How To Make an Accessible Moodle Course

What are the odds that you might have students in your classes who require your Moodle site to be accessible? Pretty high! The CDC reports that one in four adults in the U.S. has a disability. Given the likelihood that you will have students with disabilities in your courses at Dickinson (whether you know it or not), it's a good idea to build your course with accessibility in mind so that you don't have to change things later.

Furthermore, making videos, documents, and online content accessible generally makes your site better organized, more reader-friendly, and more easily navigable.

Here are a variety of ways that you can make your course content on Moodle appealing, inclusive, and accessible for all of your students.

Organization/Consistent Set-Up

A consistent set-up makes things easier for students to find (and also makes it easier for you to build). Pick a format (Weeks, Topics, or Categories for example) then use consistent, descriptive names.

Descriptive names such as "Week 1 - Speculative Fiction" are better than just "Week 1," because students can use the descriptive name to know which module to look at when they are trying to find a specific topic without needing to recall when it was presented.

Pro Tip - If you have a page, assignment or quiz that has similar information (quiz instructions for example), you can click on the kebab menu (3 dots) by the assignment name and choose Duplicate to make a copy that you can edit.
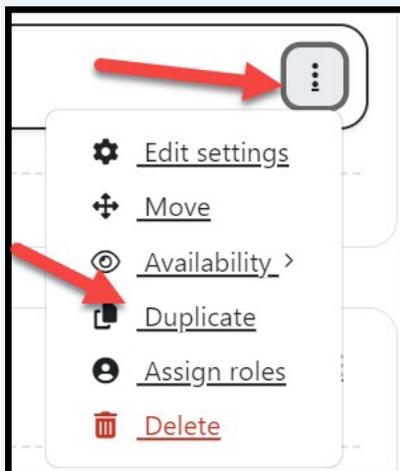
Fonts/Styles/Formatting

All of your pages should have headings defining the different sections. This is done for a couple of reasons:

- Heading help people who use screen readers to navigate the content
- Headings make it easier for everyone to read.

The headings aren't created by making the text bigger and bold, but rather by applying a Heading Style. To do this in Moodle, select the text that you want to format. A ribbon with pop up with H3 H4 H5 H6 as some of the choices. Pick the appropriate heading style based on the level of your text (H3 is biggest and most important).

Posting PPTS & Notes

Many students benefit from having the class notes or PowerPoints available. Just add them to the appropriate section of Moodle. If you have organized your course into Weeks or Topics, just add them to the relevant module. If you have organized by category, consider having one for PowerPoints and/or Class Notes.

To add a file to a module:

1. Click the "+Add an activity or resource" button in the module
2. Click the Resources tab
3. Click File
4. Type the name of the file, then upload it and click Save and Display

Captioning Videos

If you are using video in your course, make sure that it has captions. Captions are helpful for many different kinds of students, so don't wait until you have a hearing-impaired student to add captions. Here are tips from the National Deaf Center as to Why Captions Provide Equal Access to a variety of audiences beyond just those who have a hearing impairment, including visual learners, nonnative speakers, those with audio processing challenges, and others. Panopto will automatically caption your videos (here's a Guide to Using Panopto). You can also find a collection of captioning tips on ADS' captioning guidance page.

Compatibility with Screen Readers

Some students will need to have the text on your Moodle pages read aloud by their computers. Screen readers don't do well with long confusing URLs (for example: https://lms.dickinson.edu/course/modedit.php?update=1272493&return=1). It is best to use the "Insert Link" button to add a URL to a page or the URL Resource if you are adding a URL to a module.

How to Add a Screen Reader Friendly Link
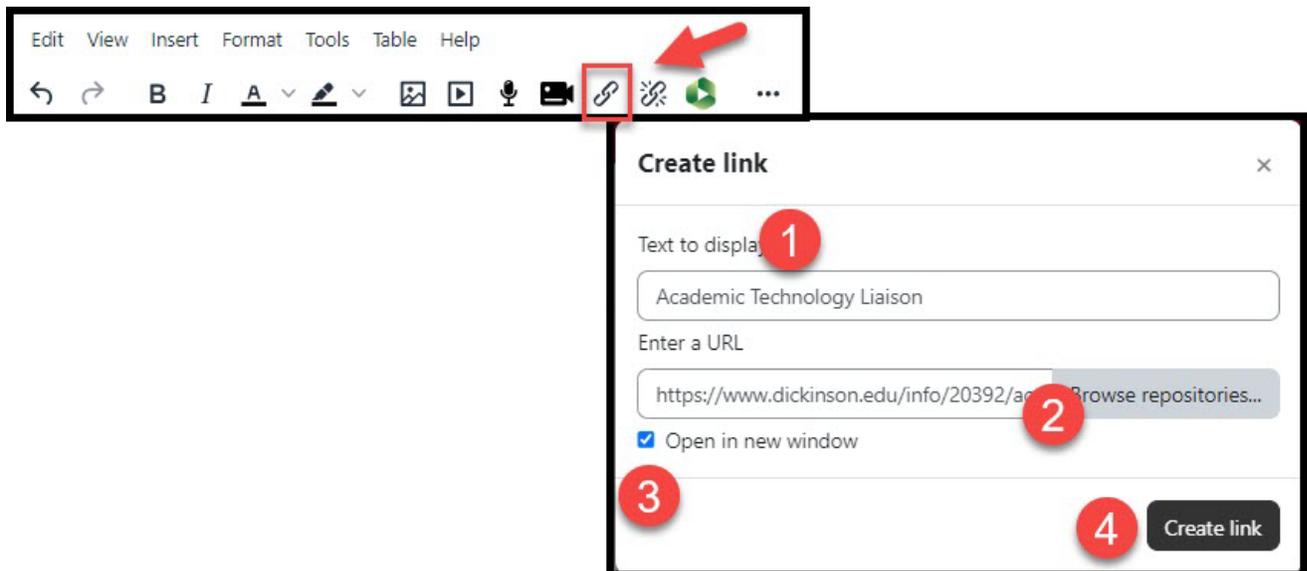
Click the "Link" button on the ribbon. When the dialog box comes up:

1. Type the name of the website that the link goes to
2. Paste the URL of the website
3. Check this Open in new window box if you want it to open in a new window
4. Click the "Create Link" button

Alt Text

If you add images, you should add Alt Text to make them "visible' to a screen reader. To add Alt text:

1. Click the "Insert Picture" button
2. Upload or drag and drop the image to the "Insert Image" dialog box
3. Once the image is uploaded, the "Image Details" dialog box will appear.
4. In the "How would you describe this image to someone who can't see it" box, type a description of the image (less than 125 characters)

Accessible PDFs

Those old scans of book pages may be jewels, but if they can't be read by a screen reader then they aren't accessible. You can use the "Read Aloud" tool in Adobe to test if the PDF is screen readable. If it's not, Access and Disability Services (ADS) has created this resource to ensure that you know [How to Make Accessible PDFs.](#)

You can either do so yourself, or if you're unable to (or would rather not), you can go to www.dickinson.edu/ADS-AT and upload your document to Sensus Access -- a conversion tool that will take an inaccessible text and convert it into one that can be read by a screen reader. In a short amount of time after submitting your document, voilá! You'll receive an email with your text converted to (for example) an accessible, screen-readable PDF.

Quizzes and Tests in Moodle

The quiz tool in Moodle lets you create self-grading tests that the students can take online. The ideal is to establish a multi-day window during which students can access the test. While you can set a time limit for these quizzes, allowing unlimited time can make the quiz accessible for everyone. If you wish to establish a time limit for taking the test once it has been started, you can give specific students extended time as follows:

1. Make sure that you are in Edit mode, then click on the quiz that you want to edit
2. Click the "More" drop down for the quiz and choose "Overrides"
3. Click the "Add user" override button
4. Click in the Search box to find the student to which you want to grant extended time
5. Set the dates and time limit and number of attempts permissible
6. Save or Save and enter another override

This ["How to Set Up Extended Time Exams in Moodle" video explains](#) one way to schedule extended time exams in Moodle without calling attention to students with disabilities who need this accommodation.

Guided Tour

Consider making a Moodle video tour and sharing it via "Announcements" with your students. This will help students understand how to navigate your course and ensure that they are able to find what they need to be successful. You can use [Panopto](#) to make a screen capture of your Moodle course.

Remember: You're not alone. You can find a number of resources on the ADS [Faculty Resources](#) and [Assistive Technology](#) pages. You can also email questions to ADSTechnology@dickinson.edu as well as AcademicTechnology@dickinson.edu.