# Topic: Introduction to Accessibility Basics: Purpose and Practice

## Webinar ID: 812 5696 6806

Q1. What does the acronym WCAG stand for?

### Answer:

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Ref.: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

Q2. One of the issues that often comes up in Art History courses is the fact that alt text often provides information that actually gives away answers on tests and quizzes. What strategies do you suggest for effectively using alt text in courses that use images and expect students to perform visual analysis tasks?

### Answer:

1. Understand the Purpose of Alt Text

Alt text (alternative text) is designed to:

* Provide essential information about an image for students using screen readers,
* Communicate content and function without relying on sight,
* Avoid interpretive or analytical language—especially during evaluations.

2. Use Neutral, Objective Alt Text in Assessments

For tests and quizzes, alt text should be purely descriptive, not interpretive. The goal is to offer enough information for context, without revealing what the student is supposed to analyze or conclude.

3. Provide Detailed Descriptions in Instructional Materials (Not Assessments)

In lectures, readings, or study guides, it's appropriate to include more detailed or interpretive descriptions that support learning.

* These can be embedded directly or provided as separate image description documents, transcripts, or even audio descriptions.
* This approach ensures all students benefit from the educational content, while keeping assessments fair.

4. Create Two Versions of Image-Based Materials

Consider preparing:

* One version for learning, with detailed alt text or descriptions,
* One version for assessment, with basic, factual alt text.

This method supports both accessibility and academic integrity.

5. Explore Alternative Assessments for Visually Impaired Students

If visual analysis is core to your course outcomes, consider offering:

* Oral analysis tasks,
* Tactile graphics,
* Audio-described materials.

These alternatives allow students with visual impairments to demonstrate their understanding without relying solely on images.

Q3. Can AI format the teaching content to cater students with different needs?

### Answer:

Yes, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can greatly support educators in creating content that is accessible, adaptive, and inclusive for students with diverse learning needs. AI enables personalized learning by analyzing student performance to adjust difficulty levels, recommend resources, and adapt pacing. It enhances accessibility by converting content into formats like text-to-speech, speech-to-text, captions, and AI-generated image descriptions—tools like Microsoft Immersive Reader and Google Lookout are examples. For language support, AI offers real-time translation, simplified language, and multilingual glossaries, aiding English Language Learners through platforms like Google Translate and DeepL. It also assists with content summarization and study aids by generating summaries, key points, flashcards, and quizzes using tools like Quizlet and ChatGPT. Neurodiverse learners benefit from AI features that break tasks into steps, provide focus tools, and offer distraction-free layouts, as seen in apps like Goblin Tools. Lastly, AI writing assistants like Grammarly give real-time feedback on grammar, structure, clarity, and even plagiarism, supporting students with learning disabilities or language barriers.

Q4. What should I do if I have students with disabilities that have conflicting needs? If the class room, presentation style, volume of a video, etc.?

### Answer:

When digital accessibility needs conflict, the best approach is to give students options for how they access content. Here are some simple ways to make that happen:

* Videos: Always include captions and offer a transcript so students can choose how they want to engage. If someone is sensitive to audio, they can read instead. For someone who needs audio descriptions, consider adding a version with that, or provide detailed context in the transcript.
* PowerPoint slides: Use accessible slide templates, add alt text for all images, and make sure there’s high contrast between text and background. Share the slides in advance as a PDF or editable file so students can adjust things like contrast or font size on their end.
* Documents and readings: Use clear headings, real text (not images of text), and ensure they work well with screen readers. Offering both PDF and Word formats helps students use what works best for them.

If two needs directly conflict (e.g., one needs high contrast, another low brightness), provide customizable files or individual access links when possible. Most LMS platforms and tools like YouTube, Google Slides, or Panopto support these features.

Q5. Can we get a demonstration of how the assistive technologies work so we can understand what the student is using and how our content comes across to them? i.e. what is a screenreader and how does it work? (with examples)

### Answer:

[Screen Reader Demo- Digital Accessibility](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEbl5jvLKGQ)

[Assistive TechnologiesUsed By People With Disabilities](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz8gXfluwBs)

Q6. any site which help with creating Alt Text for images?

### Answer:

[Generate AI Powered Alt Text](https://www.apexcovantage.com/platforms/alt-text-generator)

“Disclaimer: The link provided above leads to a free third-party resource that may require you to upload images. Please be aware that any uploaded content might be stored or processed by the service provider. We strongly advise you to review and comply with your institution’s data security and privacy policies before using the website. This link is shared solely for illustrative purposes by LearningMate, and we do not assume any responsibility for data handling practices or potential misuse of content by the external site.”

Q7. Is "Click here" needed for all hyperlinks?

### Answer:

No, "Click here" is not necessary for hyperlinks. It's generally more effective to use descriptive text that clearly conveys the purpose and destination of the link. For example, a phrase like "Accessibility Tools and Resources Slide" is self-explanatory and more helpful for users, particularly from an accessibility and usability perspective. Additionally, the descriptive text itself should be directly hyperlinked, rather than using generic phrases like "click here." This ensures a more intuitive and accessible experience for all users.

Q8. I feel some students do not realize it’s a link unless it says “click”

### Answer:

That’s a valid point. However, most students will still recognize it as a link, especially if it’s properly formatted as one. For screen reader users, the assistive technology announces it as a link if it has been correctly marked, so the word "click" is not necessary for accessibility. That said, if you feel that the link may not be visually obvious or might be missed by some users, it’s perfectly fine to include phrasing like "Click here to go to the Accessibility Tools and Resources Slide link"—as long as it’s combined with a descriptive name. This approach maintains clarity while supporting a wider range of users.

Q9. Is there a standard font size recommended for all Canvas assignment instructions?

### Answer:

In terms of digital accessibility, there is no single mandated font size for Canvas assignment instructions; however, it is recommended to use a minimum of 12pt to 14pt for body text to ensure readability for most users. Larger font sizes, such as 16pt or more, are often preferred for users with visual impairments. It’s also important to use accessible fonts (like Arial, Verdana, or other sans-serif fonts), maintain good color contrast, and allow users to zoom in without loss of content or functionality. Ensuring clear, readable text supports all learners, including those using assistive technologies.

Q10. How to make a button keyboard accessible?

### Answer:

To make a button keyboard accessible, follow these key best practices:

1. Use Semantic HTML:

Always use the native <button> element for buttons instead of non-semantic elements like <div> or <span>. Native buttons are automatically focusable and operable via keyboard.

1. Ensure It’s Focusable:

The button should be reachable using the Tab key. This happens by default with <button>, but if using custom elements, you must add tabindex="0" to make them focusable.

1. Support Keyboard Activation:

The button must respond to the Enter and Space keys. Native <button> elements already handle this. For custom elements, add JavaScript event listeners to support KeyDown or KeyUp for these keys.

1. Use ARIA Attributes if Needed:

If using non-standard elements, use role="button" to convey the correct role to assistive technologies, but only when necessary. Native <button> elements already provide this role.

1. Provide a Visible Focus Indicator:

Ensure users can see when the button is focused, either using browser defaults or by customizing :focus styles with CSS (e.g., outline or box-shadow).

1. Label Clearly:

Provide a meaningful label using visible text or aria-label to indicate the button’s purpose to screen reader users.

Q11. Do we have the ability to make our Canvas content accessible? For example, do we have the ability to make our content compatible with mobile devices or to create a test that can be answered using voice commands, or make quizzes navigable by keyboard?

### Answer:

Yes, Canvas provides a range of built-in tools and features that allow instructors to make their content accessible to all learners, including those using assistive technologies. You do have the ability to design your Canvas content to be:

* Compatible with mobile devices: Canvas is responsive and works well on mobile browsers and through the Canvas Student app. To improve mobile accessibility, use clean, structured content (like headings and lists), avoid large files, and ensure images and videos are mobile-friendly.
* Keyboard-navigable: Canvas is designed with keyboard accessibility in mind. Quizzes, discussions, and most interactive elements can be navigated using the Tab, Enter, and Arrow keys. It’s important to structure your content using semantic HTML and proper formatting to maintain this functionality.
* Voice-command friendly: While Canvas doesn’t directly include voice input features, it is compatible with speech recognition tools like Dragon NaturallySpeaking, Windows Speech Recognition, or built-in tools like Voice Control on macOS. If your test or quiz is well-structured and uses standard form fields and buttons, users can interact using voice commands.

To further support accessibility, you can use the Canvas Accessibility Checker when editing pages. It helps identify issues such as missing alt text, poor contrast, or improper heading structure, enabling you to create content that works better for all users.

Q12. Similar to the art/geography/anatomy alt text issue is the topic of providing audioscripts for recordings in a course on listening for English as a Second Language students (and presumably foreign language students too). For instance, I'm teaching a class where one of the main goals is for ESL students to build their ability to listen to academic lectures in English and take organized notes. Giving them a transcript has the potential to turn it from a listening exercise to a reading on. On the other hand, I don't want to keep students from them if they're a necessary support. Do we just wait until a student comes to us to ask for this kind of accommodation?

### Answer:

To ensure both accessibility and effective learning in an ESL listening course, it’s important to proactively provide audio transcripts or captions as required by accessibility laws, rather than waiting for students to request accommodations; however, to maintain the pedagogical goal of developing listening skills, you can design the course so students first engage with the audio without a transcript and access it afterward for review and comprehension support. This approach balances legal obligations with instructional intent, supports Universal Design for Learning by offering multiple ways to engage with the material, and ensures that students with disabilities or different learning needs have equitable access without compromising the learning experience. Coordination with Disability Services can further help address individual accommodations when needed.

Q13. Is a score of 88% accessible acceptable with UDOIT?

### Answer:

A score of 88% in UDOIT (Universal Design Online content Inspection Tool) generally indicates good accessibility but also suggests there are some issues that should be addressed to improve the content’s overall accessibility. While it’s not a failing score, aiming for as close to 100% as possible is best practice to ensure your course materials are fully accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. It’s recommended to review the specific warnings or errors flagged by UDOIT and resolve them to enhance the learning experience and comply with accessibility standards.

Q14. What should we be aware of in our courses that might not be fully keyboard accessible?

### Answer:

In your courses, elements that might not be fully keyboard accessible often include custom-built buttons or interactive components that aren’t properly coded, embedded multimedia players lacking keyboard controls, drag-and-drop activities, complex tables or charts without proper navigation cues, and forms or quizzes that don’t support keyboard input for all controls. Additionally, hidden menus, pop-ups, or modal dialogs that don’t trap keyboard focus can cause navigation issues. To ensure full keyboard accessibility, it’s important to use native HTML elements where possible, provide visible focus indicators, ensure all interactive elements can be reached and operated via keyboard alone, and test your content thoroughly using only the keyboard.

Q15. I use headings on Canvas and usually make them red to look nice, but they are also bold. I ran the accessibility checker, and everything looked fine. Is it okay to use color as long as the contrast is high?

### Answer:

It’s generally okay to use color for headings as long as the color contrast between the text and background meets accessibility standards (at least 4.5:1 for normal text). Using color along with bold formatting can improve visual hierarchy for sighted users, but it’s important to remember that screen readers do not interpret color or boldness. Therefore, you still need to properly tag the text as a header using the built-in heading styles in Canvas. This semantic tagging ensures that assistive technologies correctly identify and navigate the structure of your content. Using both clear visual cues (color and bold) and correct structural markup provides the best experience for all users.

Q16. I read that tables should not be used for layout purposes. I dont know how else to do my layout. and issue in my Canvas pages but also in my website pages.

### Answer:

Tables should only be used to organize tabular data, which helps users—especially those using screen readers—understand and navigate information that’s structured in rows and columns. Using tables purely for layout purposes, however, is discouraged because it can confuse assistive technologies and make keyboard navigation difficult. For layout on Canvas pages or websites, it’s best to use modern CSS techniques like Flexbox or CSS Grid, or built-in layout tools that separate content structure from visual design. This approach ensures your content is both visually appealing and accessible to all users.

Q17. What is the best font for dyslexics?

### Answer:

For digital accessibility compliance, the best practice is to use clear, simple, and highly readable fonts—typically sans-serif fonts like Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, or Calibri—because they offer clean letterforms and good spacing, which supports readability for individuals with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. While specialized fonts like OpenDyslexic or Dyslexie have been developed specifically for dyslexia, their effectiveness is not universally established, so they are optional rather than required. More importantly, ensure your content allows users to adjust font size, spacing, and colors, and always maintain sufficient contrast to meet accessibility standards (like WCAG). The key is to provide flexible, readable text rather than mandating a single “best” font, supporting diverse user needs in line with digital accessibility guidelines.

Q18. The alt text strategy may run up against the old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words, so there is going to be some deficit.

### Answer:

From a digital accessibility perspective, it's true that alt text has its limitations—it may not fully capture the depth or nuance of complex images, especially in fields like art, anatomy, or data visualization where visual detail is essential. However, the goal of alt text is not to replicate every visual element but to convey the essential purpose or meaning of the image in context. While “a picture is worth a thousand words,” alt text aims to provide equivalent access, not identical experience. For more complex visuals, such as charts or detailed diagrams, it’s best to pair alt text with longer descriptions or linked accessible data elsewhere on the page. This layered approach helps bridge the gap and supports inclusivity, even when the image’s full richness can’t be translated into words.

Q19. I teach Art History and use slide identification questions in a multiple-choice format. For example, I might ask, "Which of the following best identifies the image?" with the image provided. Would this be considered accessible? What would you recommend to make it more accessible?

### Answer:

The multiple-choice slide identification questions—such as “Which of the following best identifies the image?”—can present accessibility challenges, particularly for students who are blind, have low vision, or use screen readers, as they cannot perceive the visual content in the same way as sighted students. In its default form, this type of question may not be fully accessible, but there are ways to make it more inclusive without compromising your learning objectives. Instead of relying solely on alt text, which is typically brief, you should provide a more detailed description of the image—covering elements like subject matter, style, medium, period, and any identifying features—either in a linked page, or in a collapsible section accessible within the quiz. To avoid giving away the answer, ensure that all image descriptions (if using multiple images) include comparable detail, or build descriptive context into the question itself so the image is not the only source of information. If a student has a documented visual impairment, you may need to provide alternative formats, such as audio descriptions or oral exams, in coordination with your institution’s accessibility or disability services office. It's also important to clarify your learning objective—if you're assessing visual recognition, you must provide equivalent access to those visual cues; if you're assessing knowledge of the artwork, you might consider using text-based identifiers as clues. Ultimately, enhancing accessibility in this way ensures that your assessment aligns with both your instructional goals and digital accessibility standards.

Q20. Do students have to request accessibility or does the new rule require all classwork, etc. to be accessible whether or not we have a person who has identified a disability?

### Answer:

Under the ADA, Section 504, and WCAG guidelines, all course content must be proactively accessible, regardless of whether a student has disclosed a disability. Accessibility is a legal requirement and must be built into course design from the outset, not provided only upon request.

Q21. Similar point applies to audio to written, you are missing special aspects of meaning conveyed by the sound, pace, etc., used to say things. You may be losing information or meaning.

### Answer:

It's true that converting audio to written text may not fully capture important aspects like tone, pacing, emotion, or emphasis, which can carry meaning beyond the words themselves. While some of this nuance may be lost in a transcript or caption, the goal of accessibility is to provide an equivalent—not identical—experience. To help preserve meaning, transcripts and captions should be thoughtfully written, and when necessary, supplemented with brief notes on tone or delivery. This ensures key information is conveyed while meeting accessibility standards.

Q22. Last one, what about students using AI to create better accessibility, letting AI do some of the navigating.

### Answer:

Students using AI tools to support accessibility—such as having AI generate image descriptions, summarize content, adjust reading levels, or assist with navigation—can be a valuable way to enhance their learning experience. These tools can help bridge accessibility gaps, especially for students with disabilities or language barriers. However, it's important to remember that AI is a support tool, not a substitute for properly designed accessible content. The responsibility to ensure course materials meet accessibility standards under laws like the ADA and Section 504 still lies with the institution and instructor. Encouraging students to use AI responsibly and ethically can empower them, but it should complement—not replace—accessible course design.

## Questions Specific To Institution:

1. Some faculty use textbook plug-ins like "My Math Lab" and similar programs that textbook companies create. Will the VCCS be working with publishers to ensure these products are accessible and universally designed?
2. Follow-up question to the "Publishers being compliant. It stands to reason, if this is a requirement, they too will ultimately have to provide accessible content. Correct? Timeline may be different, but I imagine the requirement would filter down to all educational platforms, including publisher provided content. Thoughts?