Top 6 Habits You Can Adopt to Increase Access in Online Courses

1. **Adopt structures when creating documents**

   Adopting a formatting structure when you are creating a new document in a Microsoft program is a simple, fast and easy way to ensure accessibility for a greater number of users. There are some easy tools to use that are not time consuming and once you adopt them, they become second nature.
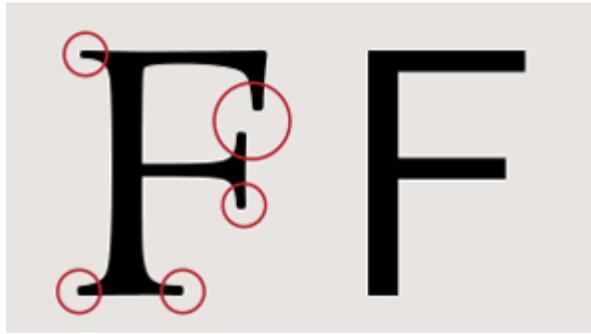
   - **Use your programs Styles or Headings feature.** This is a built-in formatting tool that gives your documents structure. The benefits of this, is that it allows students to navigate your document easily, without having to scroll through the entire document each time they are looking for something.

     The Styles feature is available and should be used in any Microsoft tool (Word, Excel, PPT, Publisher). For a quick and easy tutorial follow this link to a brief YouTube video.

   - **Use formatting appropriately**: Use **Bold,** Underlining and *Italics* to emphasize points. But use it sparingly. If used too much the emphasis of the point becomes saturated.

   - **Use high color contrast colors**: Some students are colorblind. If you are using color to emphasize a point, or to draw a distinction, you will want to make sure that the color contrast is high.

   Good Contrast   Bad Contrast

   Good Contrast   Bad Contrast

   - **Consider the font you use**: Students with vision difficulties, or attention difficulties struggle with Serif fonts. Serif fonts are more decorative, which while attractive can be confusing for some students. Choose fonts without decorative additions.
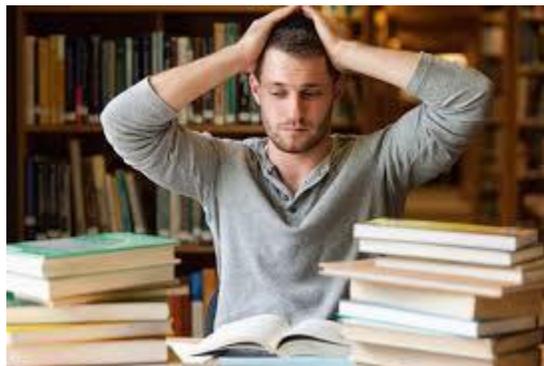
2. Use descriptive wording for hyperlink text

Hyperlinks are wonderful ways of linking students to additional or external content, or even shortening a document, as I have done here. They allow students to choose whether or not to engage with material and if so at a time when it is convenient for them to really engage with the material.
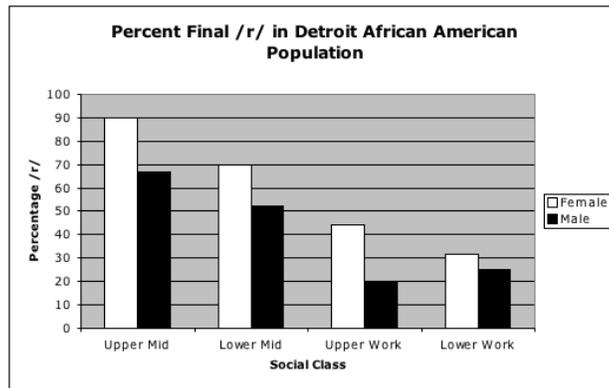
Tips	Do This	Not This
Embedded Links	Tufts Academic Resource Center	http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center
Add a description, keep it concise	This page links you to the Academic Resource Center.	This link takes you to the writing, tutoring, time management, public speaking and English academic program resources offered by the ARC.
Frame where the link will take people	The Time Management Program offers one-on-one meetings.	Click here, Learn more, Go here
Email addresses:	Kirsten.behling@tufts.edu	Kirsten Behling

3. Label all images, charts, graphs, etc. with alternative text (Alt Text):

Alt text is a written description of an image, chart or graph. It explains what the image is and what it is trying to convey to a student. For students who cannot see, they depend on alt text to understand the content in the image. Alt text descriptions also help students who are struggling to understand the importance of an image or the point that the professor wants to make. For example:

Student studying w/ lots of books, looking frustrated

Bar chart for data comparing male and female socioeconomic status

- Some Microsoft programs have an auto generating option for Alt-text. This is a wonderful tool, but make sure it is accurate.

- How to write Alt-text:
  - **Be precise**. Alt text should accurately present the same content and function as is presented in the image.
  - **Be brief**. Alt text of an image should be short and to the point.
  - **Do not repeat information**. Alt text should not provide identical information as text within the context of the image.

4. Caption all videos, or provide transcripts. Choose videos with Captions

Most people who rely on captions or transcripts of videos do not have a hearing disability. Captions held ground students in the content that they are watching. They help students focus in a space and time where focus is difficult. Captions are textual representations of a video's soundtrack. Without captions important information may be missed or it will be missed if a student has a hearing disability.

Choose videos with captions: If you are looking for a video, try to find one that has closed captions. You may need to turn them on by clicking the CC button on your screen.

Caption your class videos, PPT recordings and your live sessions: There are a lot of ways that you can caption a video. You may choose to do it yourself, you may prefer to send it to a captioning company or you may rely on technology. No matter how you do it, it is important that you do it.

We have gathered some resources at Tufts that you may use to caption the videos you use, the video recordings you make and your live online class sessions.

- Access Tufts Captioning Resources
- Captioning After Recordings
- Captioning Live Class Sessions

5. Use the Microsoft Accessibility Checker
Check the accessibility of your document before giving it to your students: Microsoft has wonderful built-in accessibility tools! Design your document adopting the strategies above. Then do a quick check on the accessibility of your content. Microsoft has the ability to do a quick review of your document, to find areas of concern and to walk you through how to fix it. Please take advantage of this. It's easy and benefits so many.

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Microsoft Excel
- PDF

6. **Make sure your learning management technology is accessible**

   Now that your course has been moved online, it is time to ensure that all of the technology you have had to learn so quickly is also accessible. It feels like a lot. It can be. But I hope these quick tips and referrals are helpful. Remember, if you make your content accessible (see tips 1 – 6) you are most likely well on your way to an accessible course. So please focus on those tips first.

   - **Canvas**: For tips on how to make Canvas accessible follow this link Accessibility in Canvas
   - **Zoom:** (Tufts.zoom.us). For Zoom accessibility tips please go to their support website
   - (Zoom, 2019)
   - **WebEx:** For WebEx accessibility tips follow these instructions.
   - **My Media in Canvas:** offers free captioning, you can find out more on this website.
     YouTube: For YouTube accessibility tips log onto Youtube Studio.