

Best Practices for Designing Accessible Courses in Blackboard*

The following table demonstrates a best practice for developing web content in Blackboard.

Use	What do I need to do?	Why?
Text	Avoid large blocks of italic text.	This can appear 'wobbly' to some individuals and therefore difficult to read.
	Use relative font sizes in your HTML.	Users will be able to alter font size on their browser set-up.
	Avoid moving, blinking and auto-refreshing text	Low-vision users find these hard to deal with. Students with dyslexia, low vision and screen reader users may find these difficult to read.
	Avoid using large blocks of CAPITALISATION.	Some users find this difficult to read.
Images	If an image is essential, insert meaningful textual description.	It's important to use both images and text, but its better not to use images of text. Use text with a style applied to it than an image containing text. Screen readers will pick up the ALT text of the image, this text should convey what is important or the purpose of the image.
	Take care with animated images.	Users of screen magnification software may find difficulty in reading images if the information is moving around.
Underlining	Don't underline large blocks of text.	Underlining represents hyper-linked text. Large blocks of underlining can be confusing for users of screen reader software.
Headings	Use headings appropriately.	Appropriately written headings will make navigation easier. It's good to construct the document like an outline - the more structured the page is, the easier it is to read.
Links	Avoid using more than 10 links on an individual page.	For the blind user, the process of scanning links is linear and therefore slow. The use of too many links on a page can be very frustrating for the user.
	Don't use 'click here' for a link.	This can be confusing for screen readers. Instead use a description like: 'go to Blackboard'.

The following table demonstrates a best practice for uploading web content into Blackboard.

Type of upload	Accessibility issues	Solutions
Images	Screen readers cannot read images.	Provide a textual representation of the image for people accessing the page in a non-graphic way (e.g. text only, or speech). This can be done by adding an alternative text attribute or ALT text in the image editor. This text should convey what is important or the purpose of the image.
Graphs/ Charts	Some screen readers are unable to read them.	Provide a textual representation of the graph or chart so that it is meaningful and logical to students.
Tables	Screen readers are only able to read simple tables. Do not use tables unnecessarily.	Keep all tables simple and make line-by-line reading meaningful. Screen readers will read from the top left cell of the table to the bottom right cell.
PDF documents (Adobe Acrobat)	Some screen readers are not able to read PDF files or a user might not have plug-in.	Always ensure that HTML texts are also available and provide a link to download the free Adobe Acrobat Reader. http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html
MS Word/Excel documents	User may not have Microsoft Office software installed.	Always ensure that HTML texts are also available and provide a link to download the free Microsoft Office Viewers.
PowerPoint Presentations	PowerPoint files will be inaccessible to users of screen readers.	Provide alternative transcripts where possible.
Multimedia	Screen readers will not be able to read multimedia files.	Provide alternative transcripts where possible.

* adapted from: <http://info.uwe.ac.uk/online/Blackboard/staff/guides/accessibleContent.asp>