

10 Key Practices for Designing Accessible Course Materials

Creating accessible course content ensures that all students, regardless of ability, can engage fully with your materials. The following practices offer a clear starting point for faculty members seeking to enhance accessibility in their courses.

1. Include Required Accessibility Statements

- A [Syllabus Statement](#) that includes information about Academic Accommodations and Learning Technologies available to all students. These statements communicate your commitment to accessibility and guide students to available resources.

2. Use Semantic Structure for Clarity and Navigation

- Always use [heading styles](#) to organize content: Title, Section Headings, Subsections. Creating headings by bolding and/or increasing font size is not accessible.
- Use **bold** (strong) and *italics* (emphasis) through structural styles—not manual formatting.
- Include a Table of Contents and, if applicable, a Table of Figures, both generated from heading styles.
- Format lists, columns, and tables using built-in tools—avoid using tabs or spaces to simulate structure. Never insert a picture of lists, columns, or tables as these are not considered accessible and cannot interact with screen readers.
- Proper semantic formatting improves readability and compatibility with screen readers, ensuring access for blind/low vision users and individuals with other [print disabilities](#).

3. Enhance Readability

- Break up long paragraphs into shorter sections.
- Use clear, concise language and avoid overly complex sentences.
- Choose an [ADA-compliant font](#) at 12-point size or larger for optimal legibility.

4. Provide Text Descriptions for Visual Elements

Add [ALT text](#), a brief (under 100 characters) text description of images and graphics which is a critical part of making content accessible to students using screen readers. If more detail is needed, include a long description in the surrounding text or as a separate document. [Image Accessibility tools](#) can be found online.

5. Avoid Relying Solely on Color

- Color should never be the only method used to convey meaning.
- Always pair color with text, symbols, or patterns to ensure understanding for students with color vision deficiencies.

6. Ensure Adequate Color Contrast

- Make sure there is a strong contrast between text and background elements. ([Online Contrast Checker](#))
- Avoid backgrounds that distract from or obscure the content—especially in slides and web pages.

7. Use Descriptive Hyperlinks

- Hyperlink text should clearly describe the destination.

- Instead of vague phrases like “Click here” or “Email me,” use meaningful labels such as: “Visit the Writing Center Website” or “Download the Course Syllabus (PDF)”
- Avoid typing out entire URLs (raw URLs) unless necessary.

8. Run Accessibility Checks

- Most software tools (Word, PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat, etc.) include [built-in accessibility checkers](#).
- Use them regularly and follow the suggested fixes to address any issues.

9. Make Multimedia Content Accessible

- Audio-only: A written transcript.
- Video-only: A text-based description of key visual elements.
- Audio + Video: Closed captions, transcript, and video description.
- Tip: You can combine the transcript and video description into a single accessible document.

10. Continue Learning and Improving

- These practices offer a strong foundation, but accessibility is an ongoing journey. For further guidance, explore resources such as:
 - [Microsoft Accessibility Support](#)
 - [Broward College Ally Webpage](#)
 - [Broward College Instructional Design Webpage](#)

