Quick Guide to Digital Accessibility

Why is Accessibility Important?

Florida State College at Jacksonville 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 indicate that electronic content must meet accessibility requirements. FSCJ's Educational Technology Web Accessibility: https://at.fscj.edu/blog/accessibility

Accommodation

Students may request an accommodation through FSCJ Student Support Services. Students requesting accommodations must request an appointment with a Student Support Coordinator where they provide documentation. The Student Support Coordinator sends an Accommodations Memo to the instructor with information regarding the required accommodation. Contact Student Support Services immediately if you have any questions.

Course Site Design

The recommendations described in this document make it possible for screen reader users to access material efficiently. These same practices support other 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

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 the 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>.**

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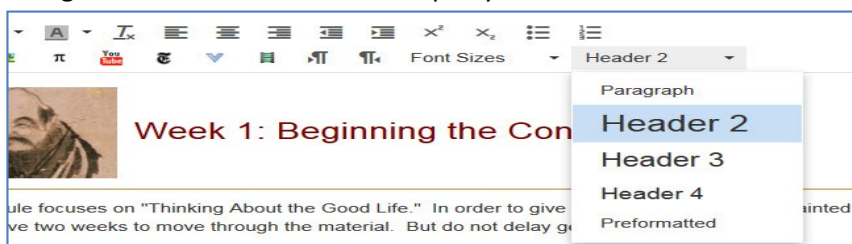

Figure 1. Use the styles within the editor to create headings and subheadings in Canvas.

Avoid "Click Here"

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

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.

Alternate Text

Every image in your course needs to have "Alt text." This allows 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.

Figure 2. Add Alternate in the image attributes menu of Canvas.

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.

Color

Avoid using color along 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 may 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.

Figure 3. In this image, the orange text is very difficult to see against the gray background.

Canvas Accessibility Checker

Canvas has an accessibility checker within Canvas. This tool allows instructors and instructional designers to quickly identify materials that need revision and explains how to correct accessibility issues.
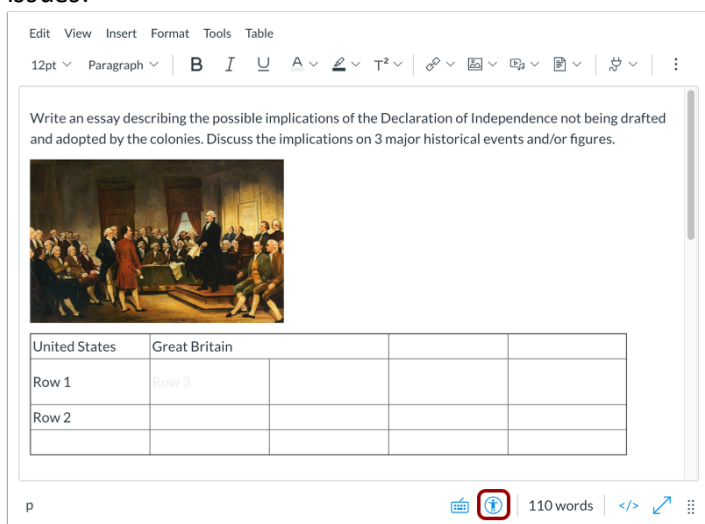

Figure 4. The accessibility icon in Canvas's rich text editor can be used to check accessibility of page content.

For more information on how to use Canvas's Accessibility Checker, go to this page in the Canvas Instructor Guide.

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.
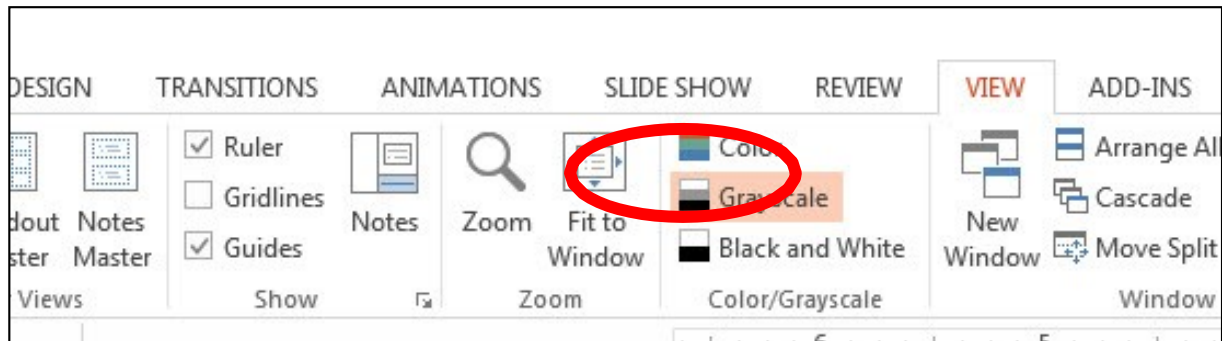

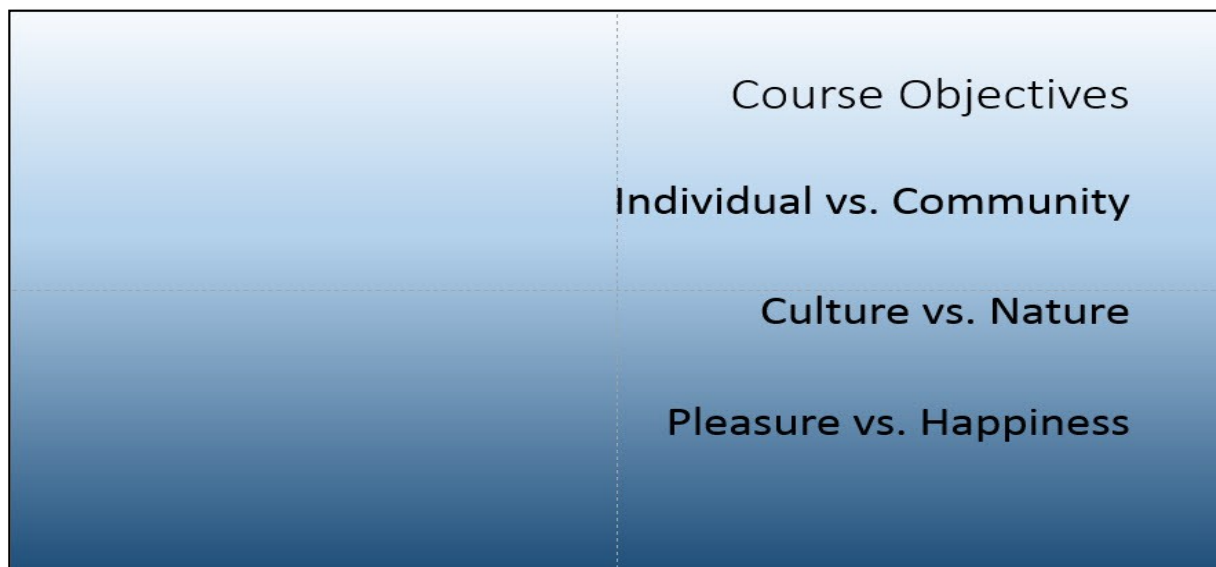*Figure 7. Switch your PowerPoint to grayscale to check the color contrast.*

Figure 8. Black text is difficult to see against the darker end of a blue gradient background.

Accessible PDF Files

All course material must 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. A scanned page from a book saved in PDF format is not an accessible PDF. The PDF Accessibility Checker PAC is a freeware program that can evaluate PDF accessibility.

The best approach is to start from a Word document, and edit it for accessibility before saving the file as a PDF.

To add "alt text" to your Word images:

1. **Right click** on the image.
2. Select **Format Picture** from the bottom of the menu.
3. Choose **Layout & Properties** from the text menu that appears to the right.
4. Select **Alt Text.**
5. Type your text in the **Title** box, add a longer description if needed.
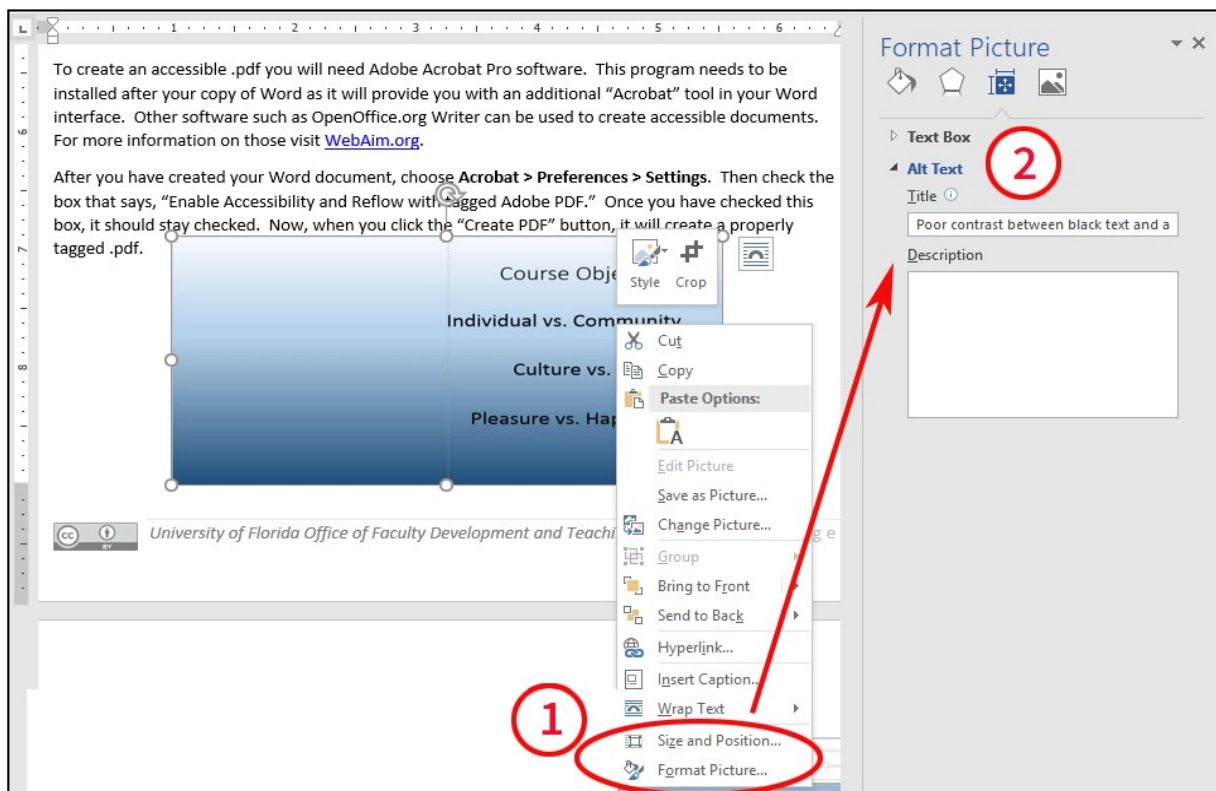
For more information on making your Word documents accessible before saving as PDF, visit the Microsoft Office Support Page where you will find more information about using the accessibility checker within Word on different operating systems.

Closed Captions

FSCJ is steadily working towards the goal of Closed Captioning all video content. This is required by federal law and FSCJ policy. The Center for eLearning ensures all videos in its Master Course Shells are captioned when a course is being developed. Individual instructor developed videos or videos borrowed from other websites, like YouTube, must also be captioned or a transcript must be provided if adding captions is not possible.

If you use Canvas Studio to record videos or if you upload videos to your Canvas Studio account, you can use the captioning tool and review the captions to identify and correct any errors.

For more information on how to add captions to videos in Studio, go to this page in the Canvas Instructor Guide.

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 this short 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.

If you are unsure of the accessibility of a tool or e-text, contact the Educational Technology Team at EdTech@fscj.edu.

Get Help!

If you are using a PDF without having the source document in .doc or .docx format, contact your Faculty Development Specialist for assistance with making your PDF's accessible. You can also contact your FDS for help with accessibility in PowerPoints, Canvas Studio Videos, and Canvas pages:

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Office # G0203

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.

Quick Guide to Digital Accessibility" by University of Florida Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence used under CC/revised to remove references to UF training and resource sites and added FSCJ contacts and other support sites.

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