

Top Ten Tips for a More Inclusive Course

1. Have a clear starting point for students.

A busy course navigation menu can make it difficult for students to find their way to the content they need to make progress in the course. As much as possible, simplify the course navigation menu by hiding items that are not immediately needed.

2. Start strong.

Consider creating an introductory video that welcomes students to the course in a more personal way (especially if you are teaching an online-only course). In the video, explain the connections between what they will learn in the course and broader career outcomes to emphasize relevance.

3. Communicate expectations in student-friendly language.

Use generative artificial intelligence (genAI) to translate approved course objectives into more student-friendly language that can also be shared with students to support understanding of course expectations.

4. Chunk information to support retention and recall.

After a few screens of content, include a prompt or an activity that supports students in synthesizing what they have just learned before they move on to new content. Similarly, break up long pages into sections using properly marked up headings.

5. Highlight big ideas and relationships.

Assist learners in identifying the big ideas they need to focus on through design elements. For example, a video can include a list of takeaways next to it, and a reading can have a series of guiding questions to set up learners to read in a more goal directed way.

6. Support students' executive functioning.

Students vary greatly in their ability to plan, manage resources and monitor their progress in order to accomplish learning goals - the executive functions. Devices such as checklists of key dates, breaking up large projects into smaller deliverables (submitting an outline, then a first

draft for feedback, etc.) can help all students, including those with executive functioning challenges, stay on track toward successful completion of course objectives.

7. Provide multiple pathways based on students' prior knowledge and goals.

Determine what is “must know” and “nice to know” content, then streamline the module to focus more on the enduring understandings you want students to take away from the course, while at the same time providing the “nice to know” content as supplementary information.

8. Use the built-in accessibility checker if one is available.

Many learning management systems now have a built-in accessibility checker that can help you quickly identify basic accessibility issues (such as images missing alternative text). Similarly, Microsoft Office has a built-in accessibility checker you can use to check the accessibility of your syllabus, handouts and other documents that will be uploaded to the course shell.

9. Share key documents in multiple formats.

PDF works well for content that is to be printed, but it is a legacy format that can be difficult to make compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies. Consider sharing the the syllabus and other key documents as Microsoft Word documents that can be more easily made accessible using the tools mentioned in the previous tip.

10. Make it easy to access support.

Consider creating a separate module that houses all information related to technology and use of the Learning Management System. This will ensure students can access these resources from anywhere in the course and assist in minimizing technical issues that could be barriers to learning.

Further Reading

- The [Creating Accessible Documents](#) resource from the National AEM Center at CAST has tips and how-to instruction for addressing common accessibility issues. The tips and techniques shared in this resource apply to any tool that has an editor feature, including the one used to author content in a learning management system such as Canvas.
- [Designing for Accessibility](#), also from the National AEM Center, goes into more detail on accessibility practices based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), the international accessibility standard.
- [Vetting for Accessibility](#) provides a set of questions to ask that can be helpful when reviewing existing resources for inclusion in an online course.
- The [Course Design section of UDL on Campus](#) compiles a set of resources to assist instructors in incorporating key principles of UDL in any course design from the start.