Instructional Accessibility Tips

Overview	According to the 2018-2019 Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Annual Report, 3,051 students registered with the office at the University of Michigan, equating to approximately 6% of the total student population on campus. Accessibility is about removing barriers to course materials for students with disabilities that prevent them from successfully navigating and completing a course. We must be all-encompassing when we think of accessibility as disabilities are not always seen and include chronic mental health and health conditions. This resource guide, adapted from ITS, the Accessibility Team, and the Accessibility in Canvas & Accessible Course Materials webinar, details tips for creating accommodations for students with disabilities as well as general practices to consider when designing your course. The strategies outlined in this resource guide are in line with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. If you are unfamiliar with UDL, this resource guide (link to UDL resource guide) is a helpful starting point in learning more about it.
Goals	1) To provide instructors with concrete ways to make their classroom, Canvas, and course materials more inclusive and accessible. 2) To encourage instructors to constantly consider how they can improve accessibility in their classrooms.
Implementation	This resource focuses on ways to improve accessibility and inclusivity in your classroom. This list is not exhaustive, and it is always a good practice to consult with the SSD office for support with accommodations. In any discipline, instructors can take deliberate steps to ensure that all students feel welcomed and valued as part of the learning community. The following practices can help to create an intentionally inclusive environment in any class.
Challenges	While many of the methods listed in this resource guide do not require heavy lifting in terms of implementation, it may not be feasible to implement all the strategies offered in this resource guide at the same time. Rather, it is a good practice to take on the +1 strategy of choosing one new method to try out and building your capacity to take on more from that point. It is also recommended that instructors reach out to colleagues who may have exemplar models of inclusive individual or group assignments. Remember, inclusive teaching is relevant in all disciplines and that it is an intentional practice that requires time and effort.

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What is Accessibility?	Accessibility and inclusivity are similar concepts in the classroom. While the term inclusivity is often used more broadly for ensuring that any student from an underrepresented background has full access to learning opportunities, accessibility, in practice, is ensuring that students with disabilities have full access to learning opportunities in the classroom. This process starts when you first design the course and requires that you take the time to think about how all students will participate and learn in your classroom. Accessibility is about preparation and thoughtful consideration for the different abilities and learning styles that will be present in the classroom. In designing an accessible classroom, you are answering the question, "how do I ensure all students have full and equal access?"
Think About Accessibility	You can make a difference just by reading these tips and being aware of accessibility best practices!
Do Your Best to Face the Classroom when Speaking	This will be particularly helpful to students who use lipreading as a primary or supplemental access solution.
Use 12 pt. or Larger Fonts in Documents, Websites, etc.	Sans serif typefaces such as Arial or Calibri are generally considered more legible when larger font sizes are used.
Consider the Contrast of Text and Background	Lighthouse International has a useful discussion of color contrast for people with low vision or colorblindness. However, be aware that black text on a bright white background may be problematic for some people with learning disabilities. Black text on a lightly tinted background or white text on a dark background will likely work better.
Lean Towards Simplicity	Think about how well the technology you are using matches your goals. Will a (probably inaccessible) Prezi be more effective than a PowerPoint? This also applies to language. Shorter sentences and words with fewer syllables, used wherever possible, are more readable. This affects students with learning disabilities, students whose first language is not English, etc.
Consider Preparing In-Class Materials that can be Distributed in Advance	Providing your materials such as PowerPoint slides in advance can help students prepare for classroom participation. This may particularly help students with disabilities, those for whom English is a second language, or even shy students feel more ready to participate.

Ensure that Your Class Website and Digital Materials are Accessible	Phil Deaton (pdeaton@umich.edu), the university's Digital Information Accessibility Coordinator, can provide University of Michigan faculty with the support and advice you need to make your site accessible.
Be Aware that Enterprise Applications may have Accessibility Problems	Even with U-M's best efforts to ensure accessibility of the products we use for instruction, some students may encounter barriers. To address this, there are informational websites listing known problems and workarounds. The list below will be updated periodically. If this information still does not address a student's barriers, you should allow the use of an alternative application. In other words, you should not assign work where the only option to complete the work involves the use of these tools. Google Apps: • Google Apps Accessibility Information Canvas: • Canvas Accessibility and Recommendations and Resources
Use Language in Your Syllabus that Encourages Students who Need Accommodations to Pursue Them	Consider putting this information on the first page of the syllabus rather than near the end—it helps convey that you mean it, that it's not an afterthought or included only to meet a legal requirement. Here is a sample: **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities** If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way we teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000 or ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.
Use Alternative Text for Images	If images are integral to your content, describe them using **alternative text**. Alt-text is a function that allows you to put in a description of the content, context, and function of an image that screen readers can use to describe the images to visually impaired learners. Caption and transcribe all videos, so blind and deaf users can use your media. Read more about making media accessible.

Use Captions for Videos	"A recent study found that 51.9% of students often used closed captions to aid with comprehension (Linder, 2016), and 71% of students with hearing difficulties used captions at least some of the time for better retain information." (Linder, 2016, Inman & Myers, 2018). The following links provide different ways to caption videos: • **Through SSD (Services for Students with Disabilities)** – Caption Request Form • **In MiVideo** – This tutorial shows how to Order/Edit Captions in My Media on Canvas. • **Through ITS** – With MiVideos on Canvas • **YouTube** – See YouTube – Adding Caption Files or Transcripts from SSD.
Use Headings to Provide Structure	Provide structure to the document with **headings**. All users will benefit from visual and logical structure, but it is crucial for assistive tech. Read more about giving structure to documents.
Create Accessible Links	Create your links with concise, **unique, and descriptive** text. Users of assistive technology rely on this to navigate documents. Read more about how to make good links. ==Good links== ==Bad Links== •Read this Arts History article ✓ Read this article on Arts History ✗ •More information on Digital Accessibility ✓ Digital Accessibility. more ✗ •Learn about Color Contrast ✓ Color Contrast. Click here ✗ •College of Literature, Science, and the Arts ✓ https://lsa.umich.edu/ ✗
Use Different Accessibility Checkers	The following accessibility checkers can help ensure your course content meets accessibility standards: • Word Accessibility Checker • Canvas Accessibility Checker • WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker • Universal Design Online Content Inspection Tool, or UDOIT

If an Accommodation a Student Requests Concerns You, Build a Bridge Instead of a Wall as You Try to Address Your Concerns	Commonly requested accommodations include extra time for tests and other assignments and a quiet space for test-taking. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) can answer questions about student accommodations without violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)/privacy issues. They may also contact you about student requests. Students who are enrolled in LS&A classes and registered with SSD may request the use of the Testing Accommodation Center (TAC) for taking exams. Other departments will need to develop and publicize their own strategies for assisting students who have SSD authorization for testing accommodations such as additional time or quiet space. For more information, or for questions about duplicating TAC services for other departments, contact lsa.testcenter@umich.edu, or see the Testing Accommodation Center site. Occasionally, you may encounter students who would like to be accommodated but who are not currently registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities office. Invite the student to have a confidential conversation with you in person, via phone, via Hangouts, or another mutually agreeable method. Beyond encouraging them to work with SSD, ask them to describe in detail what kind of accommodations they seek and let them know that you can work with both SSD and your Dean's office to try to work out appropriate accommodations. You are the expert on your course and your subject matter. Typically, others are the experts on providing accommodations and you should avail yourself of their expertise—you are not in this alone.