

# Creating Accessible Course Materials

## Guidelines for Creating Accessible Course Materials

Constructing the materials that are accessible prior to posting them, distributing them, or using them will establish an environment that is inclusive to all students. Under both state and federal laws, the College must provide students who have print disabilities with alternative format accommodations. Legally, instructional materials must be available in an accessible format at the same time, and with the same ease of use, that materials are provided to students without disabilities.

The information below highlights different features that ensure compliance and that every faculty member can easily use to ensure that course materials are accessible to students with various disabilities, those students who use alternate strategies to improve their academic performance, and sometimes for students whose first language is something other than English.

### Electronic Format and Digital Content:

#### Required Texts

The Assistive Technology Office is responsible for finding (or creating) textbooks in alternative format for approved students who request them. Students request specific texts from the Assistive Technology Office and provide proof of possession. In order to adhere to federal law, new deadlines require faculty to submit their textbook lists by June 1<sup>st</sup> for the fall semester. Please include the full title, author, publisher, edition, and ISBN-13 if available.

E-books and digital textbooks are not always accessible. If you plan on using e-books or digital textbooks in your class, please send a link to the digital book to Sondi Burnell, [burnell@grinnell.edu](mailto:burnell@grinnell.edu), to test for accessibility.

#### Materials posted to Pioneer Web (PWeb)

Post all in-class handouts and PowerPoint slides to PWeb before class so that students with print disabilities may review the material before class.

Starting with the best possible source document will positively impact the entire process of copying and scanning. Select readings from library databases or other appropriate sources that provide PDFs with selectable text or HTML documents. Work with your Academic Support Assistants to prepare course materials and online documents in accessible formats.

## Tips: Applications/Websites/Wikis/Blogs/LMS

- Add alternate text description (alt text) for all images, links, charts, graphs, etc.
- Use hyperlink text that is meaningful (see example above under Microsoft Word).
- Include closed captions for any video and a text transcript for any audio file.
- For videos that need captioning, contact the Digital Liberal Arts Collaborative ([dlac@grinnell.edu](mailto:dlac@grinnell.edu)).
- Use skip-navigation links to enable user to go directly to desired content.
- Ensure that all logical headings use the HTML heading tags (<h1>, <h2>, etc.).
- Keyboard Access: use the keyboard exclusively to navigate through webpages and applications. Are all areas of the screen accessible? Are there keystrokes available for all mouse actions? Are there a minimum number of keystrokes to get to the desired areas?
- Font Size: Go to the Settings option on your preferred Browser and select Font Size/Largest to see if point sizes can be changed.
- Color: Change the colors or contrast by adding a High Contrast extension in Chrome. Firefox go to Options and adjust in the General option or review Add-On options.

## Best Practices for Creating Your Own Digital Documents (Word documents and PowerPoint presentations):

- Use sans serif fonts whenever possible (e.g. Arial, Calibri, Tahoma, Verdana) and if you plan to project the document during class, be certain the font size is sufficient to be readable from all areas of the room. It is best to test this in your particular classroom at the start of the semester.
  - Note: If a student in your class self-identifies as having dyslexia, ask if the “Opendyslexic” font is helpful for easier reading. If so, download the font at <http://opendyslexic.org/> and print your materials using this font.
- Utilize default auto layouts in PowerPoint that best fit the purpose of your slide content. Avoid using text boxes. Screen readers cannot read text within text boxes. You can check your content and reading order by viewing the PowerPoint presentation in Outline View.
- Use effective color contrast between background and text in PowerPoint presentations. Avoid these color combinations: red/blue, red/green, dark green/black, blue/black, shades of gray.
- Don’t use color alone to convey meaning.
- Present with [real-time automatic captions or subtitles](#) in PowerPoint (Office 365)

### Tips: Microsoft Office Word

- Add alternate text description (alt text) for all images, charts, graphs, SmartArt, etc. To do so:
  1. Insert the image.
  2. Right click on the image and then select, "Format Picture" from the context menu
  3. Select the Alt Text section and then add a title and description for the image.
- Use styles (i.e., heading tags) in long documents.
  - Use short titles for headings
  - Ensure heading styles are in the correct order (i.e., heading 1, heading 2, etc.)
- Use hyperlink text that provide clear and understandable labels for links.
  - The label or text of the link should accurately describe the purpose of the link and the destination web page or content.
  - Avoid using common, non-descriptive phrases like "Click Here," "More," "Read More" or using only the URL.

### Tips: Microsoft Office PowerPoint

- Add alternate text description (alt text, see above) for all images, charts, graphs, SmartArt, etc.
- Ensure that all slides have unique titles
- Use hyperlink text that is meaningful (see example under Microsoft Office Word).
- Add text transcript in 'Notes' section for any audio or video used in slides
- Ensure that audio and video files automatically play as soon as the user advances to the next slide.

### Using the Microsoft Office Built-in Accessibility Checker (Windows)

Accessibility Checker alerts you to accessibility issues, similar to a spell checker for misspelled words.

1. Select File >Info
2. Select Check for Issues button.
3. To see information on why and how to fix an issue, under Inspection Results, select an issue. Results appear under Additional Information, and you're directed to the inaccessible content in your file.

## Best Practices for Accessible Scanned Electronic Reading:

- Post documents as accessible PDFs. You can ask your Academic Support Assistants to run the Adobe accessibility checker for you.
- Scanned readings should be clear of underlining, handwritten notes, and highlighting other than the color yellow.
- If at all possible, use custom size settings and scan one page at a time, producing a 1-page rather than a 2-page spread.
- Scan in black and white for text only and gray-scale for text with images. Be cautious about scanning in color as it produces very large files.
- Press down on the spine of the book while scanning to avoid shadows in the margins.
- Check your scanned document for cut-off text, shadows in the margins, and missing page numbers.
- In Adobe Professional, delete any unnecessary facing pages that were captured in scanning process. Rotate any pages that are sideways or upside down.
- PDF documents should include “selectable text”. In Adobe Professional, OCR documents to recognize text in image-only PDFs.
- Be consistent with filenames on PWeb to ensure they match the syllabus reference. Recommended format: author’s last name and title.
- Ensure that your document posted to PWeb is right-side-up.

### Tips: Checking Accessibility in PDF Docs/Forms

To test your PDF documents for accessibility, complete the following steps (in Adobe Reader or Acrobat):

1. Click on the **‘View’** pull-down menu >**Read Out Loud>Activate Read Out Loud**, followed by the **‘View’** pull-down menu >**Read Out Loud>This Page Only**.
2. If the document reads aloud, but the text is read out of order, adding “tags” to the document may help. In Adobe Acrobat, choose **“Advanced”>Accessibility>Add Tags to Document**. (This command adequately tags most standard layouts so text-to-speech software reads the PDF in the correct order, but cannot always correctly interpret the structure and reading order of complete page elements.)

## Large Print:

- Ensure that all printed handouts are provided in enlarged font (14-16 pt.) for students with this accommodation. This includes the course syllabus, reading assignments, quizzes, exams, and tests. It is best practice to print enlarged materials on regular-sized paper so the student does not have to deal with over-sized documents or have their disability disclosed. Speak with the student about their preference and the size font they need.
- Speak aloud anything that you write on the board.

## Captions/Transcripts:

- The audio content of video materials and any audio files will need to be captioned and/or transcribed for students with this accommodation, including any videos that you create. Many already come captioned, but it must be “turned on” when you show it to the class.
- Commercially produced videos, DVDs, as well as publisher-produced media may already have this available via subtitles. If you are using a video that does not provide captions, please contact the Assistive Technology Office so we can contact the video’s production company and ask about a captioned version.
- If captions or transcripts are not available, we will need to produce transcripts or captions in-house. This can be a very time-consuming process, and if not feasible, will require a plan to provide an equal alternative form of access to the content. Please contact the Assistive Technology Office with any questions or concerns about captioning. You can also contact the Digital Liberal Arts Collaborative ([dlac@grinnell.edu](mailto:dlac@grinnell.edu)).

## We are here to help!

Contact your Academic Support Assistants about e-reserves and creating accessible course materials.

If you have any questions or need assistance in checking the accessibility of your course content, please contact a member of the AT Team:

- Son-di Burnell, Coordinator of Assistive Technology. [burnell@grinnell.edu](mailto:burnell@grinnell.edu), x3061
- Stephanie Micetich, Assistive Technology Support Specialist. [pulsstep@grinnell.edu](mailto:pulsstep@grinnell.edu), x3085
- Doug Peterson, Assistive Technology Support Specialist. [petersod@grinnell.edu](mailto:petersod@grinnell.edu), x4107
- Stacey Puls, Assistive Technology Support Specialist. [pulstac@grinnell.edu](mailto:pulstac@grinnell.edu) x3243
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