Creating Accessible Canvas Sites

Creating accessible Canvas sites means paying attention to the different ways that students access and use materials and activities within a course site. An accessible site makes the site easier for students who have visual impairments, colorblindness, and for students who need greater visual clarity to improve reading comprehension:

Build the site using clear consistent organization:

- Module titles are accurate, descriptive, and clear: "Week 3" is fine, but "Week 3: Theories of Population Growth" is better
- Item titles are accurate, descriptive, and clear: "Assignment 2: Reflection Paper on the Malthusian Debate" is better than just "Assignment 2"
- Modules use a consistent organizational structure: chronological organization is easier for those that use screen readers or alternative input tools
- Remove unused or unnecessary navigation items from student view

When using the html editor (also known as "Rich Content Editor") anywhere in Canvas, use accessibility formatting guidelines.

- Use the "headings" format for headings and the "paragraph" format for main text
- When making lists, use the bullet button or the numbered list button to format
- If using equations, use the equation editor instead of editors if at all possible
- Links should be descriptive and visually obvious
- Colors should be high contrast and not the only navigation cue
- Images should be large enough to be visible and high contrast
- Use the alt-text tool when inserting images to add a description

Files can have their own accessible formats for screen readers, and care should be taken to use the most accessible format available for any file type.

- Create "OCR" versions of PDF files, which work with screen readers
- Microsoft Word contains a tool to check for accessibility

Video would ideally have both captions and transcripts available. Audio files should have transcripts. Microsoft Stream and Vidgrid have tools to create subtitles and transcripts.

Use an accessibility checker on your site. Canvas has one, and there are other free online tools you can use.

Visit the Faculty Development Community Canvas Site:

Learn more about the Canvas html editor:

Learn more about creating a screen-readable pdf:

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