

Accessibility Guidelines for Submissions to Digital Commons Repository

Overview

The Murray State University Libraries seek to ensure that research and scholarly activity works shared through the Murray State University Digital Commons Repository are accessible to all users.

Accessibility is the practice of making your online content usable by as many people as possible with the widest possible range of abilities, operating within the widest possible range of situations. Accessible content provides equal access and equal opportunity to people with diverse abilities. Not all users take in or interact with the content in the same manner. Some users rely on screen readers, keyboard navigation approaches, or other assistive technologies.

When preparing materials for submission, you should follow the effective practices of accessibility so that everyone can benefit from your work. Plus, following accessibility standards will meet the federal Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Universal Design for Learning framework. This set of guidelines will walk you through on how to submit your work to the Digital Commons collection at Murray State.

General Accessibility Guidelines

Here is a basic checklist that all content should follow, regardless of the platform used in creating the content.

Structure

The structure of the content in a document includes headings, lists, and color contrast. Follow these fundamental accessibility principles for structure:

Use Heading Styles

Heading styles are necessary to improve user readability by breaking the article into clear sections that are organized in a linear, logical layout. Individuals who use screen readers rely on heading levels to navigate a document efficiently. Therefore, your content should be structured using styles, rather than relying on text size and placement. Proper heading styles, such as Heading 1, Heading 2, etc., should be applied.

Format Items into a List

If your content contains items that should be ordered with a number or a bullet, the items must be formatted into a list to improve clarity and readability. Use the platform's built-in lists tools to format lists properly. This helps to make content easier to scan and more accessible for screen-reader users.

Ensure Sufficient Color Contrast

Avoid using color alone to convey meaning. However, if color is used in the text, headings, figures, or backgrounds, be certain that all readers, including those with color vision impairments, can perceive the content clearly. Use simple colors, but again, ensure that color is dark against a white background. Avoid neon colors because they are difficult to read and have poor contrast on a white background.

For detailed guidance on ensuring color contrast, visit the [WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker](#). The resource is a visual, web-based utility that calculates foreground and background color combinations against WCAG contrast ratios, showing how color contrast choices impact users with various visual impairments.

Images and Media

Alt-Text

In any document or online, use alt-text for every meaningful image so screen-reader users can describe the visual content. For purely visual or decorative icons, check the box for “mark as decorative” or similar wording if the icon adds style but no new information. This tells screen reader devices to skip it.

Transcripts and Captions for Multimedia

Captions must be used for video content, and transcripts are necessary for audio recordings to support users with hearing impairments.

Many video content platforms provide auto-generated captions and transcripts. Although the technology in generating captions and transcripts has improved, you are encouraged to check auto-generated captioning or transcripts for accuracy.

In some cases, videos might feature important visual information, with only music playing or no sound. An audio description or written context is required for this kind of video content.

For audio files, upload a text transcript with the audio materials.

Descriptive Links

If your article contains URL links, use concise, descriptive hyperlink text that clearly tells the viewer where the link leads. A best practice is to introduce hyperlinks. For instance, rather than using a vague “Click here” label or an exposed URL, use meaningful text.

Here is an example:

Go to the [Murray State University Digital Commons repository](#) to check out the scholarship and other creative works from faculty and students.

Tables

Aim to use tables only for displaying research data. In each table, give a clear header row, a concise caption, and alt-text. For detailed guidance in creating tables in Word, see the following resources:

- [Accessibility Made Easy: Make Word Documents Accessible](#)
- [Accessibility Officer: How to Make Your Word Documents Accessible](#)

Resources

[Adobe Acrobat Pro Accessibility Checker](#)

Built into Acrobat Pro (**All tools > Prepare for accessibility > Check for accessibility**), the checker inspects tag structures, reading order, alternative text, form fields, and table headers, and includes a guided fix pane.

[WAVE \(Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool\)](#)

A popular free web page scanner and browser extension (Chrome, Firefox, Edge) that uses visual icons to flag errors, contrast issues, and alerts directly on a live page.