

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

FACULTY CENTER FOR LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Quick Accessibility Tips

What is Accessibility and why do we care?

Accessibility means equal access. The ability of all persons, regardless of special needs or disabilities, to access, use, and benefit from everything within their environment.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requires that all institutions that use federal funds, such as financial aid, are required to comply with these standards to make web content accessible.

Recently in the news, MIT and Harvard were sued by the Association for the Blind for not providing captions for videos. Accessibility is the law. Nobody wants to be sued for not providing captions or transcripts nor for making materials inaccessible to students.

This document provides some general ideas for how you can begin to address these issues, but certainly does not provide the comprehensive list of all the things that one can do. We have provided a list of resources at the end of this document so you can explore more on this topic.

Videos

Videos must be captioned or have a transcript provided for students who are hearing impaired. If you've created a movie showing your PowerPoint slides in Echo360 or some other software, consider embedding the source PowerPoint file along with the video or the lecture notes. If you are not using content you create yourself, consider finding videos on YouTube, PBS, TedTalks or other sources that may already have captions or transcripts.

There are two ways to comply with Section 508 for accessible videos:

- Transcripts
- Captions

What are transcripts?

Bottom line – transcripts are simply the text spoken in a video in written form. If you don't script your videos before you record, or if you are using videos from someone who does not have a transcript or captions enabled, consider using student workers to type word for word the audio from the video along with the descriptions of viewable content into a Microsoft Word document and embedding it in the course along with the video.

What is Closed Captioning and how do I caption?

Closed Captioning is the superimposition of text over a video. Most people are aware of it because they have used the CC button on a TV remote to show subtitles. However, if you are creating your own videos, you have to provide the captions and then sync them with the video. In YouTube, you will often see a little CC icon in the bottom of the video player. This is for closed captioning and will allow you to upload a text file to sync with the spoken words in the video. You must create the caption file.



For some helpful hints on creating closed captioning on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJGiS83eQLk>

There are two types of captions:

- **Open captions** – words that appear automatically when you hit play on your video (cannot turn them off). These are typically what you see on videos with Lyrics on YouTube for example.
- **Closed captions** – Words don't appear unless you turn them on. You can toggle them on and off. These are what you typically see on your TV or YouTube.

Many people pay a third party to create captions – typically an expensive service. Unfortunately, our Ensemble account does not currently have the paid captioning service enabled. You might check with your department head about budgets for captioning services or consider seeking a grant. In the meantime, there are some easy do-it-yourself tools out there.

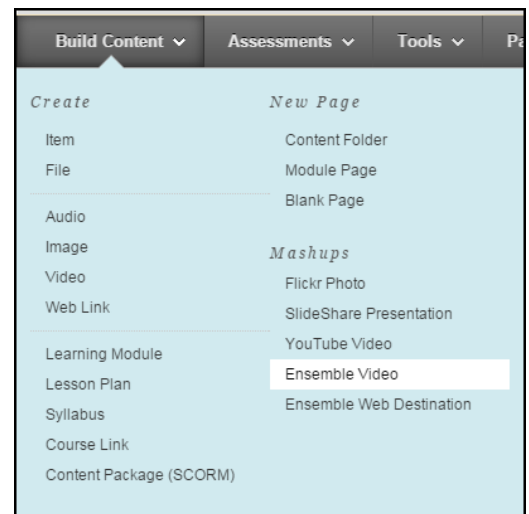
Excerpted from: <http://www.digitalgov.gov/2014/06/30/508-accessible-videos-how-to-caption-videos/>

Some recommended tools:

- Camtasia
- YouTube
- PowerPoints with Narration
- Speech to Text for Microsoft (Word and other programs on a PC)
- Voice to Text Recognition (like Dragon Speak) – there are some free ones on the internet

How to embed Ensemble videos with written transcripts in Blackboard

1. Upload your video(s) to Ensemble.
2. Go to any content area in your course shell.
3. Click the Build Content > Ensemble Video button.
4. Search for your video by clicking **Go** > Find the video you want, then click **Select**. This will insert your video into your content area.
5. Click the down arrow next to the title of the embedded video and click **Edit**.
6. In the *Edit Item* window, scroll to section 2. Attachments and click **Browse My Computer**, find the Word document transcript you created for your video, attach it, then click **Submit**.



Audio

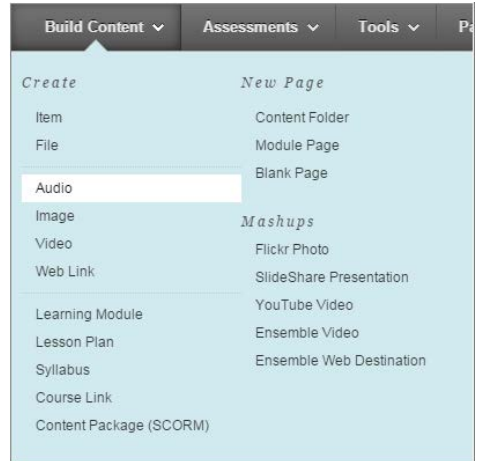
Transcripts are also required for embedded audio in Blackboard for students who are hearing impaired. Again, consider writing a script before recording which you can use as a transcript in Microsoft Word or if you use something already recorded, perhaps use a student worker to transcribe it in Word for you.

Some recommended tools:

- Speech to Text for Microsoft (Word and other programs on a PC)
- Voice to Text Recognition (like Dragon Speak) – there are some free ones on the internet

How to embed audio with transcriptions in Blackboard

1. Create the audio file and transcript.
2. Go to any content area in your course shell.
3. Click the **Build Content** > **Audio** button.
4. Name the file, click the **Browse My Computer** button to find your file and attach it.
5. In section 2. Audio Options, click the **Browse** button next to *Include Transcript*, find your Word document transcript and attach it. When done, click **Submit**.

A screenshot of the Blackboard audio creation form. The form is titled '1. Select Audio File' and '2. Audio Options'. It includes a 'Name' field with a red asterisk indicating it is required, a 'Color of Name' dropdown set to 'Black', and two buttons: 'Browse My Computer' and 'Browse Course'. The '2. Audio Options' section has radio buttons for 'Autostart', 'Loop', and 'Add alignment to content', all set to 'No'. There is a 'Browse' button next to 'Include Transcript' with a tooltip that says 'Browse to select a file containing a transcript for people who cannot hear the audio.' Red arrows point to the 'Name' field, the 'Browse My Computer' button, and the 'Browse' button.

Images

Section 508 requires the use of alternative text, alt text or descriptions for images embedded in Blackboard for those with vision impairment. The vision-impaired cannot see the images, graphs, charts and often tables you embed in Blackboard, so if you use one, be sure to describe it so the student understands what you are trying to show.

Alternative text should present the content and function of the image. If the image wasn't there, what text would you use in its place. If the image has no function, leave the alt text field blank.

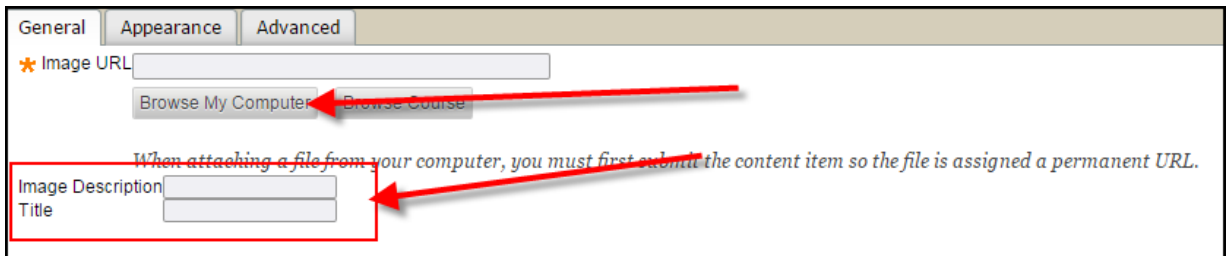
Where is this alt text? How do I add it in Blackboard?

There are two places to add images in Blackboard.

1. The first is in any text editor window, click the image icon on the toolbar.

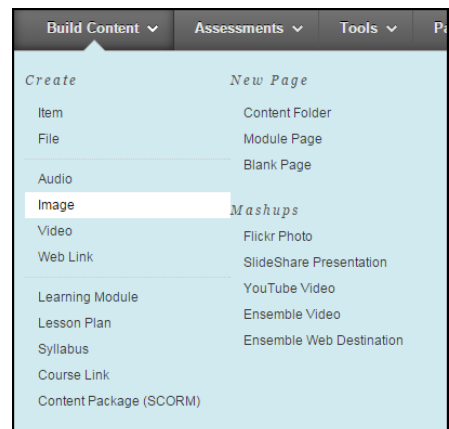


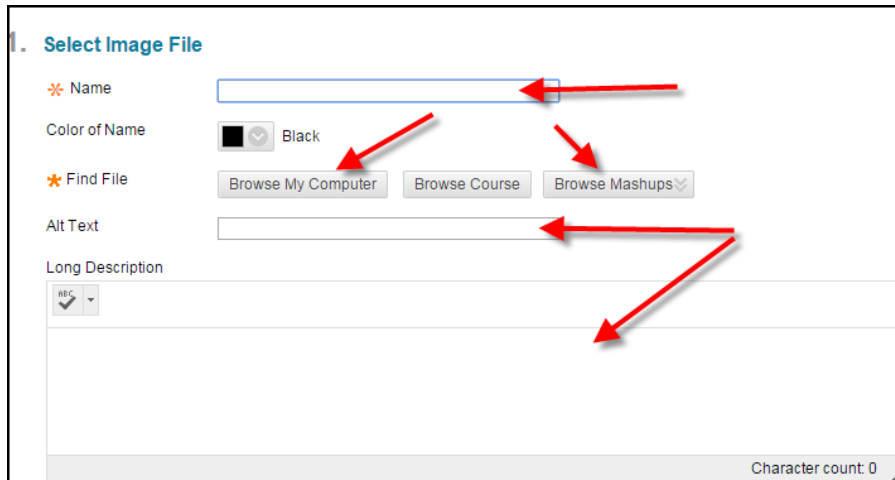
In the Insert/Edit Image window, **Browse My Computer** for your file and attach it, then enter a description of the image and title in the **Image Description** and **Title** blocks.



This enters an image into your regular text edit box where you would put your text as normal for whatever you like (Lectures, Information, Tests, Blogs, Wikis, Journals, Discussions). You can describe the image in more detail if you like in the text editor window.

2. The second way to insert images into Blackboard, is to go into any content area in your course shell.
 - a. Click the Build Content > Image button.
 - b. Enter the name of the image
 - c. Browse your computer or Mashups (such as Flickr) for an image and attach it.
 - d. Fill in the **Alt Text** field.
 - e. Give a **Long Description** if possible.





Text and Colors

For students who are vision impaired, reading text in Blackboard can be a challenge and text must be easily viewable and/or readable by a text-to-speech reader like Jaws. Some important tips:

1. **Ensure the text is easy to read on the background.** When in doubt, use the default black on a white background.

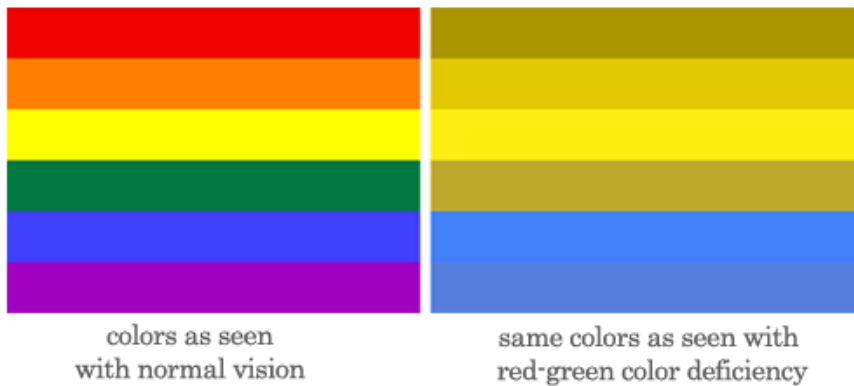
Hard to read

Easy to read

2. **Minimal use of color** – screen readers cannot differentiate different colors for the vision impaired. Use **bold**, **CAPS** or *Italics* instead to emphasize text. Use it minimally. You do not want your entire content to be bolded, capped or italicized.

You really **should not** be using **lots of colors** to **emphasize text**. This can be **jarring to most readers**, and **inaccessible to those using screen readers**. **Use of highlighters in Blackboard is also not very low-vision friendly.**

3. **Color should not be the sole means of communicating information** – Additionally, students who are blind will not be able to distinguish between colors and those with color blindness see colors in different ways. Do not indicate or call out things solely by color, for example, having a section in red, because a color blind person may not see red. Here's an example of how color-blind people may see images:



From: <http://understandinggraphics.com/design/designing-for-color-blindness/>

It is estimated that 8% of men are color blind or color deficient. Colorblindness is not typically a problem except in cases where colors convey important information. In these cases you should change the graphic or provide an alternate means of providing this information, perhaps by explanation in text.

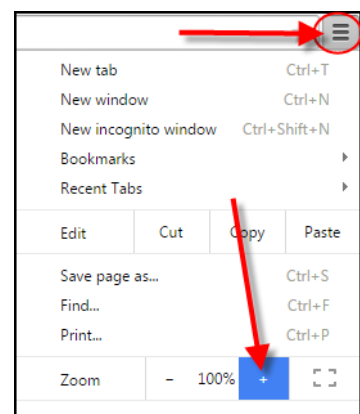
Excerpted from: <http://webaim.org/articles/visual/colorblind> and <http://www.color-blindness.com/2006/04/28/colorblind-population/>

Color also must not be the sole method of indicating a link within non-linked text. For best practices, reserve underlines for hyperlinks. Students will often click underlined text thinking it's a hyperlink because that has become the norm for web browsing.

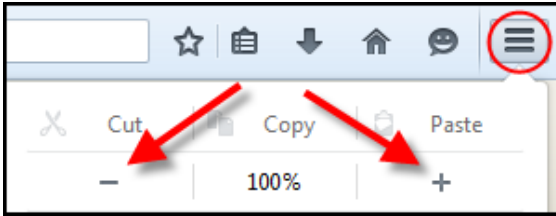
Excerpted from: https://www.webaccessibility.com/best_practices.php?best_practice_id=369

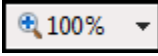
4. **Use a standard font-size** – Do not increase the size of your font to make emphasis unless you use headers. Screen readers can pick out headers. Allow the students to drive their own text-size. Did you know that you can zoom in and out in your browser to increase or decrease font size?

In Chrome: go to the settings icon upper right in the address bar of the browser, click it and go down to zoom and click + or – to enlarge or minimize text.



In Firefox: it is also in the upper right corner of the address bar:



In Internet Explorer: the Zoom is in the lower right corner of the browser window in the “Status Bar” 

Students may have different size screens than you, so some text may appear bigger or smaller on their screens.

This may show up rather small on your screen.

But may show up rather large on theirs.

5. **Blinking, moving or flashing text and graphics** – Please use minimally if at all. Flashing graphics and text can trigger epileptic seizures in individuals with photosensitive epilepsy and migraines.

Excerpted from:

https://www.webaccessibility.com/best_practices.php?best_practice_id=353

Resources:

Americans with Disabilities Act <http://www.ada.gov/>

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Fact Sheet)

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/factsheets/504.pdf>

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act

<https://www.section508.gov/content/learn/laws-and-policies>

508 Accessible Videos – Why (and How) to Make Them

<http://www.digitalgov.gov/2014/06/30/508-accessible-videos-why-and-how-to-make-them/>

508 Accessible Videos – How to Caption Videos

<http://www.digitalgov.gov/2014/06/30/508-accessible-videos-how-to-caption-videos/>

NCDAE – Captioning YouTube Videos - <http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/#accessibility3>

NCDAE – Creating Accessible Electronic Content

<http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/electronic-content.php>

Creating Subtitles and Closed Captions on Your YouTube Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJGiS83eQLk>

Speech to Text for Microsoft Word: Microsoft Office Software

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5abApZ9_mLI

How to automatically transcribe your video (audio to text)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3_goHuBqDg

Why online ed accessibility is not a “when we get to it” issue

<http://www.ecampusnews.com/top-news/online-education-accessibility-299/2/>

Blackboard Quick Start Guides – Universal Design and Accessibility

http://fits.uchc.edu/blackboard/bb_files/Bb_Quick%20Start%20Guide_Universal_Design.pdf

Web Accessibility Best Practices

https://www.webaccessibility.com/best_practices.php