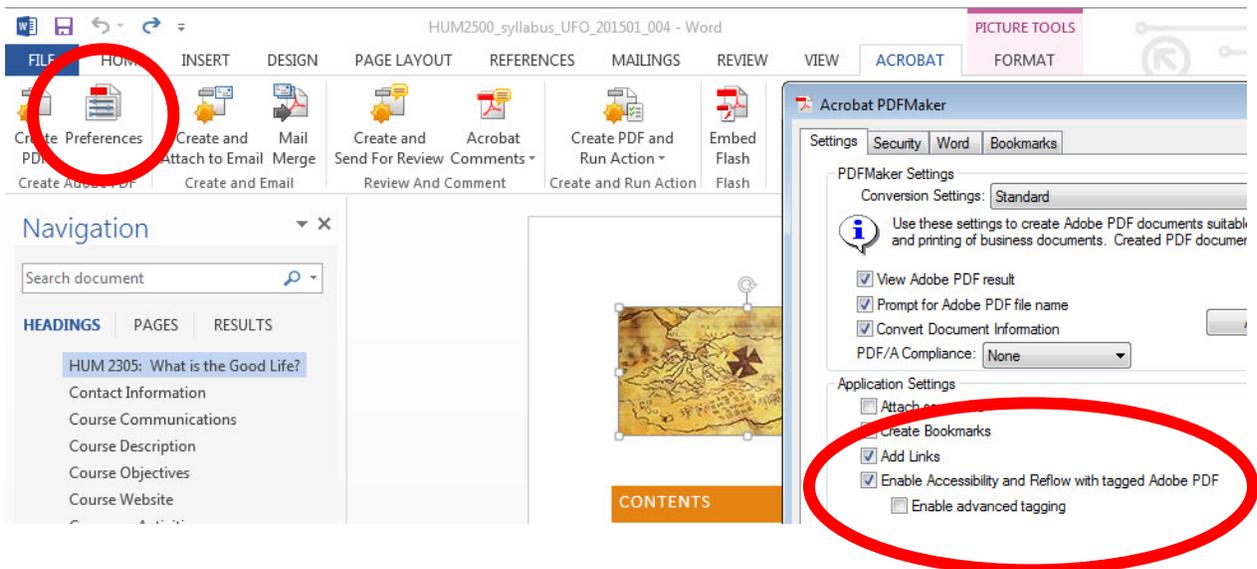
Accessible .pdf Files

All course material needs to be accessible to a screen reader. This includes any .pdf documents that you provide to the student. If you cannot select the text in the document, it is an "image" and a screen reader will not be able to read it. All of the document scans created by ARES course reserves team are accessible.

To create an accessible .pdf you will need Adobe Acrobat Pro software. This program needs to be installed after your copy of Word as it will provide you with an additional "Acrobat" tool in your Word interface. Other software such as OpenOffice.org Writer can be used to create accessible documents. For more information on those visit WebAim.org.

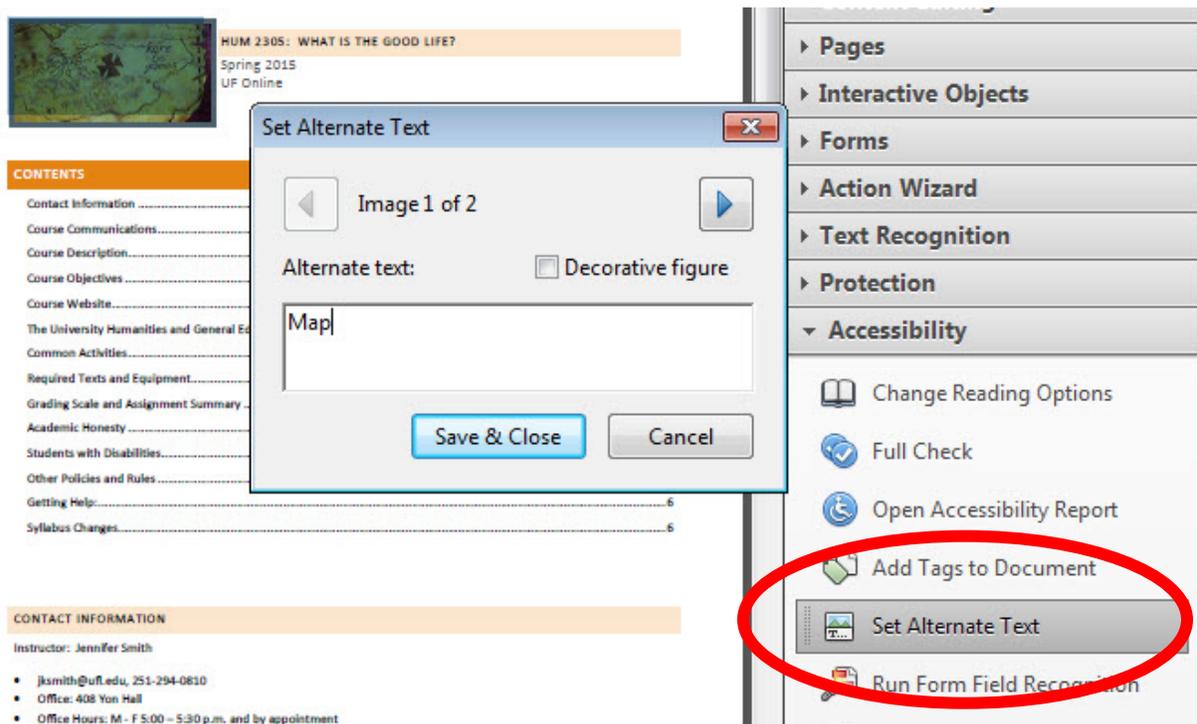
After you have created your Word document, choose **Acrobat > Preferences > Settings**. Then check the box that says, "Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF." Once you have checked this box, it should stay checked. Now, when you click the "Create PDF" button, it will create a properly tagged .pdf.





Alt Text for PDF Images

If you will have images in your .pdf document, you'll need to add the alt. text for those using Adobe Acrobat Pro. To do this, select **View > Tools > Accessibility**. Select the image you wish to tag and choose **"Set Alternate Text."**



For more details on PowerPoint, PDFs and Word documents visit [the Creating Accessible Documents Page](#).

Closed Captions

Where it is possible, large enrollment distance learning courses (80% or more online) with reusable video content are proactively closed captioned. If your course meets this criteria and an accessibility fee is charged for your course, please contact John Jordi, jjordi@dce.ufl.edu to request proactive closed captioning.

If you record new videos each term, work with your technical support team to determine a closed captioning plan. You will need to know your video format, storage location and required turnaround time. If you host your videos in Mediasite, the process is quick and requires very little effort from you or your support team. If you have videos housed elsewhere, upload and download of videos may be required.

Inform your TAs that any requests for Closed Caption accommodation need to be addressed as quickly as possible so that there is no delay in a student's ability to access course material.

Publisher Material/Tools

When you adopt a textbook or publisher tool, ask the rep for a copy of their Voluntary Product Accessibility Template or other accessibility documentation. If you are using free or open source material, use the following checklist to ensure that the content is accessible to all users.

- Video content is closed captioned.
- Transcripts are provided for audio recordings.
- Alt tags are used for images.
- Interactive content can be accessed without using a mouse through keyboard shortcuts.
- Beware of Flash tools! They may contain text as images that cannot be read by a screen reader.

If you are unsure of the accessibility of a tool or e-text, contact Jennifer Smith, Director of the Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence for assistance jksmith@ufl.edu.

Resources

"AccessDL." [Project DO-IT: Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology](#). University of Washington, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2014.
University of Washington provides resources and publications on making distance learning courses accessible.

Betts, Kristen. "[Legal Perspective: Q&A with Daniel F. Goldstein](#)." The Sloan Consortium, Oct. 2013. Web. 01 Feb. 2014.

A Q and A session with Daniel F. Goldstein provides a legal perspective on issues relating to accessibility and online learning.

Betts, Kristen. "[National Perspective: Q&A with National Federation of The Blind & Association of Higher Education and Disability](#)." *National Perspective: Q&A with National Federation of The Blind & Association of Higher Education and Disability*. The Sloan Consortium, Oct. 2013. Web. 01 Feb. 2014.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) provide a national perspective regarding online learning and accessibility.

Betts, Kristen, et al. "Strategies to Increase Online Student Success for Students with Disabilities." *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 17.3 (2013).

Center for Persons with Disabilities. "[Resources.](#)" WebAIM: Web Accessibility in Mind. Utah State University, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2014.

"[From Where I Sit Video Series.](#)" Professional Development for Accessible Technology: Promotional Materials: FWIS. University of California, 2009. Web. 16 Jan. 2014.