

Creating Your Course

Creating an accessible course automatically means that you're creating an online, hybrid, or face-to-face course with the ease of use for students. We've added resources to this section that helps you create your syllabus, assignments, and other course materials.

General Design

Universal Design for Learning offers a strong lens to consider accessibility for course materials. When considering the design of your courses and your materials, these UDL principles offer a framework for accessibility. Several [resources](#) are available for more in-depth discussions of Universal Design. These principles give a big picture look at accessibility as you consider course designs.

- Equitable Use – the document is useable to students across the ability spectrum
- Flexible Use – the design of the document allows students with multiple preferences and abilities to access the information
- Simple and Intuitive – the organization of material is consistent and easy to understand regardless of the students' previous experience
- Perceptible Information – the document conveys information effectively
- Tolerance for Error – the use of the document is not disrupted by unintended actions
- Low Physical Effort – the materials can be used comfortably with minimal fatigue
- Size and Space for Approach and Use – access to the materials considers students standing or seated and students with a variety of methods of accessing digital materials

Although UDL can run the risk of becoming a checklist of limited practices, we embrace the concepts of offering flexibility and choices to course designs. For further details regarding UDL visit the [CAST](#) community.

Participatory Design Strategies

One of the easiest but most often overlooked strategies we can use to create and check accessibility is to include our students as participants in our course designs. Rather than assuming students can easily access our materials, asking students if and how they access course materials can offer greater insights. Check-in with students with a midterm an anonymous survey or questionnaire and ask students about their experience with your materials. Also, using student conferences to ask students about their access practices and how your materials are working for them can be an effective strategy.

Check Your Documents Converted from their Original Formats

It is a common practice to design documents in one program such as Word and then save the document in another form such as a PDF. PowerPoints are often saved for students to access as a PDF. However, the accessible formatting constructed in one program does not always follow the document into the new file. Check converted documents to ensure accessibility features such as heading structures, alt text, and links have successfully adapted to the new format.

Using Virtual Office Hours

Traditional office hours remain an important part of the instructional environment for students. These times offer students a place to ask questions, carry-on course conversations, and clarify content. It is important that your

students know you are accessible at certain times. Giving students an option to access this resource through video conferencing can benefit many students. Using video conference software (e.g. Adobe Connect, Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts) offers students a choice of communication methods. These are all free ways to easily communicate with students in a chat room. They also allow you to share your screen with students.