

Course Materials Accessibility

A quick-reference guide for SOL faculty preparing syllabi, slides, and readings for fall semester

SYLLABI & HANDOUTS (WORD)	SLIDE DECKS (POWERPOINT)	READINGS & OTHER DOCS
• Use real headings. Home tab → Styles gallery → click Heading 1 for section titles (for example, “Course Policies”) and Heading 2 for subsections. This helps students and assistive technologies move through the document more easily than bold or enlarged text alone. • Use built-in lists. Home tab → click the Bullets or Numbering icon. Use numbers only when the order matters, such as steps in a process, and let Word create the list formatting for you. • Make hyperlinks descriptive. Instead of using shorthand like “click here” or providing a raw URL without context, make sure to describe the content clearly, such as “Week 3 reading.” • Add alt text to images. Right-click any image, chart, or screenshot → View Alt Text → write a one-sentence description, or check “Mark as decorative” if it conveys no information. • Check contrast. Try to avoid light gray or yellow text on white. When color helps draw attention to information, such as red text for due dates, pair it with a brief label like “Due:” so that students do not have to rely on color alone. • Keep tables simple. Use tables only for real data, not layout. Include a header row and avoid merged/split cells. • Run the checker. Review tab → Check Accessibility. Take care of any flagged issues before uploading.	• Title every slide. Give each slide a unique, descriptive title in the title placeholder. You can use View → Outline to confirm titles are present. If a visible title does not fit the slide design, keep the title in the title placeholder and move it just off the slide so screen readers can still identify and navigate to the slide. • Use slide layouts. Insert tab → New Slide → choose a layout with built-in placeholders. This is more reliable for screen readers than adding stand-alone text boxes. • Fix reading order. Review tab → Check Accessibility opens a pane → select a slide → use “Reading Order” to confirm title, text, and images are read in a logical sequence. • Add alt text. Right-click each image, chart, or diagram → View Alt Text → briefly describe what it shows and why it matters, such as “Bar chart: case filings rose 20% from 2020–2023.” • Avoid text-in-images when possible. If a slide is a screenshot of text, such as a scanned statute excerpt, retype the key text in a real text box so students can have it read aloud, search it, or enlarge it. • Run the checker. Review tab → Check Accessibility. Take care of any flagged issues before uploading.	• Consult with TMLL staff about course readings. Whether you are reusing documents or identifying new readings, librarians can help review options and, when possible, locate accessible digital versions. • Start with the source file when possible. If you still have the original Word or PowerPoint file, make accessibility fixes there first and then export a new tagged PDF. • Export tagged PDFs. When saving a Word or PowerPoint file as a PDF, use File → Save As → PDF → Options → check “Document structure tags for accessibility.” This preserves your headings for screen readers. • Check Blackboard Ally. Open the Accessibility Report in your course to see Ally’s color-coded score for each file and suggestions for what to fix first. Many issues cannot be fixed directly in Ally; instead, you may need to update the original Word, PowerPoint, or PDF file and then upload the revised version.

Additional guidance is available on our [Digital Accessibility Resources](#) page

Questions and Support

- **Title II requirements and best practices:** Ursula Gorham, Executive Director of Data & Educational Technologies (ugorham@law.umaryland.edu)
- **Identifying potential accessible digital materials:** libref@law.umaryland.edu
- **Navigating applications and tools:** help@law.umaryland.edu
- **Remediating materials without an accessible equivalent:** Contact your assigned faculty support staff member.

Visual Guide: Finding Key Accessibility Tools

HEADINGS (Word)	
Home tab → Styles gallery	
ALT TEXT (Word and PowerPoint)	
Right click on image → Edit Alt Text → write a one-sentence description, or check “Mark as decorative” if it conveys no information.	
READING ORDER (PowerPoint)	
Review tab → Check Accessibility opens a pane → select a slide → use “Reading Order” to confirm title, text, and images are read in a logical sequence	
ACCESSIBILITY CHECKER (Word and PowerPoint)	
Review tab → Check Accessibility	