ONLINE COURSE ACCESSIBILITY
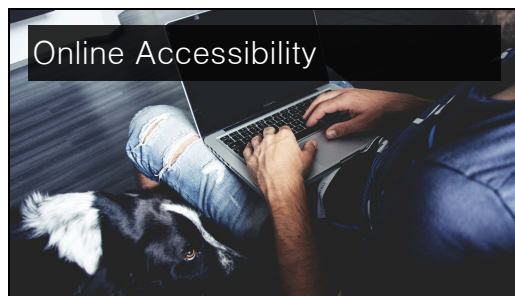
SLIDE 1

Online Course Accessibility

Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence

Hello! In the previous video, I talked about basic accessibility requirements for course material. I described what a screen reader does and explained how to address a few common accessibility issues. In this session, I'll cover some accessibility challenges that impact online courses.

SLIDE 2

You may be wondering how accessibility requirements impact online courses? Actually, online courses can be MUCH easier for students to access with the help of assistive technology.

SLIDE 3
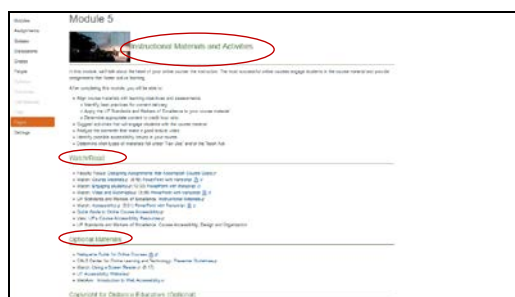
As I mentioned in the previous video, headings and subheadings make it possible for all students to move through your course material efficiently. These are critical to support students who use assistive technology.

SLIDE 4
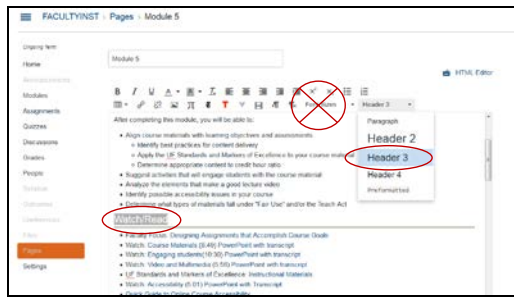
To create the headings within Canvas, simply highlight the desired subheading text and choose the appropriate "header" level from the drop down menu above the editing window.

This will "tag" the text as a heading in a way that can be read by assistive software. If you change the size of text using the "Font sizes," (click) or by simply making it bold and a different color, it won't be properly tagged and the software won't find it.

SLIDE 5
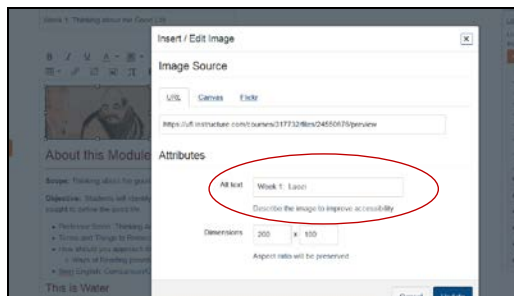
Any meaningful images require "Alternative Text" and it's a good idea to include the "ALT" text for all images. To add Alt Text to your Canvas images, just click the **"Embed image"** icon in the content editing window (it's a picture of a tree) and type the image description into the dialog box. The screen reader will read whatever you put in the Alt text box.

SLIDE 6

Default "Alt Text":

img54345.jpg

"Alt Text" description:

Student working on a laptop with his dog beside him

If you don't provide "Alt Text" then Canvas will use the filename as the default. In this case, the screen reader will try to read: img543545.jpg But what we really want the student to hear is, "Student working on a laptop with his dog beside him."

The best practice is to appropriately tag all images. If the image is purely decorative, put "decorative image" in the alt text box.

SLIDE 7

Please avoid using the words "click here" as your link text. Why?

SLIDE 8

Poor Example:

Click here to see the "Guides" on the teach website

Good Example:

For more information you can access the Guides in the FDTE Library

Screen reader users can skip from link to link. And prior to each link, the screen reader actually says the word, "link." That way the student knows that the next word or words will take her to another page.

In the bad example on the left, the student won't find out where the link goes until after the screen reader is already past the link because the screen reader will say, "**Link** click here to see the guides on the teach website."

In the good example, the screen reader will read, "For more information you can access the **link** guides in the FDTE library"

SLIDE 9

Poor Example:

Donald Tapscott, in his paper ''Growing Up Digital,'' http://www.ncsu.edu/meridian/jan98/feat_6/digital.html says these students...

Good Example:

Donald Tapscott, in his paper ''Growing Up Digital ,'' says these students...

In the poor example on the left, the screen reader will attempt to read the link URL and it will be hard for the student to determine what the external site might be.

The screen reader would read the good example as: Donald Tapscott in his paper **Link** Growing up Digital says these students. . .

SLIDE 10

Organization

It probably goes without saying, but the more organized and consistent your pages and navigation are, the easier it is for ALL of your students to find course material.

SLIDE 11

This can save you significant amount of time in responding to messages from students who can't find something. Of course, your pages won't look like this, because you'll be using headings and subheadings.

SLIDE 12

DO:
- Put items in the same place
- Use consistent names
- Be concise
- Ask for feedback!

DON'T:
- Underline text for emphasis
- Change the link color

Do put course elements that repeat in the same place on every course page. If you refer frequently to a particular document or course element, always use the same name. For example: "The Policies and Procedures" document or the "Course Handbook."

To tell you the truth, the computer screen isn't really the most ideal tool for reading. So the more concise and to the point you can be with your information and instructions, the more likely students will be to read it. Chunk your text into smaller sections and use subheadings to divide it up.

Ask for feedback! Colleagues and graduate students can look at your course site with a fresh pair of eyes. Ask them to navigate to a particular page and watch how they get there. Use a survey to ask your students specific questions about the course site. If you find students are asking a lot of questions about something, ask for suggestions about how it could be improved. They'll be happy to help you, especially if you implement the improvements quickly!

In the "Don't" category, remember that underlined text generally indicates a link. So avoid underlining text for emphasis, use italics or bold instead. Blue is the established color for link text and it's best not to change that.

You'll notice that in Canvas, it can be difficult to distinguish the blue color of a link from the black color, although this varies from monitor to monitor. And, by default, links are NOT underlined. This can actually be changed in settings.
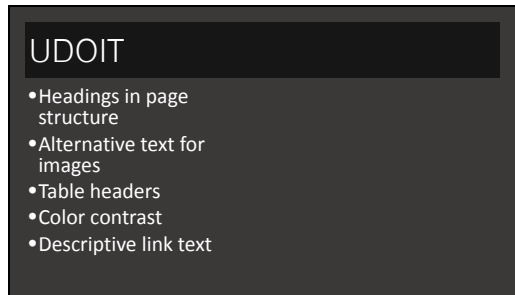
SLIDE 13
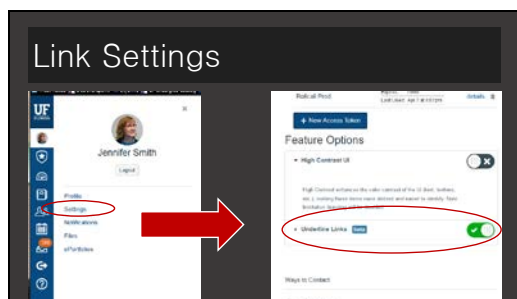
At the beginning of the term, suggest to your students that they adjust their settings so that links are underlined for them. To do this, they need to go into their settings and turn on "underline links." It's at the bottom of the settings page. Then they need to click the "Update Settings" button.

While they are adjusting their settings, suggest that they set their notification preferences so that they receive your announcements and emails right away. It's a good idea to make all of

these settings a 0 points assignment so that it shows up in the Canvas syllabus tool with a deadline.
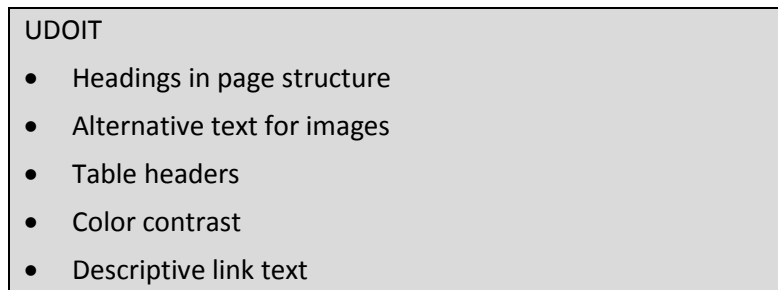
SLIDE 14

UDOIT
- Headings in page structure
- Alternative text for images
- Table headers
- Color contrast
- Descriptive link text

You may have noticed a new tool called UDOIT within your navigation options. This is an accessibility checker for Canvas that was created by the University of Central Florida. It will check your Canvas course site for the most common accessibility issues which include: headings, alt text, table headers, color contrast and link text.

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UDOIT

- Headings in page structure

- Alternative text for images

- Table headers

- Color contrast

- Descriptive link text

UDOIT has some limitations. It can't check the closed captions for any videos that aren't on YouTube—which includes Mediasite. And it generally flags YouTube videos. The Captions on YouTube generally don't meet accessibility standards.

 It can't effectively evaluate whether you're using text color for emphasis or as a heading, so it flags all of them. Also, it can't tell if you're using bold or italics for emphasis so it flags those as well. And since it can't tell if you're using headings properly, it will flag those.

And it won't scan .pdfs and word docs.

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In fact, it's probably a good idea to just uncheck the "files" option from the content list.

I just want to point out that I know a fair amount about web accessibility, and the majority of this Good Life Demo course site DOES meet accessibility standards, and yet (click) UDOIT has found 64 errors and made 231 suggestions.

So don't stress if your report tells you that you have a lot of errors. You can actually go through them fairly quickly.

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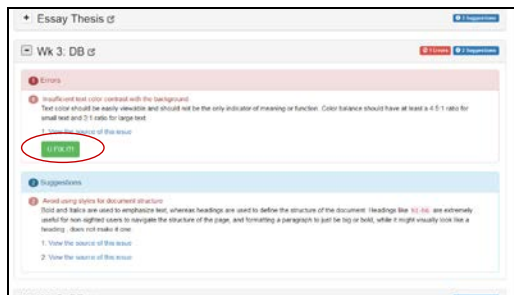
The green U FIX IT button can show you the issue and help you fix it if you like. I find that the UDOIT tool is particularly helpful with things that I just plain forgot to do such as adding the Alt Text to images.

SLIDE 18

Resource:UFIT:

UFIT Training: Accessible Online Environments

Just-in-time guides on UF e-Learning FAQs

e-Learning Support

The UDOIT tool is not a magic wand, but it can provide you with some useful guidance. For more in-depth, step-by-step information on accessibility, I encourage you to visit the UFIT Training website to self-register for the *Accessible Online Environments* training. This is online and within Canvas, so you can just review the sections you need.

Also, for a quick guide how-to-fix the errors that UDOIT finds, visit the e-Learning FAQ page.

Finally, if you need help with using the UDOIT tool, contact the e-Learning Support team.

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Thus far, we've been talking about course material that you, as the instructor can control and edit. Now I'll mention a couple of things that you may not be able to control directly. One of these is Closed Captioning for your videos.

If you use a script when you record your video, you can provide that to the students. This will meet many accessibility requirements, although if there are important visuals that go along with the text, a simple transcript won't be sufficient. Providing a transcript has the added benefit of being available in case students have trouble getting the video to play.

SLIDE 20

Closed Captioning
- Proactive Captioning with the Accessibility Fee
- Accommodation requests through DRC
- YouTube CC doesn't meet standards
- Accessibility.ufl.edu

In the best of all possible worlds, we would caption every video created or used here at the University of Florida. Unfortunately, this can be an expensive process, depending upon how many videos are in your course.

There is some money for pro-active captioning that has been collected for courses that are on-book and are 80% or more online. Otherwise, the student will need request an accommodation through the Disability Resource Center. If you receive such a request, follow up on it immediately so the delay for the student is as short as possible.

Be aware that YouTube captioning generally doesn't meet accessibility standards. But we can make a copy of the video and caption it ourselves for this purpose. Again, this takes time.

Visit accessibility.ufl.edu for more details on the captioning process.

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Publisher Tools

- Must meet accessibility standards

- Required by law and UF Policy

- Select text?

- Keyboard only?

- VPAT

- Voluntary Product Assessment Template

- Ask about accommodation

One last thing. Both the law and UF policy require that all course material must meet accessibility standards. This includes publisher content and tools.

You might ask, "How can I tell if my publisher tool is accessible?" All of the things that I've mentioned in these two presentations apply. Can you select the text? Can you use the tool with only the keyboard?

Ask your publisher rep to provide you with the VPAT—the Voluntary Product Assessment Template. That document will outline all of the accessibility criteria and explain how the tool meets them. If you see that a resource you plan to require for your course does not meet any of the criteria, ask your rep how the company will provide accommodation. If the company provides no accommodation, you'll need to consider how you will address student needs in your course.

This may seem like a lot of trouble, but it's much better to consider your options when you select your course material and tools than to scramble during the first week of class to create accessible materials for a student who needs them.

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Resource: DRC
- Dso.ufl.edu
- Accessibility.ufl.edu

Remember that the Disability Resource Center is your partner in helping to provide all of our UF students with a quality learning experience. By keeping accessibility in mind, you'll save yourself the trouble of going back and trying to retrofit your materials. You can find details and contact information on the dso.ufl.edu website as well as accessibility.ufl.edu.

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Thank you

Thank you!

SLIDE 24

Image Source
- Unsplash. *Man with laptop and dog*. Digital image. *Pixabay*. N.p., 29 Mar. 2015. Web. 8 Dec. 2016.