

# Making Blackboard Courses Accessible

## Quick Guide to making your course accessible in Blackboard

When creating a Blackboard course you should try incorporate accessibility within your design and also any outside resources like uploaded documents. Below are some suggestions for faculty that can help make a course more accessible for students within the Blackboard environment.

### Quick Guide Checklist

- Include alternative (alt) text for all non-textual items.
- Use descriptive names for file uploads.
- Consider your themes and backgrounds when designing your site and text formatting.
- Make sure audio and video files containing speech have a text equivalent or captions.
- All attached documents must also be accessible for students.
- Provide clear instructions for students and allow for extra time on assignments or tests if accommodation is requested.
- Use of headers when creating content within your course.
- Use self-describing links and be aware of using screen readers.

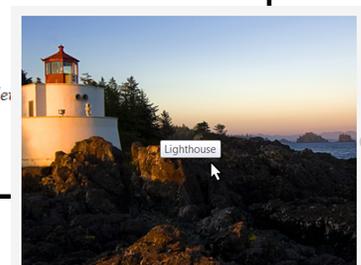
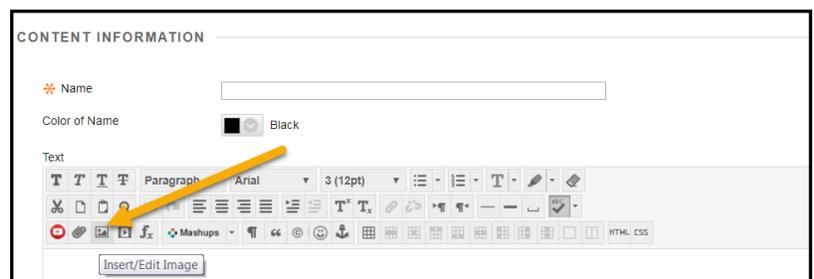
## Alternative (alt) text in Blackboard

Without alt text, screen readers will either skip over the image or describe a nonsensical line of text that is generated when the picture is inserted. The alt text is a description of the image. For help on generating alt text go to

<https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/>.

### To insert an image with alt text in Blackboard using the content text editor:

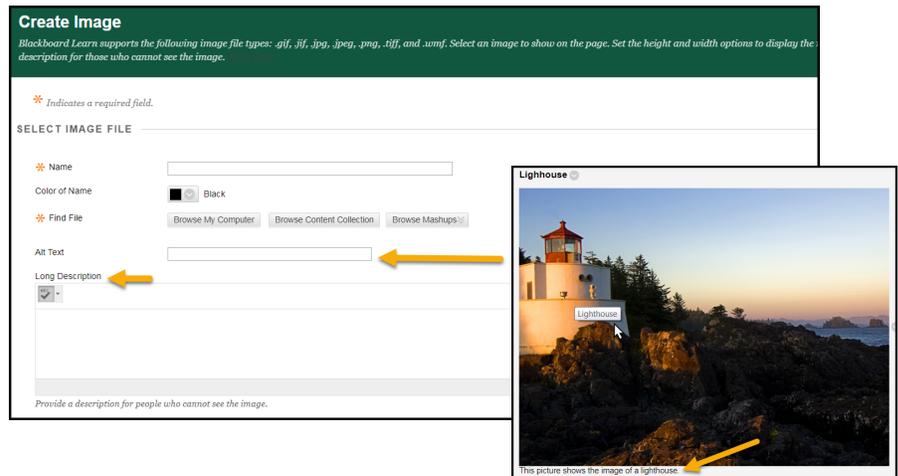
1. Go to **Build Content** and **Create Item**.
2. Select the **Insert/Edit Image** icon.
3. Under the General tab type in the **Image Description** and **Title**.
4. Alt text will appear when hovering over image.



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To insert an image in Blackboard using the image content:

1. Build Content/Image
2. Select Image from the listing of options.
3. Type in the **Alt Text** and provide a **Description**.
4. The alt text will appear when hovering over the image along with the description underneath the picture.



## Audio and Video Files

This can include, narrated PowerPoint presentations, videos through YouTube, Panopto or other video editors. It is best to provide a text equivalent with a transcript or through captioning. Both YouTube and Panopto have captioning capabilities. However, many are not ADA compliant and will need to be edited. It is best to follow some basic best practices when making sure your videos are ADA compliant.

### Best Practices for ADA Compliant Captions

- One to three lines of text appear onscreen all at once and stay there for three to seven seconds
- Timed to synchronize with audio
- Do not cover up graphics or other visual elements of the picture
- Require the use of upper and lowercase letters
- Use a font similar to Helvetica
- Have a good resolution
- Include no more than 32 characters per line

For directions on auto captions within Panopto, please visit the support website at <https://support.panopto.com/s/article/How-to-Manually-Caption-Your-Sessions-in-the-Editor>.

For directions on subtitles and captions in YouTube, please visit the support website at <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734796?hl=en#>

## Descriptive Names for Files

Using descriptive names for files uploaded to Blackboard allows screen readers to give students information about the document. For example, "Assignment #2 – Case study on Accessibility" rather than, "Assignment #2".

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## Themes and Backgrounds

Use high contrasting colors on your site to allow students with visual impairments to accurately interpret data. As a reference use the [WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker](#) to test colors.

For more resources use the quick reference provided by WebAIM at <https://webaim.org/resources/evalquickref/>

### To modify a theme or style to your Blackboard course

1. Go to the Control Panel
2. Select Customization.
3. Click on Teaching Style
4. Choose Text, Colors and Backgrounds for your course.

## Clear Instructions and Timed Test

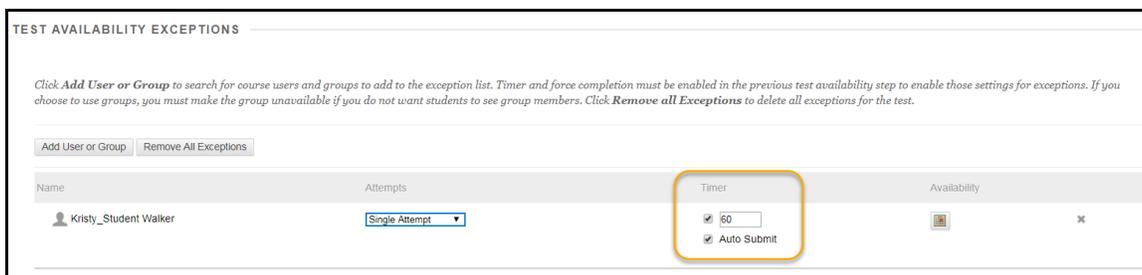
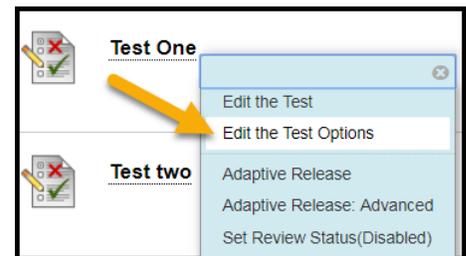
### Best Practices for providing clear instructions:

- Include approved disability accommodation statement on each syllabus, every semester.
- Create a timeline for course content and assignments. Make sure to include due dates. This will make it easier to generate accessible materials when needed.
- Seek out resources for making your course accessible.
- Provide clear expectations and easy to understand instructions for navigating through Blackboard.

For more resources use the quick reference provided by WebAIM at <https://webaim.org/resources/evalquickref/>

### Directions for providing extra time on test within Blackboard

1. Go to the Assessment that you have made available in Blackboard to all students.
2. Click on **Edit the Test Options**.
3. Locate **Test Availability Exceptions**.
4. **Add User or Group**.
5. Choose the exceptions needed and the Availability for the student.

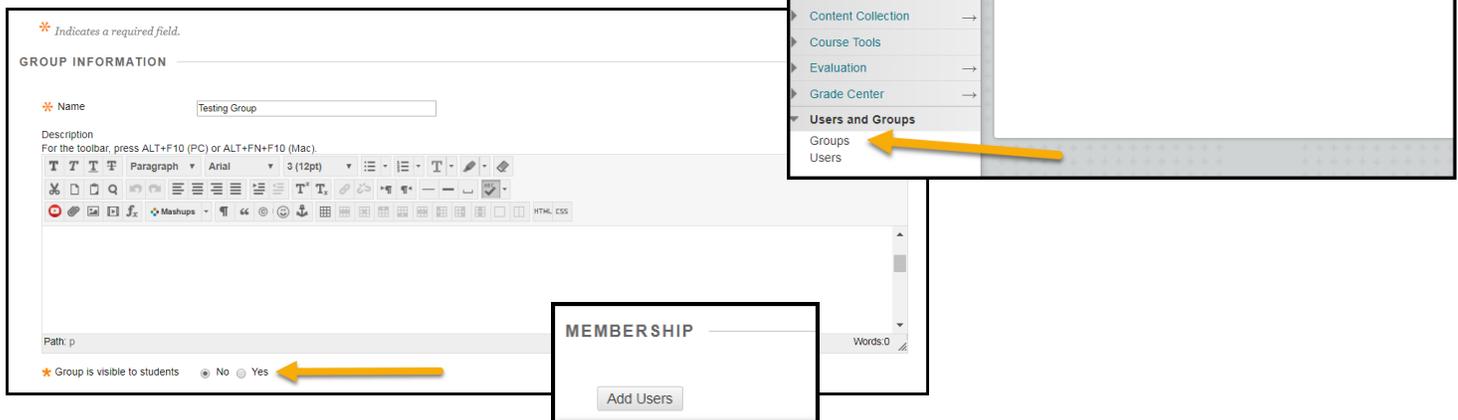


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When you have more than one student in your course you can create a group to choose for exceptions. When creating the group it is important to make sure the group is hidden to students so they can't see who is part of the group.

## Directions for Creating a Group for Testing Exceptions

1. Go to the **Control Panel**.
2. Locate **Users and Groups** and Select **Groups**.
3. Select **Manual Enroll**.
4. Name the Group to identify as a testing group.
5. Make group available to students **"No"**.
6. Add users to the group and submit.
7. You will then be able to add Groups in the Edit Testing Options when adding exceptions to tests.



The image contains two screenshots from the Blackboard system. The top screenshot shows the 'Groups' page in a course. A yellow box highlights the 'Create' dropdown menu, which is open to show options: 'Single Group', 'Self-Enroll', and 'Manual Enroll'. A yellow arrow points to the 'Manual Enroll' option. The bottom screenshot shows the 'GROUP INFORMATION' form. A yellow arrow points to the 'Name' field, which contains 'Testing Group'. Another yellow arrow points to the 'Group is visible to students' radio button, where 'No' is selected. A third yellow arrow points to the 'MEMBERSHIP' section, which has an 'Add Users' button.

## Attaching Files

Keep in mind, that documents created without accessibility in mind will be completely inaccessible by a screen reader. Screen readers will only pick up one or two words.

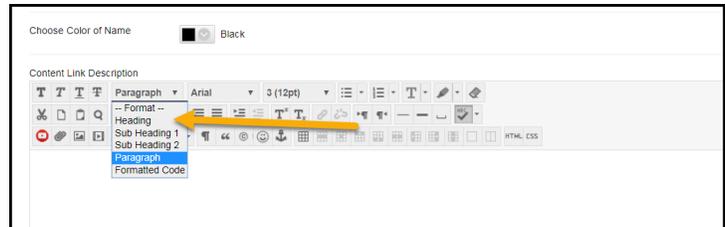
For more resources on using Microsoft Office products for accessibility please visit the NCDAE (National Center on Disability and Access to Education) at <http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/#mword>.

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## Headers

When using a screen reader “Headers” help to section out the content of the text. Students can skip to the sections without having to go through the entire document.

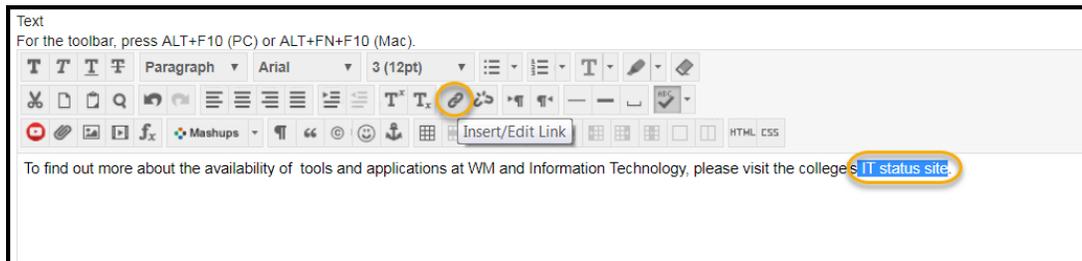
1. To create a Header in Blackboard highlight the text that you wish to change the text format in the text editor when creating an **Item**.
2. Select the **Format** in the drop-down menu.
3. Click on **Submit**.



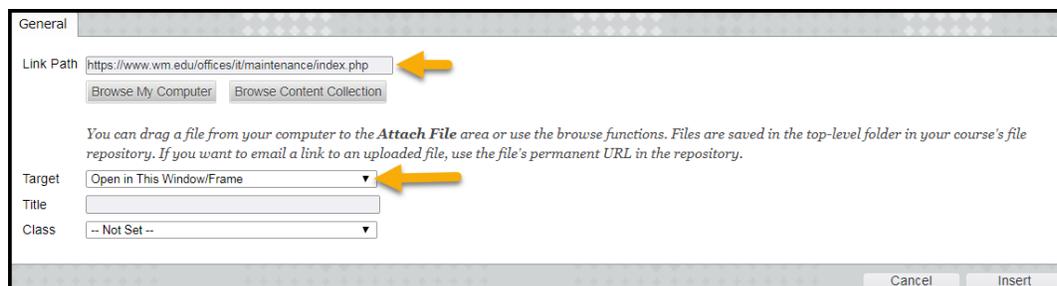
## Self-Describing Links

When building a content item and adding links in Blackboard, make sure to describe the website.

1. Go to Create an Item and in the text editor highlight the text to be hyperlinked.



2. Click on the Insert/Edit Link icon.
3. Choose how the link will open either in a New Window or within the Window Frame.



Note it is a good idea to let students know how links will open when navigating through the course. If choosing to open in a new window, students will be directed outside of Blackboard and will want to make sure that the browsers pop-up blocker is disabled. This takes the student outside Blackboard while still being able to navigate through the course. If it opens within the window frame, the student will have to navigate back into the Blackboard course.



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