

Accessibility in Blackboard

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1. General Considerations

Blackboard as a learning management platform includes many features that make it accessible, such as built-in headers in many of its tools allowing someone using a screen reader to more quickly navigate through a Blackboard page.

Blackboard can become inaccessible when instructors add inaccessible materials, so it's important to make accessible Word, PowerPoint, PDF, and excel files for your course and choose textbooks that offer an electronic version whenever possible. It is also important to use descriptive names for your files so that screen readers can easily identify them.

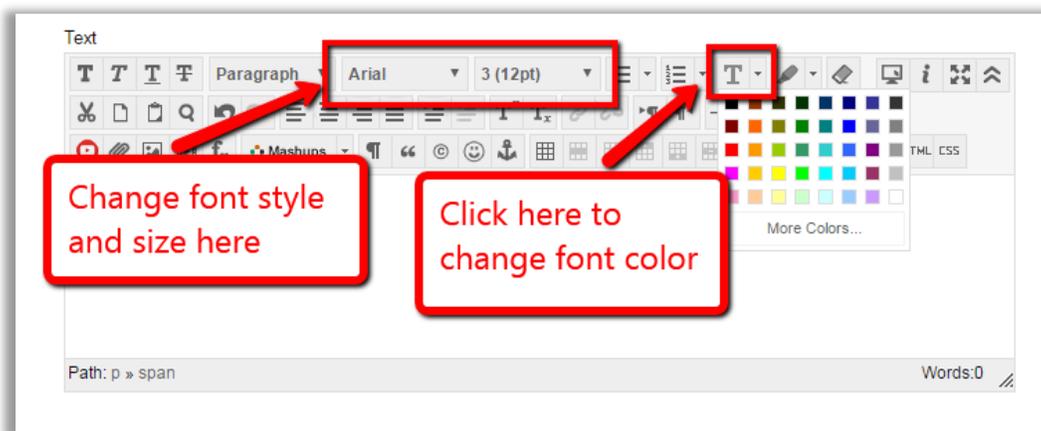
You should also add an accessibility statement to your syllabus and course homepage. This should include information about content, disability accommodations, and links to vendor accessibility information for the software and textbooks used in your course.

2. Consistency and Simplicity

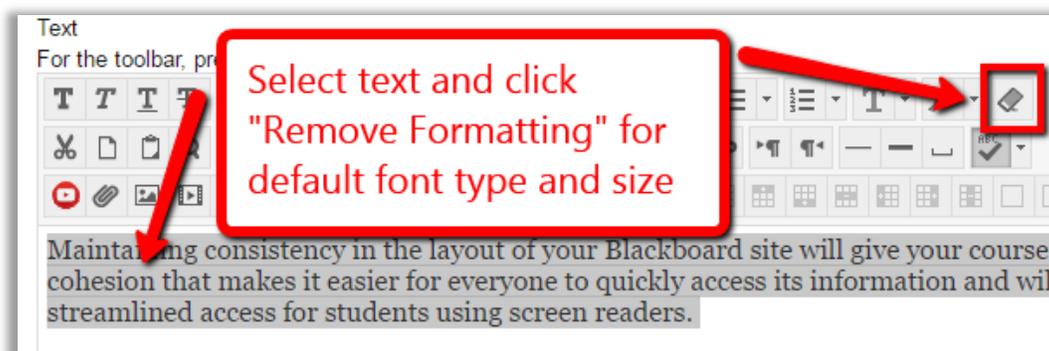
Maintaining consistency in the layout of your Blackboard site will give your course a sense of cohesion that makes it easier for everyone to quickly access its information and will facilitate streamlined access for students using screen readers. Strive to keep your course layout simple and consistent in terms of formatting, font type and size, and content type. You should also try to keep the screen uncluttered by reducing scrolling as much as possible; make more pages rather than long pages filled with small type and jammed with images. Also, structure the content in each module or weekly folder consistently. See [this blog post](#) for more details and examples for this principle.

3. Font Type and Size

Use a clear, clean font in at least 12 pt. You can change the font style, size, and color in the formatting toolbar of any content editor in Blackboard. Change the color by clicking on the large T icon.



Note: when marking text in the text editor and clicking the “Remove Formatting” button, the text will revert to Blackboard’s default: Arial, Size 3 (12 pt) font. We recommend using the default text font and size throughout your course site.

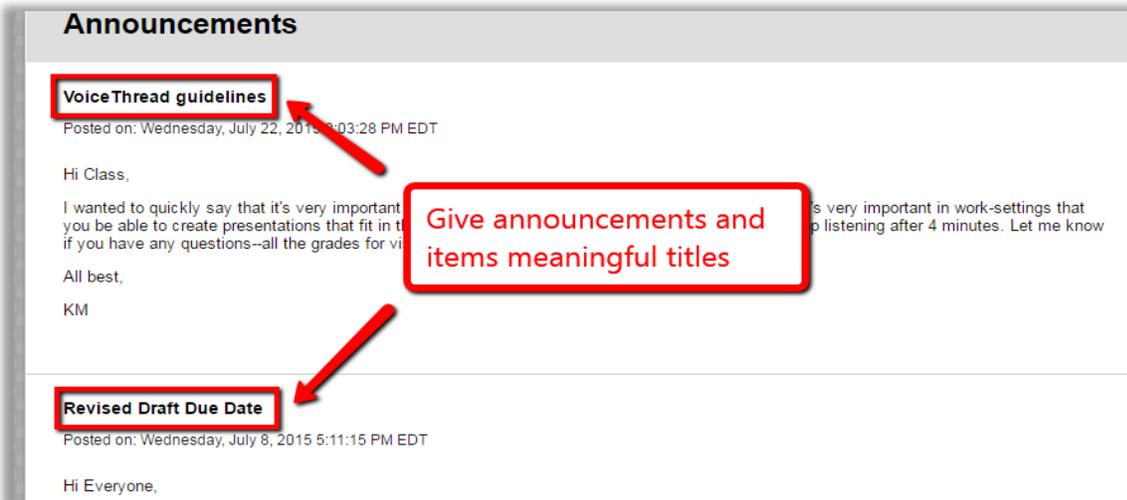


Some things to keep in mind when using color in your Blackboard course:

- Maintain strong contrast between the color of the text and the background.
- Avoid red and green font, since people with color blindness cannot distinguish them.
- Do not use color as the only way that information is communicated.
- Limit the number of colors used.

4. Built in Headers

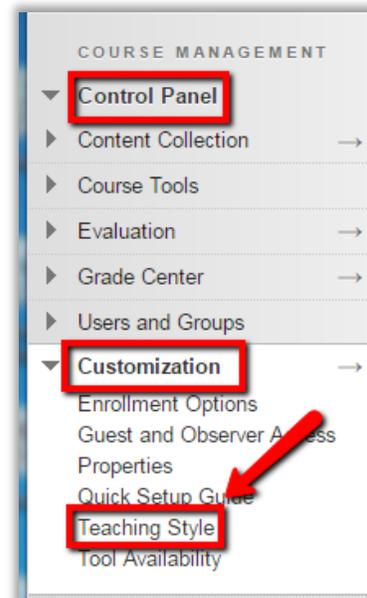
The built in headers in tools such as items, announcements, and discussion boards allow a student using a screen reader to skip between titles and easily navigate the page. To facilitate this, give elements meaningful names that allow students using a screen reader to know what the content is so they can decide whether or not they want to read further or skip down to the next heading for now. So you might, for instance, want to give more meaningful titles to your announcement than simply “Announcement,” or the date/ week.



5. Course Menu

In order to make sure everyone can read your course menu, be sure to maintain strong contrast between the background and the menu items when designing your course menu. Avoid red and green, as people with color blindness may have trouble distinguishing them. Also, use text instead of buttons in your menu to ensure that screen reader users can access the menu.

To change your menu style from buttons to text, go to the Control Panel of your course site, click on “Customization,” and then click on “Teaching Style.” Scroll down to “Select Menu Style” and tick the bubble next to “Text.”



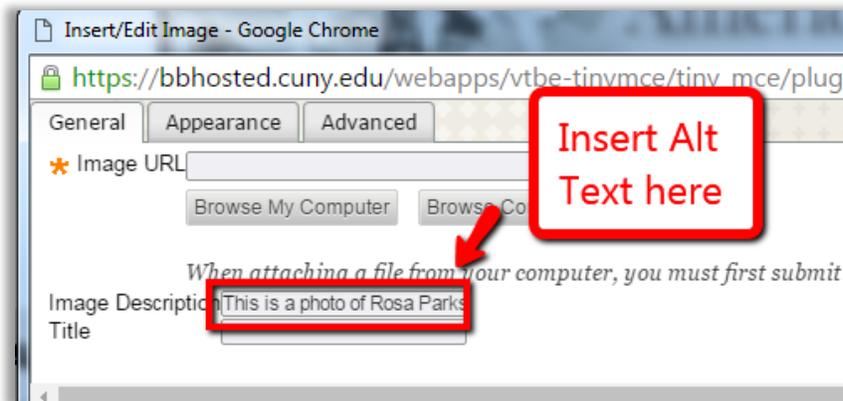
6. Images/ Charts/ Graphs

There are a few things to keep in mind when including visuals such as images, charts, or graphs in your Blackboard site:

- Do not overcrowd a page with too many visuals
- Be sure your readers can see your image, chart, or graph by formatting it in an appropriately large size, and by maintaining contrast with the background.
- Include Alt Text for all visuals

Alternative text (Alt Text) for images is important to include for anyone accessing your document using a screen reader. That said, you do not need to add Alt Text for purely decorative images but only for those that include important information. You can also include a text-only alternative page with descriptions of the imagery and data.

To add Alt Text, click on the image and then click on the insert image icon. Under “Image Description,” you can insert details describing the visual. Be sure to explain what are the most important elements of the image, graph, or chart. You do not need to enter in a title.

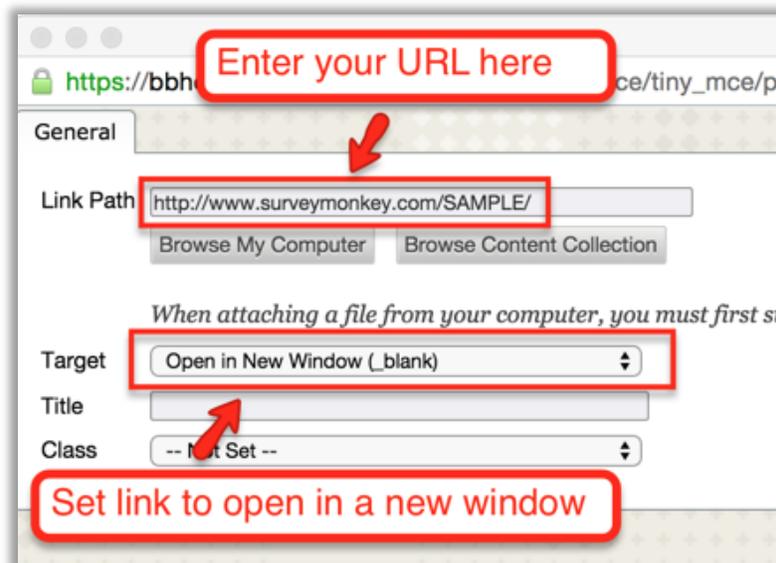


7. Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks allow you to link to a website from within your course. The text that you use to create a hyperlink should provide your readers with a clear description of where they will go once they click on the link. Meaningful titles for your hyperlinks will also ensure that screen reader users can more easily understand them.

Because screen readers will read every letter, avoid using the entire web address as your hyperlink text (i.e. do not say: fill out this user survey online here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/SAMPLE/>). Instead, include text that describes the website to which you are linking (i.e. please fill out the [online user survey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/SAMPLE/)).

To add a clickable hyperlink to text in your course, highlight the text with your mouse and click on the “Hyperlink” icon in the toolbar. In the pop-up window, enter (or cut & paste) the link’s web address into the “Address” field. Then, next to “Target,” set the link to open in a new window. Click “Insert” to save.



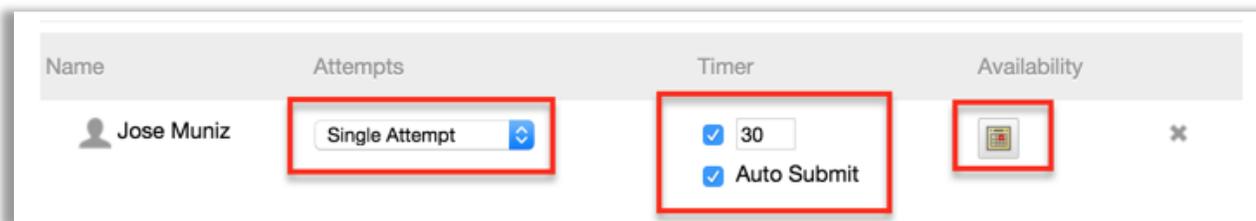
8. Tests and Quizzes

You can give a particular student or a group of students extra time on a quiz by adding *Test Availability Exceptions* for tests in Blackboard.

To change test options, navigate to the test in your course site, click on the downward facing arrow next to its title, then click on “Edit the Test Options.” On the next screen, scroll down to “Test Availability Options” and click on “Add User or Group.”



In the pop up window that appears, tick the circle next to the users or groups that you would like to set test availability exceptions for and click “Submit.” Back on the Test Options page, you can now set exceptions for attempts, timer, and availability.



9. Accessible Content

Only add accessible documents and media to your course site. Include captions or transcripts for audio and video content. Please see guides on how to create accessible Word, PDF, PowerPoint, and Excel documents. Also, be sure to only include accessible publisher-provider content.