

Tips for Accessible Materials in Online Course Administration

With the movement to online courses in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, some considerations for online accessible materials in Blackboard (or other LMS) are required. These include the types of documents that are being used, the way information may be linked, and how discussion threads are presented.

If providing online materials for reading, it is important to make sure your materials can be read in different browsers, other programs, and visually/audibly. This can affect PDFs that are older or photocopied, uncommon file formats (ex: LaTeX for math), or documents with many educationally relevant images. Before uploading your files to Blackboard please use our online accessibility tool, [SensusAccess](#), to turn your documents into optimized PDFs or Word Docs for your students' reading. If using emails or documents with many graphics, be sure to provide text descriptions of the information, as different student computers may have issues with viewing images. For more information on how to use SensusAccess, please see the CET website for our How to Use SensusAccess guidelines.

Using color to highlight important information is an effective way to ensure students notice the information. However, when doing so make sure that you also include text adjustments (Bold, Italicized, Underlined). Colors can be great, but they also can distract from the information being told. To minimize this, use text adjustments in conjunction with color if color/highlighting is necessary.

When linking content through Blackboard, please remember that it may be difficult to distinguish the link from regular text. It's important that links do not say "Click Here" as this does not always signify where the link goes, and students may end up missing these links if they are looking for website names or content specific links. If using links for online content, either provide the entire link (ex: <https://usc.edu>) or describe the content within the linked text ([USC Website](#)).

Discussion threads on Blackboard will be common for online class collaboration. When designing these discussion threads, tagging the discussion is important. This allows students to quickly navigate to the correct discussions and avoids issues with answering the appropriate responses. If replies appear hidden underneath the original discussion topic, it's important to explicitly communicate this to your students. It will mitigate questions about where to respond or what to respond to specifically. For information on how to adjust discussion thread tagging and format of presentation please see [Blackboard Help for Faculty: Discussion Board](#) website.

