Accessibility Basics

Accessibility is ensuring that all provided materials are accessible to all students, regardless of ability. When we are making content for our students and community, it is important to be sure that we remember some basic components of accessibility. The basics listed below are great ways to consider and improve the accessibility of your course materials.

Document & Text Accessibility

1. Documents need structure and organization to help convey information. To ensure this organization is more than visual, use the styles Bar in MS Office products to class text as Titles, Headers, Subtitles, etc.

2. Choosing the appropriate font for a document is a key component of accessibility. Instead of using complex, very fancy, or highly stylized text consider using a Sans serif font. These fonts black decorative additions, and are therefore easier to process.

3. Paired with font choice, is font color. When trying to highlight important text be sure to use text coding like bold, italic, or strikethrough, as screen readers will actually read them.

4. Avoid images of text like pictures of quotes, billboards, etc. These images will not be read by screen readers, and will in fact be ready as a blank image.

Image Accessibility

1. Alternative text, or Alt text, is a contextual explanation of the value of an image that does not exceed 150 characters. All images used in instruction, regardless of their intent or placement require alternative text.

   a. 150 characters = one Tweet. Can you sum your image up in a tweet?

2. Consider the four key tenets of alt-text:

   a. Define Image Value: *Do you need this image?*

   b. Evaluate Context & Purpose: *Is the image informative or decorative?*

   c. Describe Objectively: *What is being presented or evaluated?*

   d. Be Succinct: *Can you fit the description in two sentences?*

3. Image inaccessibility starts when images are provided without any supporting text. When using images make sure that they are supported with text. Be sure to explain the image in its value in the preceding text.

4. If the images are too complex, it will need a long description. Long description is exactly that, a long form detailed description of the image and its value. It expands on the value of the image in a way that alt-text cannot.

   a. To learn more about long description and Alt-text contact the CTLD Accessibility Group.

PowerPoints and Presentations

1. Slides:

    a. Presentations rely on a mix of visual and text content. Take both text and image accessibility into consideration when building presentations.

        i. Images need alternative text; Text needs text coding

    b. Similarly, to documents slides need proper read structure. When designing a PowerPoint or a presentation, be sure to use the built-in slide templates as their structure is set.

        i. If you want to change the reading structure, use the Arrange Tab

    c. Avoid flashing and intrusive animations. If an animation flash is more than three times per second it is a seizure risk.

2. Presenting

    a. When presenting slides, in person or online, be sure to talk about everything on the slide.

        i. People with dyslexia and other visual processing disorders may have difficulty following a fast-paced presentation.

Video/Audio Accessibility

3. Video:

    a. Video content needs to be accessible for people who are unable to hear the content. Its accessibility can be achieved with the use of closed captioning.

    b. Closed-captioning captures not only the speech, but also ambient sound and musical score.

        i. Closed captions ensure that the content of the film or video is delivered without reliance on sound.

        ii. Closed captions must as accurate as possible. There is no excuse for inaccurate captions.

    c. Providing a transcript for a video is also important, so people who do not have access to the video player can review the content.

4. Audio:

    a. Audio files like podcasts and recordings also need accessibility adjustments, primarily the inclusion of transcripts.

        i. Transcripts allow people to read the content rather than have to listen to it. This is helpful for people with audio processing disorders, loss of hearing, and those unable to download the files.