

Diverse Students, Equal Access

Universal Design

Everyone learns in different ways. Universal Design for Learning means applying flexible goals, instructional and assessment strategies that apply to different learning styles.



Visual-Verbal
prefers text



Visual-Nonverbal
prefers graphics



Auditory
prefers listening



Tactile-Kinesthetic
prefers activities

Multimedia

Audio, video, and interactive demonstrations are helpful for students with learning disabilities, who may learn better by listening or watching. For students with vision or hearing problems, you need to provide transcripts or captions.



"I don't have any particular disability, but as an ESL student I really appreciate the transcripts and captions that accompany the audio components. I used to have to replay the audio pieces a couple of times to make sure I had not missed anything, which was a bit frustrating at times."

- Pamela, Education student

What is web accessibility?

Web accessibility means making sure that anyone, using any kind of browser, can access any page on your website.

It means providing alternatives and making adjustments for people who might have a disability that affects their ability to use the Web.

Why is it important?

Students with disabilities are placed at a disadvantage academically if they don't have access to the same materials as other students. It's our responsibility to ensure that they have equivalent access.

As it happens, the changes you make to your site for accessibility reasons can actually improve the experience for everyone.

Who is affected?



Blind / low vision problems



Physical/motor disabilities



Cognitive & learning disabilities



Hearing impairment

How do I make my website accessible?

Making your site accessible involves changes to the HTML code that makes up your site, and thinking carefully about layout and structure. Most of the changes you need to make in your site are quite easy! Here are some examples.

Navigation

Keep it short, clear, and consistent on every page.

Signposts & breadcrumbs

Highlight the location of the current page in the navigation.

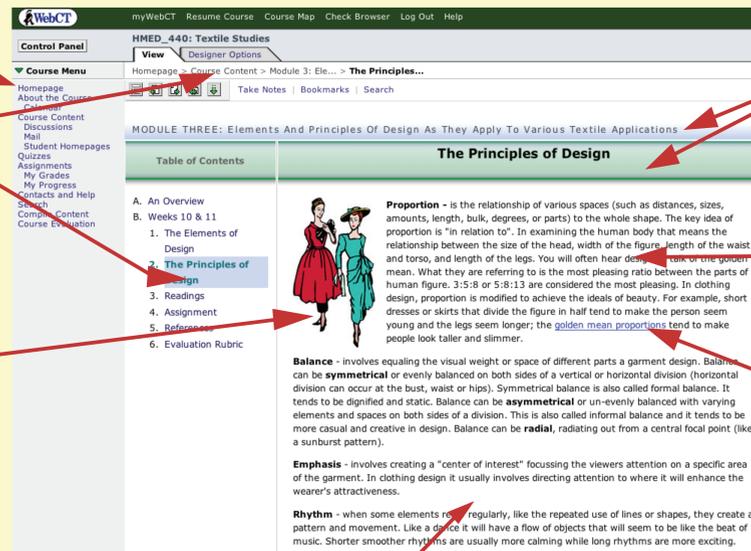
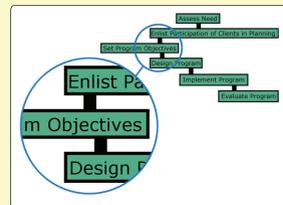
Images

Set ALT text for all images:

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If an image is very complicated or has small text, use LONGDESC to describe the image or make a large version of the image that people can "zoom in" on.



Headers

Use <h1>, <h2>... tags for headers.

Fonts

High-contrast, sans-serif fonts - defined in CSS as relative, not absolute sizes. Avoid putting lots of text in an image, as users can't resize it.

Links

Use clear, unambiguous text for links. Avoid using "click here".

Writing

"Chunks" of text in short paragraphs are easier to read. Readers tend to skim pages looking for key points, and save long documents to print and read offline. Highlight key points in bold.



What can I do?

Web developers

Learn about the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and use correct XHTML and CSS code to build your site. This will make it easier for you to maintain your site as well as make it more accessible for everyone.

Instructors & Course Designers

Consider offering your course materials in multiple formats. You could include audio readings of certain key passages of text, which will help ESL students as well as auditory learners.



Also consider giving students a choice of assignment formats - in addition to written assignments and exams, you might suggest posters, class presentations, or videos.

About Us

In 2005 we began a BCcampus-funded project on web accessibility in online courses, in which we adapted and modified several courses, gave workshops and wrote a manual on accessibility for instructors. A second BCcampus project expanded the scope of our work to include multimedia, audio and video accessibility.

You can learn more from our website at:

<http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/accessibility/>



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