Access Tips

Week of September 7-14, 2017

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.

Week of September 14-21, 2017

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).

Week of September 21-28, 2017

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.

Week of September 28 – October 5, 2017

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.

**Week of October 5-12, 2017**

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.

**October 12-19, 2017**

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.
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.

November 2-9, 2017

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.

MTSU One Stop

MTSU One Stop is a great place to start when asking about anything campus-related.

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http://www.mtsu.edu/one-stop
4. Type or paste 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 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.

November 9-16, 2017

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.

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.