

Designing Courses for Accessibility

Visit [TILT - Accessibility](http://www.csufresno.edu/tilt/resources/accessibility.shtml) (<http://www.csufresno.edu/tilt/resources/accessibility.shtml>) site for more resources.

Good course design benefits all learners, not only those with disabilities. In order to make courses accessible for all, it is suggested that universal design principles are applied. Concentration should be placed on content rather than flashy graphics or audio. Below are some simple guidelines to meet the needs of various users.

Screen Layout

Maintain a simple, standard page layout. Buttons, links and logos should appear in the same place throughout the site and not move position from page to page.

Background

Keep backgrounds simple and make sure that there is adequate contrast between the background and the text.

Buttons

Make sure that buttons are large enough to be accessed by someone with limited fine motor skills using a standard mouse.

Graphics

Provide alternate text for each graphic and include descriptive captions for pictures.

Link Descriptions

Make links descriptive so that they are understood out of context. Label links to embedded documents - Assignment 1.doc (Word Format)

Audio

Be sure to provide captioning and transcription for video or sound clips.

Special Features

Since most screen readers read from left to right, information presented in tables may be confusing to blind users. For this reason, the designer should consider the use of alternative text to tables. Databases and forms may be difficult to access with a text-based browser and applets, and plug-ins do not use universal design features. The best solution is to provide text alternatives. If users cannot access information they should be directed to an email address for help.

Testing

It is important to test pages with a variety of Web browsers and if possible using different platforms. It can be extremely helpful to test pages using a validation program such as [WebXact](http://webxact.watchfire.com/) (<http://webxact.watchfire.com/>)

[CLiCk, SpeaK](http://clickspeak.clcworld.net/about.html) (http://clickspeak.clcworld.net/about.html) is an open source, freely available extension for the Firefox web browser. It features a mouse driven interface, and it reads web pages.

Many potential problems can be avoided if you deliver information in multiple modes. Consistency and simplicity are the keys to accessibility.

[Fangs for Firefox](http://www.standards-schmandards.com/2006/fangs-for-firefox-15/) (http://www.standards-schmandards.com/2006/fangs-for-firefox-15/)

[System Access to Go](http://www.satogo.com/) (http://www.satogo.com/) Free Screen Reader

Resources

[Stanford University Accessible Education Tutorials](http://www.stanford.edu/~skeegan/) (http://www.stanford.edu/~skeegan/)

[Acrobat Accessibility Training Resources](http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/training.html) (http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/training.html)

[Adobe Accessibility Resource Center](http://www.adobe.com/accessibility) (http://www.adobe.com/accessibility)

[CommonLook Section 508 for Adobe Acrobat](http://www.net-centric.com/products/cl_s508_adobe.aspx) (http://www.net-centric.com/products/cl_s508_adobe.aspx)

[Fact and Opinions about PDF Accessibility](http://www.alistapart.com/articles/pdf_accessibility) (http://www.alistapart.com/articles/pdf_accessibility)

[Use of PDFs in Accessible Documents](http://wcagsamurai.org/errata/pdf.html) (http://wcagsamurai.org/errata/pdf.html)

Some information adapted from the [Microsoft Accessibility Web site](http://www.microsoft.com/enable/).(http://www.microsoft.com/enable/)