Campus Tips for Accessibility

- When you are using pictures to present important information and you are sharing that electronically, e.g., flyers or charts and graphs in PowerPoint slides, include alternate text. Only pictures that have pertinent informational value need to include a text alternative. Please take time to view a short video on the process of adding alternate text presented by Jimmy Williams and Bill Burgess from MTSU’s Faculty Instructional Technology Center.

- When creating and/or using videos consider audio description (an explanation of audio description is attached). If you would like an example of audio description and its importance, watch this trailer for the movie Frozen without audio description and then watch the same trailer with audio description (the clips are about a minute and a half each).

- The vast majority of videos MTSU creates and/or uses must include closed or open captions (the only exceptions would be a video with no words or lyrics included, a performance by an orchestra for example). Captions can be created on your own or you can contact MTSU’s Center for Educational Media (CEM) to use a contracted vendor, Cielo24 (there is a cost for using this service). If it is a 3rd party video, search for a captioned version, contact the creator of the video to inquire if a captioned version exists or can be created, or contact CEM about working with Cielo24. The vendor can create a dynamic transcript that is on par with captioning and does not infringe on copyright.

- Do not forget to include a transcript when providing information through audio only, a podcast for instance. A transcript can be self-generated or a vendor can be used. The university does not have an official vendor for this service; however, the same vendor the university uses for video captioning, Cielo24, can also provide transcripts — contact the Center for Educational Media for more information on working with Cielo24.

  Transcripts can be helpful when captioning the videos you are creating since it gives you a script to use when establishing the captions in your videos. Transcripts can be a good fiscal choice. The cost for video captioning is greater than the cost for a transcript and having a script is the biggest hurdle to cross when attempting to caption one’s own videos. So, it may be worth considering a professional transcript and then “do it yourself” captions for a video that you were planning to send off for captioning.

  A transcript is NOT a reasonable alternative to captioning videos. If everyone who visits your website attends your event, or is in your class watching a video, asking someone to read a transcript is not an equivalent experience.
Campus Tips for Accessibility

- Encouraging a change in mindset and approach may be the most important part of our electronic accessibility initiative. When creating a class, planning an event, building a departmental website, etc., think of accessibility during the planning phase. An accommodation mentality, wait for an individual request and then react, has been the approach. While individual accommodations will always be valued, do not pass up opportunities to be forward thinking. We would not build and open a building that has stairs at every entrance without a ramp with the plan to install one if a request is ever made. However, that is the approach we have so often taken with electronic offerings. Include captions, audio descriptions, transcripts, etc. proactively not reactively. Let us avoid making people wait for access.

- Today’s electronic accessibility tip deals with forms on campus. Almost every department has their own set of forms that they ask students, faculty, staff, etc. to fill out. Let’s create forms that aren’t an automatic hurdle for people with disabilities. 

To do this:
Use website-based forms, such as Dynamic Forms. Paper forms do not work for people with vision or mobility impairments, and PDF forms are often just scans of paper forms. Web-based forms create an easy and accessible way to gather responses, while eliminating indecipherable handwriting.

The campus has a contract to use the Dynamic Forms tool. Put in an ITD work order to gain access and training. OmniUpdate, the authoring tool for departmental pages, also has a form creator built in.
Campus Tips for Accessibility

Sending out a beautiful email invitation is a great way to promote your event. However, we don’t want to exclude potential attendees by relying on images that don’t have proper descriptions.

Let’s add description of any invitation information contained in a flyer image to one or both of the following:

The body of the email (the safest option)
1. Simply add all invitation information contained in the image to the body of the email. (This also helps when your email image is blocked by anyone’s virus restrictions.)

Alternate text for the image
1. Go to the image and right click, then select Format Picture.
2. A side bar will open on the right side of the Word window.
3. Select the third icon from the left (Layout and Properties).
4. Type a full description of invitation information into the bottom Description field (If you typed the event info in the body of the email, you can just add some alt text that says, “See email text for event information”.)
5. There is no Save button. You can either close the side bar or click on a different picture to add alt text.

When you follow these steps, people that cannot see the invitation image will not miss out on the event.
Campus Tips for Accessibility

- When you create any kind of document, webpage, or email that includes a link, all of your viewers will benefit from you taking an extra few seconds to embed the link behind some descriptive text of the link’s destination.

To do this: (If you prefer a video walkthrough that shows why this is an accessibility concern: How to make meaningful links)

1. Type out text that describes the destination of the link.
2. Select the text, right click and choose Hyperlink… from the menu.

3. The Insert Hyperlink window will open.

4. Type or past the URL of the webpage in the Address field.
5. Then click the OK button to save the link.

Embedding links has one caveat. When you intend your document to be printed, you’ll want to include the URL (web address) in the document, but you should make sure that the URL doesn’t automatically become a link. If the URL turns blue and becomes underlined
Campus Tips for Accessibility

to show that it is a link, you can right click in MS Office products and choose Remove Hyperlink. That way, it won’t show up in the list of links, as shown in the video above.

➢ When you look through a long document or webpage, you probably scan for the section that interests you. Using assistive technology, people without vision can do the same, but this function hinges on you adding heading structure to your documents and web pages.

(If you prefer a video walk-through of this process, see Adding Headings in Word – YouTube.)

To add heading structure:
1. Place the cursor on the line of your paragraph topic.
2. Choose Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, etc., from the Paragraph or Styles menu.
3. Use correct heading nesting. Think of how a book is laid out…

Title (Heading 1)

Chapter 1 (Heading 2)

Section 1 of Chapter 1 (Heading 3)
Section 2 of Chapter 1 (Heading 3)
Section 3 of Chapter 1 (Heading 3)

Chapter 2 (Heading 2)

Section 1 of Chapter 2 (Heading 3)
Sub-section 1 of Section 1 (Heading 4)
Sub-section 2 of Section 1 (Heading 4)
Section 2 of Chapter 2 (Heading 3)

Chapter 3 (Heading 2)

➢ PDFs are a quick and easy way to share information widely. Teachers use them to scan sections of books or articles, and departments use PDFs to create documents that cannot be edited. We already looked at using PDFs for fillable forms, and hopefully you now know that web forms are made navigable and understandable to people with disabilities much more easily than PDFs.
Campus Tips for Accessibility

If you are creating documents to be exported to PDF, Microsoft Word is your friend. The key is to build in heading structure, descriptions for images, and any other appropriate accessibility technique while you’re creating the Word document. Newer versions of Word (2013 or greater) will be able to export those accessibility elements to a PDF through the Save As function in Word.

PDFs from scanned materials CAN be made fully accessible, and the best place to start that process is Adobe Acrobat Pro. If you don’t have this pre-installed on your MTSU computer, contact your departmental installer to get Acrobat Pro DC for free. Once in Acrobat Pro, the accessibility tools will get your PDF on the way to accessibility. For more information on the step-by-step process, look for the Access Success section of the September-October ITD Communicator.

Note: Acrobat Pro will do the best job that it can to recognize the text in your scans, so give it the best quality images of pages that you can (400 dpi or greater).

If PDF is the format that you need for your document, that is completely accessible. At the same time, let’s take these few extra steps to make sure they are accessible to anyone that might need to read them.

- Do not forget about accessibility when planning an event. Please encourage presenters to make sure any videos they use are captioned, any materials they may distribute have accessible electronic versions available, and that they describe any visuals used. Also, add language encouraging the use of accessible material to contracts when paying to bring in an outside speaker. Finally, include a statement on advertisements providing a contact where people with disabilities can call or email to request an accommodation like sign language interpreting. The contact should be someone from the department planning the event for the sake of being inclusive. Once a request is received, the contact can reach out to me with any questions about how to arrange a requested accommodation.

- Consider color: When putting together a PowerPoint presentation, creating web content, sending an email etc., please keep in mind good color contrast. Also, avoid using only color to convey information, emphasis, or functionality.

Bill Burgess from the Faculty Instructional Technology Center has put together a great website concerning electronic access, which includes further information about the importance of considering color. It is under PowerPoint Accessibility and Full List of Accessibility Issues and Fixes.
Campus Tips for Accessibility

- When informational material is presented in a way where the information on the page is divided into snippets or panels like an electronic newsletter or infographic, please set the reading order. If you are using an infographic consider saving it as a pdf, setting the reading order, and either using the new pdf or using the graphic and offering the pdf as an alternate option – you could use alternate text for the graphic but trying to convey multiple, distinct pieces of information in that way could prove confusing for the end user.

- Late last semester one of the tips was about considering accessibility when planning events. After that I was asked about guidance surrounding that topic, and I am happy to report that some guidance has been created and can be found on our ADA website.

- When creating and sharing Excel spreadsheets, there are ways to improve the accessibility of those documents. Microsoft gives a good rundown on what accessibility features to consider when using Excel.

- Many of the programs we use such as Adobe, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint have built in accessibility tools. Use them to get a starting point but please know that they will not catch everything, so manual editing is needed. A good rundown on how to access each program’s accessibility checker can be found on the Faculty Instructional Technology Center Site.

- Don’t forget about hardware and furniture. The computers we offer at our front desks so students and visitors can check in or use for other purposes need to have accessibility features such as a screen reader installed. The kiosks or tables we use for them need to be at appropriate heights as well. Height is something to also be considered for offerings such as brochure racks.

- When creating and using PowerPoint presentations, don’t forget about access. When creating the presentation, consider color contrast, alternate text for important pictures, and that any linked videos are captioned among other access areas that have been referenced in previous tips. This is especially important if you are going to distribute slides. When presenting, describe any essential visual materials like charts and graphs or highly visual video clips. That will allow anyone who has limited or no sight access and will probably help everyone better understand the materials.

- Let’s get MTSU students involved in creating accessible materials. Share the accessibility tips about captioning, audio description, alternate text, Word docs and pdfs, etc. with the students in your classes, student groups, and offices when applicable.
Campus Tips for Accessibility

- Don’t forget about employees. When creating materials that will only be shared with campus faculty/staff, accessibility still needs to be considered.

- Researching and purchasing the latest and greatest technologies and platforms for use by students, colleagues, and visitors is often an in-depth and rewarding process. As part of that research, seek assurance from vendors that their products are accessible and consider using that information when deciding which vendor to choose.

- Please know that in this initiative to increase the access of all university offerings, with a special emphasis on electronic ones, the university has resources in place to help you evaluate your contributions to the campus community. Bill Burgess in the Faculty Instruction Technology Center is a great person to contact and he has published a website with detailed tips. The Center for Educational Media has taken the lead on information regarding common video access concerns – captioning and audio description. The Procurement Office is actively engaged in requesting information from vendors about the accessibility of their products during the bidding process. Several members of the ITD staff actively evaluate website and online education concerns. The Library is systematically working to make the vast amounts of information it offers the campus and overall public accessible. The Disability & Access Center is working with students individually and on initiatives that will generally benefit students. There are approximately 300 faculty and staff who have gone through a training over the past year and many more who have in previous years. Last, and I hope not least, is the commitment to my position as someone to be a resource and cheerleader to all the wonderful people that make up this forward-thinking and inclusive community.