Disability Services
Easy Electronic Accessibility

Faculty can make their course content more accessible with a few easy steps. Keep these simple tips in mind when you're preparing materials for the Spring 2023 semester!

Accessibility Checkers

If your program has one, give it a try! Microsoft Office Suite, as well as Moodle, all have one. Often, the checker will identify potential accessibility problems and offer solutions, but remember that it doesn't catch all of them!

Color Contrast

If you're printing something on computer paper, or creating a PowerPoint, make sure you use a dark font on a light background. Black text on a white background is the most common format, but if you like to use colored paper or slides, make sure that it's readable, and whatever you do, avoid red and green colors, as those colors are the most common for people with color blindness.

Fonts

San Serif fonts are said to be the most accessible fonts. Bolding words or sentences to emphasize them is fine, but do know that if the reader is using a text-to-speech software program, the program will not recognize the bold means the word or phrase is being emphasized. Screen readers will not recognize italics either, and for some with vision impairments, italics may be hard to read. Avoid underlining words or sentences that are not hyperlinks, as screen readers may mistake

underlined words for hyperlinks. Size 14 font is the recommended minimum size font for general accessibility.

Headings

When you create a document like this, use headings and use them in order. Not only does it organize and structure your content, it makes it easier to follow, whether or not the student uses a screen reader. You may notice that every one of my documents utilizes headings, which can be seen by ticking the "Navigation Pane" box in the "View" panel in Microsoft Word!

Images

If you include an image on your document or slide show, please consider either marking them as decorative – meaning the screen reader will not pick them up – or giving them alternate text. Alternate text is used to describe images to those who are blind or having vision impairments. Describe what is in the picture and give any relevant context. Images that can be marked as decorative are ones that are not relevant to the content, such as company logos.

Language

Concise, simple language is the most accessible language, especially in this era of social media. Obviously, different subjects, programs, and departments will have their own jargon, but classroom materials are for students, not seasoned academics.

Links

Use descriptive text when adding a hyperlink to your content. If you paste the URL, a screen reader will read the entire thing out to the student. Who wants to hear that? Allow me to give you an example:

Descriptive link: Please use our Test Request Form to arrange for ACE to proctor student exams.

Not a descriptive link: Please submit test requests here: https://montanatech.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2axMPTJlDmwqoRM

PDFs
When creating a PDF with required content for students, do not scan the images at the department's copier, as those are completely inaccessible to screen readers. It is recommended you type them up on Microsoft Word, then convert it to a PDF.

Simplicity
The simpler, the better! Overloading your content with images, charts, and tables, can confuse screen readers, and makes it inaccessible to students who rely on those.

Tables
Tables are difficult to make accessible. Avoid using them, if you can, and if you can't, use simple table with no merged or empty cells, and include header rows or columns. Or, if you prefer, you can turn the table into an image and describe it with alternative text.

Videos
If you are playing a video for your students, or posting one to your course's Moodle page, it is strongly encouraged that you have them enable synchronized captions. Not only does that allow students with hearing or vision impairments to understand what's going on, but the National Library of Medicine confirms that having captions on videos improves the viewer's comprehension, attention, and memory of the video, regardless of age or ability. It is also recommended that transcripts of the video be provided, so that students with hearing or vision impairments may follow along. Transcripts also allow students to quietly review the material without having to replay the video.