Digital Accessible Design

# Background:

Creating online course content that is accessible serves to benefit all students, in addition to being required by federal law. According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=60), 19% of undergraduate students and 11% of graduate students surveyed in 2015-2016 reported having a physical, learning, and/or mental disability. Many of those students utilize assistive technology to interact with online course material. Students have the greatest chance of learning when instructors help ensure that online course content interacts smoothly with those technologies. On the back of this sheet is a quick reference guide that will help instructors make their BlueLine course pages, videos, Word documents, PDFs, and PowerPoints as accessible as possible.

For more on the federal laws requiring digital accessibility visit the following resources:

* [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](https://www.section508.gov/manage/laws-and-policies)
* [Americans with Disabilities Act with amendments](https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm)
* [ADA Information and Technical Assistance](https://www.ada.gov/)

All Creighton online and hybrid courses are reviewed for digital accessibility.  Faculty will be notified by an instructional designer during the course review process if changes need to be made for all learners, regardless of program or pathway.  The instructional designer will assist in this process if needed.

Please contact the Center for Faculty Excellence for assistance with online exam accommodations, captioning for course videos, or verification of BlueLine course accessibility.

The following are examples of why accessible course design is so important to learners:

**Color-blindness:**

* [WebAim Color Blindness Examples](https://webaim.org/articles/visual/colorblind)
* [Color-blindness Simulator](http://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/)

**Low Vision:** [WebAim Low Vision Examples](https://webaim.org/articles/visual/lowvision)

**Auditory:** [WebAim Auditory Disabilities Examples](https://webaim.org/articles/auditory/)

## Additional Resources:

* [ADA Compliance for Online Course Design - Educause](https://er.educause.edu/articles/2017/1/ada-compliance-for-online-course-design)
* [20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course - University of Washington](https://www.washington.edu/doit/20-tips-teaching-accessible-online-course)
* [University of Washington IT Accessibility Checklist](https://depts.washington.edu/uwitats/checklist/)
* [Accessibility at Penn State](https://accessibility.psu.edu/)
* [Creighton University Office of Disability Services](http://blogs.creighton.edu/edge/disability-services/)

# Course Accessibility Guidelines – Quick Reference

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| Content | Guidelines | Benefits |
| **Audio/Video**  | * If there is a letter of accommodation received from [Disability Services](http://blogs.creighton.edu/edge/disability-services/) then audio files **MUST** be transcribed, and videos **MUST** be captioned. Contact eLearning@creighton.edu for assistance with this.
* Visual demonstrations or any text/image content not described in the audio may need a text or audio description.
* Media files shouldn’t play automatically when a user enters the page.
 | Captions also benefit non-native speakers or students experiencing audio glitches. Captions reinforce audio and provide additional ways for students with different learning styles to engage with the course material. |
| **Font Color** | * Ensure good [color contrast](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/) for text/graphics/charts and backgrounds. Content should be in a legible, sans serif font.
* Color cannot be the only way to convey meaning. Screen readers do not read aloud visual information, and some students are [color-blind](https://webaim.org/articles/visual/colorblind) and might miss the color designation. Screen readers also do not automatically recognize bold font or special characters.
 | This fix improves legibility for all students. |
| **Document Types** | * External Documents (PDF files, journal articles, book chapters, etc.) should be both accessible and copyright compliant. Work with an Instructional Designer and/or Librarian to set up a [course E-Reserve](https://www.creighton.edu/reinert/services/coursereserves/) to ensure you are copyright compliant and your content is accessible.
* [Word documents](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us), [PowerPoint files](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us), and [PDF files](https://www.adobe.com/accessibility/pdf/pdf-accessibility-overview.html) should be made accessible as well.
 | The documents are OCR ([Optical Character Recognition](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/1159/pages/optical-character-recognition-ocr)) compatible and easily readable by all students. |
| **Images** | * Use Alt text (alternative text) for all images. Alt text should describe the meaning conveyed by the image in the context of the course material, and it should be up to 125 characters.
* For complex images needing description of more than 125 characters consider including a description in the text or use [Image Long Descriptions](https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/complex/).
 | A descriptive alt text can help guide student understanding of the image presented, regardless of need for accommodations. |
| **Link Text** | Avoid vague or repetitive link text such as “click here” or “read more”. Use language for links that makes sense out of context (e.g. “Guidelines for Discussion Posts”). Don’t just copy and paste a URL – be sure to use descriptive wording for a hyperlink that is unique to that hyperlink only. | Allows students using adaptive technology to understand and predict where a link will take them. |
| **Section Headings** | Web pages and documents with headers should utilize built-in Styles for section headings, along with descriptive header text. [Built-in Styles](https://webaim.org/techniques/semanticstructure/) are distinguishable to screen readers, while large or bold font as a heading signifier is not.  | This also allows for easier comprehension for visual readers. |
| **Table Captions and Column Headings** | 1. Do not use tables for layout and design purposes. Restrict tables to the presentation of data only.
2. Use [table headers](https://accessibility.psu.edu/software/canvas/canvaseditor/#tables) to identify rows and columns.
3. Use a caption to display the table title.
 | All students can access and navigate the data presented. |

*Adapted from the* [*Penn State Course Accessibility Guidelines*](https://accessibility.psu.edu/courses/courseguidelines/)*, accessed October 2018.*