

Sierra College Accessibility Guide

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) of PDFs

What: PDFs that are scanned images of textbooks, worksheets, etc. need OCR.

Why: Screen readers cannot read the text in scanned PDFs, making them inaccessible.

Tips:

- Watch this video on [how to OCR PDFs in Canvas](#).

Headings

What: Use built-in heading styles (heading 1, heading 2, etc.) instead of manually formatting bold text or different sizes.

Why: Tagged headings allow assistive technology users to easily navigate Canvas Pages and documents.

Tips:

- Avoid skipping heading levels. (e.g., Heading 1 for the page title, Heading 2 for main sections, Heading 3 for subsections).
- Apply headings to content longer than half a page to help with navigation. Font color and size can be altered after heading styles are applied.
- Use paragraph spacing tools instead of using the 'Enter' key for extra line breaks between paragraphs.
- Choose TrueType fonts: Using standard fonts, such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman ensures text remains readable when enlarged.

Lists

What: Use the list button within text editors (Word Documents and Canvas Pages) instead of manually creating lists.

Why: Tagged lists allow assistive technology users to easily navigate Canvas Pages and documents.

Tips:

- Use ordered lists to indicate a process or order of importance.
- Use unordered (bulleted) lists for content with no sequence or progression.

- Lists can be nested to indicate subsections as necessary.
- Avoid using spaces and tabs to create unformatted lists.

Hyperlinks

What: Use descriptive link text to clearly identify a link's destination.

Why: Assistive technology users often rely on link text to understand the purpose and destination of a link.

Tips:

- Avoid vague phrases such as “click here,” “link,” “more”, or “read more.”
- Descriptive link text may look like: Visit the [Sierra College](#) website for more information.
- Avoid underlining text for emphasis because underlined text is associated with hyperlinks. Use **bold** for emphasis instead.

Color and Contrast

What: Use high contrast color combinations for text and background.

Why: Students with vision impairments may not be able to distinguish certain colors or see low-contrast text. Good contrast improves readability.

Tips:

- Avoid using color alone to convey meaning (e.g., blue=due on Monday).
- Examples of poor contrast include: **red on green**, **blue on blue** and **pastel on white**.

Tables

What: Reserve tables for presenting data, not for page layouts.

Why: Assistive technology users navigate tables by row and column headers. Without proper structure, the information may be confusing to students.

Tips:

- Tag row and column headers.
- Use the “header row” option in Microsoft Word to tag table headers.
- Use tables only when necessary. Avoid using tables to format pages.
- Avoid split cells, merged cells, and nested tables (tables within tables).
- Watch this video on [how to create an accessible Canvas table](#).

Images

What: All images should include alternative text that describes the context and purpose of the image. Images used for decoration should be marked as decorative.

Why: Students with visual impairments may use screen readers and rely on alternative text to understand the purpose of an image. Alt text is also displayed when non-text content does not load properly.

Tips:

- Alt text should be brief and describe the purpose and context of the image, not just the appearance.
- If an image is a button or link, describe the purpose and/or action.
- Avoid using “image of...” or “photo of...” screen readers will announce that it is an image.

Alt text examples:



Options for appropriate alt text depend on context:

- A. Photo of Male Chimp
- B. Chimpanzee yawning
- C. Male chimpanzee baring canine teeth.

All of these can be correct depending on how the image is being utilized.

Videos and Audio

What: All videos should have accurate, synchronized captions. Videos should be embedded within Canvas pages to reduce the need for students to leave the course.

Why: Accurate captions are essential for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and also benefit students in noisy or quiet environments, and those who prefer to read than listen to videos.

Tips:

- Avoid using YouTube videos with auto-generated captions. They have not been reviewed or edited for accuracy. Watch this video on [how to identify accurate captioning on YouTube videos](#).
- Avoid using burned-in captions. Students should have the option to turn captions on or off.
- For audio-only content. Use a transcript.
- For listening and comprehension assignments in language learning courses, instructors may need to work with SAS to provide an alternative, equivalent assignment for a student who cannot access the original audio-based content.

Online/Hybrid Course Accessibility Checklist

- ☐ All PDFs are OCR'd
- ☐ Headings are tagged and properly nested
- ☐ Lists are formatted using the list button
- ☐ Hyperlink text is meaningful and in context
- ☐ Underlining is not used for emphasis
- ☐ Color contrast is sufficient in text and graphics
- ☐ Color alone is not used to convey meaning
- ☐ Tables have properly tagged column/row headers
- ☐ Images have appropriate alt text
- ☐ Images not related to page content are designated as decorative
- ☐ Videos have accurate and synchronized captions
- ☐ Videos are embedded within Canvas pages