

## Accessible Online Course Design Tips

### Formatting & Writing

- Use white space and headings to break up long blocks of text.
- Pages should have unique and descriptive titles (Module 2 Quiz: U.S. Constitution vs. Quiz 2).
- Write out dates and use full stops at the end of sentences (including bullet points).
- Must follow Web Content and Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) POUR:
  - **Perceivable** -available by sight, hearing and touch.
  - **Operable** - able to be navigated and operated easily.
  - **Understandable** - to both the content and the interface.
  - **Robust** - able to be used by multiple user agents, including assistive technologies.

### Images

- All images (except decorative images, like icons or stock photos) should have quality alternate text descriptions.
- Alternate text descriptions should convey the information of the image, not merely describe the image. Alternate text should be an equivalent substitute for the image.
- Alternate text should consider the context in which the image appears.
- Complex images like graphs, charts, diagrams, and maps, must also have alternate text descriptions. Lengthy descriptions of complex images can be linked to on a separate Canvas page.
- Avoid using images of text as much as possible. If unavoidable, alternate text must contain all text in the image.

### Color & Contrast

- Color should not be the sole means of conveying information. Use texture, pattern, size, shape, etc. in combination with color.
- Ensure a high contrast ratio between background and foreground colors. Test using tools like [WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker](#).
- Make sure you use colors that contrast one another

- Bad Contrast: 
- Good Contrast: 
- To ensure following web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG), WebAim can be used for testing out color and contrast. Here is the link to their [Color Contrast Checker](#).

## Audio & Video

- All audio content (pure audio recordings and audio tracks on video recordings) must have a complete text equivalent in the form of transcripts (audio) or captions (video).
- Ad-hoc recordings (announcements, discussion replies, etc.) should come with a text equivalent that conveys the same information.
- Contact FCPE for transcription resources

## Accessible Documents

- **Word Documents:** create in latest available version of Microsoft Word and run accessibility checker. Correct all highlighted issues.
- **PDFs:** create in latest available version of Microsoft Word and run accessibility checker. Correct all issues. Convert to PDF using Adobe plugin. Using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC, run accessibility checker and correct all issues: read order, alt text, tables, language, title, etc. Must be have OCR (optical character recognition)—a scanned book will read as an image and cannot be processed by a screen reader.
- **Excel Spreadsheets:** Avoid blank cells as much as possible. Use for intended purpose—organizing data. Do not include lengthy sentences, images, etc.
- **PowerPoint Presentations:** Use notes section to describe content of slides. Notes should serve as equivalent to the information on the slides. Images should have alt text descriptions. Ensure that the order of items on slides is correct.

## Course Resources & Learning Technology

- **Text Format:** digital formats are always preferable, as they can easily be read aloud by a screen reader or other text to speech software.

## Course Content

- **Pronouns and Names:** in introductions, ask all students to share their names/nicknames and pronouns. Include this information in instructor bios.
- **Bias:** be aware of bias around gender, race, religion, sexuality, disability, etc. entering into course content (i.e. using the generic *he*, “ladies and gentlemen,” racial divisions in America being referred to as black and white). See [APA guidelines on reducing bias](#) for more information.
- **Content Warnings:** include annotations on all course materials, and highlight resources that contain troubling content (graphic violence, sexual assault, discussions/depictions of bigoted language, hate crimes, etc.) to empower students to make decisions about when and how to engage with it.

## Resources

- [WebAIM.org](#): excellent resource for all things web accessibility. Explains technical standards in laymen’s terms.
- [SPS Distance Learning Accessibility](#): expanded information on many of these topics.
- [University of Washington DO-IT](#): extensive resources for accessibility (both physical and web) in higher education.
- [Dos and Don’t’s on Designing for Accessibility](#): posters with general advice on design considerations for different types of disabilities.
- [“Technology Can Address Digital Accessibility—to an Extent.”](#) *Inside Higher Ed*, May 2 2018.: examines benefits and limits of automated accessibility checkers and highlights the places where human interaction is required.
- [Zoom Video Conferencing](#).
- [Google Suite User Guide to Accessibility](#)

## Accessible Links

- URLs must be embedded as unique, descriptive links ([Canvas at Northwestern](#) rather than <https://www.it.northwestern.edu/education/login.html> or “[click here](#) for Canvas”).
- Take into consideration for people using assistive technology such as screen readers regarding the display of hyperlinks in emails. Avoid phrases like “click here”, and don’t turn subheadings into links as those can confuse some assistive technologies.
- This is an [example of ineffective use of hyperlinks provided on the University of Minnesota’s webpage](#). We encourage you to refer to the examples on that webpage of how those things would be perceived by a student utilizing a screen reader.