

## 12 Things You Can Do to Make Your Course More Accessible

The terms ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and UDL (Universal Design for Learning) are often used synonymously. Even though they both guide student inclusion, they vary in practice. There are numerous and simple things that can be done while creating instruction that can have a major impact on a large number of students.

**ADA:** ADA, as it is often referred, is Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act which requires digital accessibility for people with disabilities. We should focus on creating instruction for learners with specific sensory, physical, and/or cognitive impairments. This includes ensuring that students using assistive technologies will have similar participation with learning materials.

**UDL:** UDL is an instructional philosophy that recognizes the differences in all students and seeks to create instruction that promotes success for all learners. We should have varied and flexible approaches to instruction and learner demonstration of knowledge. This includes developing engaging content, appropriate challenges and learner's choice activities.

Here are 12 Things You Can Do To Make Your Course More Accessible. They are in order by ease of use, the first 7 can be done in 3 minutes or less. See **How to Tips & Tutorial** at the end of the document to learn about how to implement these in your course.

1. Use **bold** and *italics* sparingly. 1-6 word is appropriate as both will be read by screen readers to alert learners of important information. (ADA)
2. The **underlining** of text should be reserved for hyperlinks only. (ADA)
3. Use bulleted and **numbered list** instead of dashes and/or images. (ADA)
4. **Headings** should be used to organize content. Headings are pre-formatted font types in both documents and web pages. They help the viewer to understand the hierarchy of the content. This allows for those with assistive technologies to quickly search for the content they wish to review. (ADA & UDL)
5. **Colored text** should be used sparingly. When appropriate use dark colors, make them bold, and limit to 3-6 words. Hyperlink blue should be used for hyperlinks only. See [WebAIM](#) to test colors for color contrast. (ADA)
6. **Descriptive Text** should be used when inserting hyperlinks. This will allow for all students to better understand the purpose of the information and be able to locate it with ease. (ADA)

7. **Tables** should have captions, a header row/column and all cells should be populated (even if that means a dash, N/A, or none). Images of tables will require alternative text, the screen reader will not be able to read any information within the image. It may be best to re-create and cite a table for improved student use. (Level III) (ADA)
8. **Images** must include alternative text. Charts, graphics, maps, cartoons etc. all need an accessible version associated that describe the image in its entirety. (When you close your eyes and read it back, do you understand the content of the image?) Decorative images should be avoided. (ADA & UDL)
9. Video and Audio need **captioning and/or a transcript**. Instructor videos can be uploaded into Kaltura through the LMS. Kaltura offer automated captions and the ability to edit captions for accuracy. Check externally linked videos for captioning, and when at all possible use videos that already have them done for you. Instructors can also [create captions](#) and/or transcripts. (ADA & UDL)
10. Creating **predictability** throughout the course by using schedules and weekly routines can reduce learner distractions. (UDL)
11. Offer opportunities for students to feel connected to their learning through **choice activities**. (UDL)
12. **Vary sources and activities** to provide value and relevance for more learners' interests and goals. (UDL)

## For More Information & Help

- [How to Tips & Tutorial: Making Your Course More Accessible](#)
- [CAST: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor: Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [GSA Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#)



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