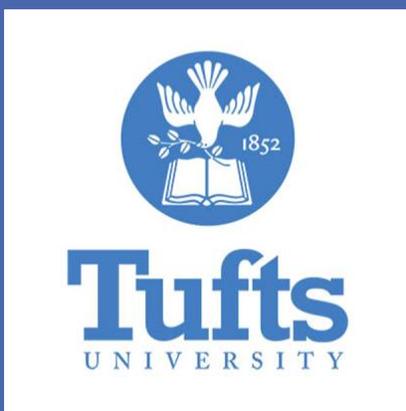


# ACCESSIBILITY IN ONLINE CLASSES: A GUIDE FOR FACULTY



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# Accessibility in Online Learning: A Legal Requirement

Even before the dramatic shift to online learning amidst the COVID -19 pandemic, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based on disability in any online environment. This includes our universities classrooms, websites, live course rooms and other transactions that may occur online. Many institutions of higher education before Covid-19 were navigating Office of Civil Rights (OCR) or Department of Justice (DOJ) inquires or investigations from outside constituents who deemed that some aspect of the university’s website was inaccessible. As of December 2019, there were hundreds of investigations, lawsuits or settlements across the United States.

In February 2019, Tufts passed our Digital Accessibility policy. This policy requires that any information that the university, Tufts staff or faculty post online should be compliant with the [latest standards in web accessibility](#). We have a wonderful [resource page](#) for Tufts personal to refer to when learning what constitutes web accessibility and how to do it. Many people at Tufts have been referring to these resources and adopting the changes needed to make our school welcoming for all. This takes time.

After the COVID – 19 shift online, the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights reminded us through a video (below) and fact sheet that institutions of higher education needed to comply with these rules. While the majority of institutions agree that people with disabilities should have the same access as their peers without disabilities, the time involved, the skill needed and the training to be offered were nearly impossible to offer. It was one thing to get everything online with some degree of best practices in pedagogy, but another entirely to now ask faculty to go back and make sure everything is accessible.

The goal of this document, is to help you – no matter your role at Tufts, adopt some simple habits that building in accessibility naturally to the work you do and the things you post online. We have included a [tip sheet](#) on how to accommodate students with disabilities in your class to help navigate the differences between face-to-face and online learning. Accessibility may seem big and challenging but with a few small content creation habit changes you too can ensure that all of our community is welcome, especially as we all navigate this new fully online experience.



FIGURE 1: OCR VIDEO, CLICK ON THE VIDEO TO WATCH IT.

# 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.

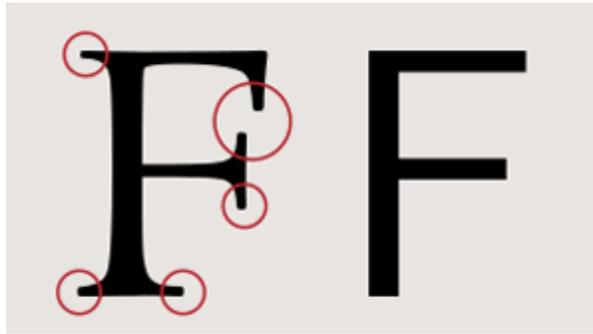
- **Use your programs Styles or Headings feature.** This is a built-in formatting tool that gives your documents structure. The benefits of this, is that it allows students to navigate your document easily, without having to scroll through the entire document each time they are looking for something.

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.



- **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.



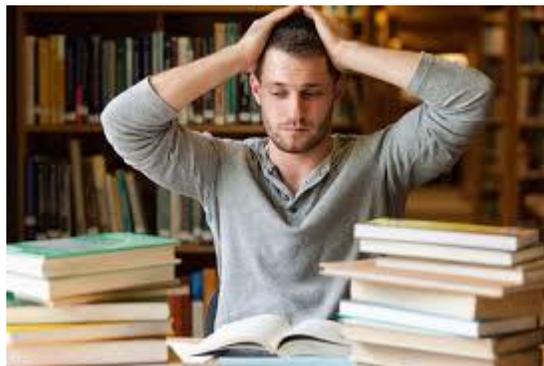
**2. Use descriptive wording for hyperlink text**

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.

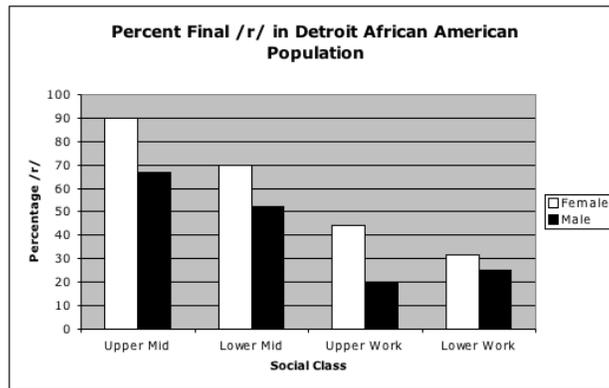
Tips	Do This	Not This
Embedded Links	<a href="#">Tufts Academic Resource Center</a>	<a href="http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center">http://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center</a>
Add a description, keep it concise	This page 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 <a href="#">Time Management Program</a> offers one-on-one meetings.	<a href="#">Click here</a> , <a href="#">Learn more</a> , <a href="#">Go here</a>
Email addresses:	<a href="mailto:Kirsten.behling@tufts.edu">Kirsten.behling@tufts.edu</a>	<a href="#">Kirsten Behling</a>

**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](https://tufts.zoom.us)). For Zoom accessibility tips watch this quick [video](#). (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](#).

# Best Practices for Ensuring Accessibility in Online Courses:

## A Checklist



Print this, download it, mark it up – use it however you want.

Use this guide to help you build in access for all as you transition from face-to-face learning to remote learning. Each Task is a suggestion for how you can increase access to your course. The Notes section is designed for you to jot down if you have done this, who to reach out to for help if needed, and what you need to do to do the task.

<b>First Steps to Take</b>	
<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Create a short guideline document (time zone of live sessions, due dates/ times, discussion posts, group work methods, etc.). Post it on the main course page.	
Put a <a href="#">SAS disability statement</a> on your syllabi and on your Canvas home page.	
Determine how you will deliver course content (synchronous, asynchronous), recorded PPTs, pasted PPTs, other resources (websites, videos, discussion boards).	
Determine your course requirements based on your course objectives. Do students need to attend all live sessions, for example? How may discussion posts “counts” as participation?	
Make sure your students have access to the text/ course materials in an online environment. Check with the publisher to see if any electronic versions exist that you can share with students.	
<b>Get Your Course Learning Management System (Canvas) Ready</b>	
<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Post your course material in a manner that makes sense. Follow your syllabus, use the LMS tools to put materials in appropriate places.	
Use the tip above to post appropriate links to class resources/ materials.	
Post the syllabus in a Word format.	
Consider chunking your recorded lectures into smaller (less than 10 minute) chunks.	
Frame each task (watch this video, write this discussion, visit the website) with a brief description of what the students need to do and why. Give it context.	
If you are going to break your class into groups, determine how to do that ahead of time. Work with educational technology or the LMS administrator.	

Consider how you will assess your students. If you are changing your approach from your face-to-face class, clearly explain that to your students. Offer a rubric, set clear deadlines and test dates. Repeat this often throughout the class.	
Learn how to set different exam times, to support students with disabilities.	
Consider how students will access the material if they do not have access to high speed Wifi or a computer and are dependent on their mobile device.	
Use the Announcement page on a regular basis to up-date students with new information, remind of due dates, and to check in.	
Offer virtual office hours at varying times during the week. Be sensitive to students in different time zones.	

### **Incorporating the Top 5 Accessibility Tips**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Use the formatting structures in the Microsoft tools (Word, PPT, Excel, Publisher).	
Use San Serifs.	
Use formatting appropriately (bold, underline, italics).	
Make sure to use high color contrasts.	
Embed your links appropriately.	
Add alterative text descriptions to all of your images, charts and graphs.	
Choose videos with captions.	
Record videos/ PPTs have captions.	
Learn how to turn on the captions in your live class sessions.	
Run the Microsoft checker on all your content before you posted it online.	

# Captioning After Recording

- With Thanks from Samantha Brumer and Kristen Dabney

Recording classes and posting the lectures is a great accessible way to reach all students in multiple time zones! It is important to speak clearly for auto transcription or the use of live captioning products, and we strongly suggest the use of a headset as internal microphones will sometimes get distorted by the fan in your laptop. It is also important to keep in mind that anything students say may not be captioned as it will be pulling from your microphone only.

## Zoom

[Tufts.zoom.us](https://tufts.zoom.us)

Zoom is an online video conferencing tool that allows users to record their meetings. If you have a pro account (which Tufts has) you can have your videos auto transcribed! You just need to make sure that the auto transcription is turned on and that you are saving your recording to the cloud. Your video and transcription may take up to two times the length of your recording. You will also have to edit the transcription. Once done, you can download the completed video or share the URL. More in depth instructions can be found [on the Zoom Support Website](#) You can also watch this quick [How to Video](#) (Zoom, 2019)

## WebEx

WebEx is an online conference tool that allows you to record your meetings. The IT administrators at Tufts have turned on auto transcription for all Tufts Webex accounts. Transcription can take double the amount of time of the lecture to be ready, so please be patient! Make sure that it is saved as a cloud recording or WebEx won't be able to transcribe the video It is also helpful if recording a meeting with multiple users to have the participants have their microphones off for clearer captioning. You will have to edit the captions before sending it to the viewers. Here are the [instructions](#) on how to use the auto transcription features.

## Captioning in Canvas

Any videos uploaded to My Media in Canvas can be auto transcribed! The captioning is done by a machine automatically using a speech to text method with a 70-80% captioning accuracy. You will be required to edit your captions once it has been produced to guarantee accuracy. It is best to have clear audio in your video for a more accurate transcription. You can find a step by step guide on how to use this feature on canvas by going to [this website](#).

## Captioning the Video- Otter.ai:

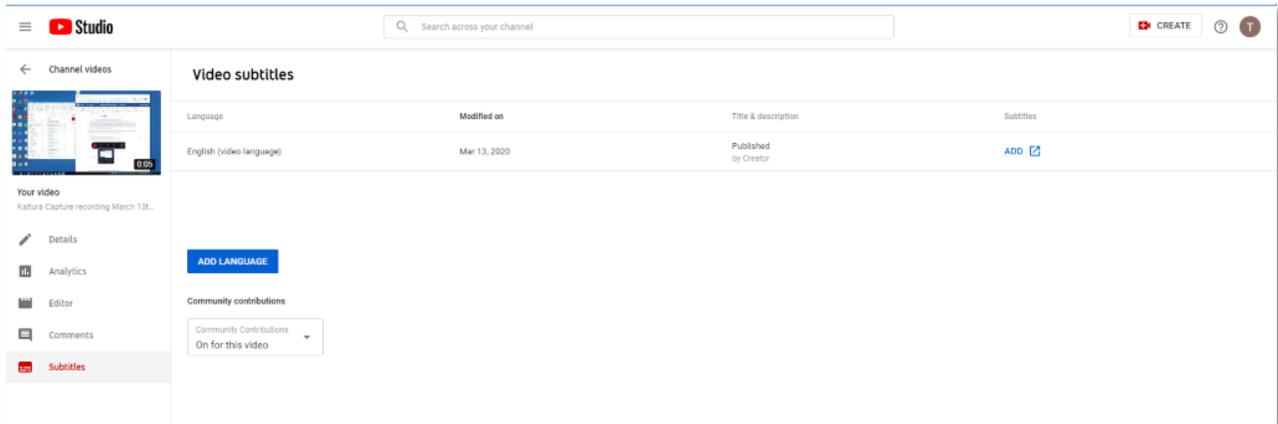
You can watch this [video](#) (Lau,2019) You may need to pay for this service\*

1. Take the downloaded Kaltura video and upload it into Otter.ai
2. Otter.ai will auto caption the video for you but you will need to edit it. You should break up the paragraph it auto transcribes into one to two sentences so that it can sync with the speaker.
3. Export as SRT
4. Select the three dots at the top-right corner of the screen.
5. Select the "Export Text" button from the drop-down menu.
6. Select "SRT" for the file type.
7. To choose to include or remove speaker names from the captions, toggle the "Include speaker names" switch. You can also see additional options to enable automatic line breaks.
8. Select "Continue" to export the file.
9. In the web app, the file will automatically download to your device as an SRT. In the mobile app, you must select the application to which you would like to save the file.

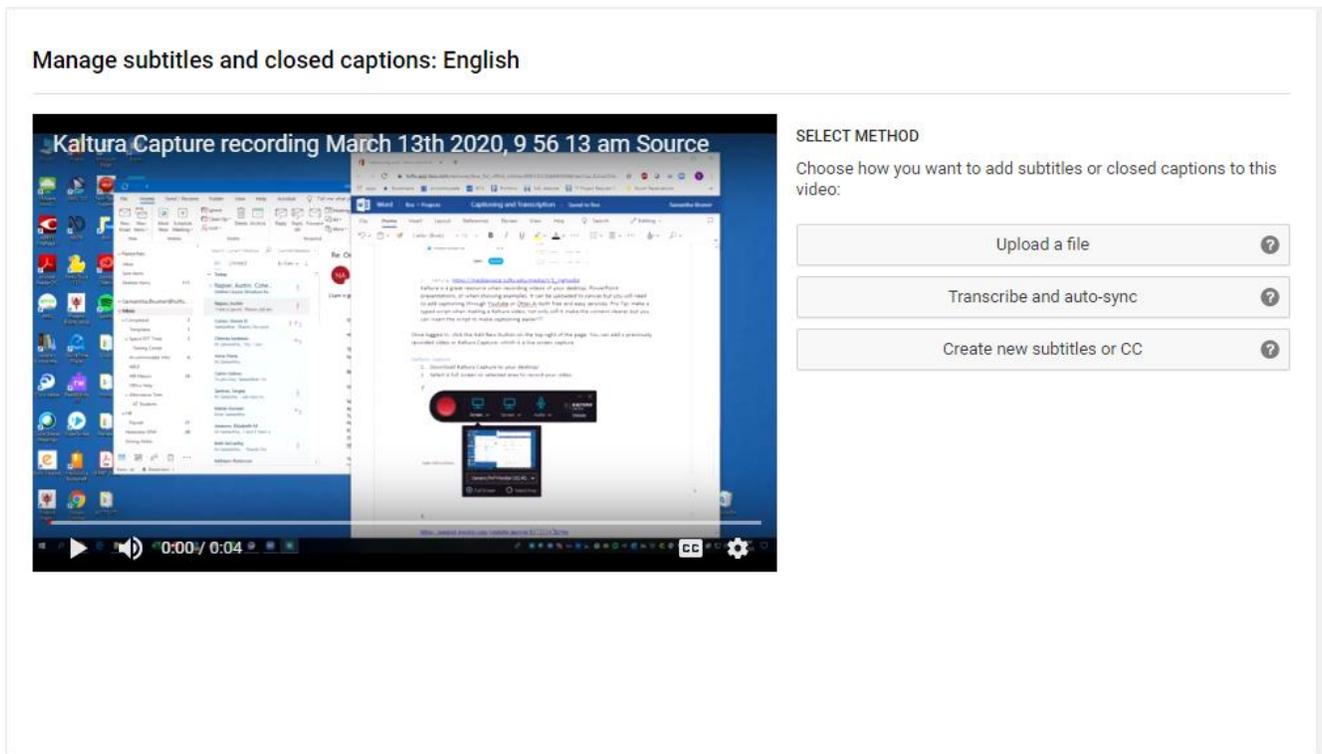
## Captioning the Video- YouTube:

The uploader of the video has the option to make it unlisted, private or public. Unlisted means that you can share the link and anyone can follow it and see the video, but it will not show up if someone tries to search for it on YouTube. Private means you can add up to 50 users (with google accounts) by name who can access the video. Public means anyone on the internet can search for it. You are able to change settings as you go.

1. Sign into [Studio](#)
2. Upload your Kaltura Mp4 file to YouTube.
3. From the left menu, select videos. And click details on the video you would like to edit
4. Click Subtitles and the ADD button.



5. From here you can add you script from your lesson plan or have YouTube auto transcribe.



6. Review automatic captions and edit or remove any parts that haven't been transcribed properly.

*Pro tip:* If you have a script you used while recording your video, YouTube does an excellent job of syncing the two up. You will still need to edit it but it will cut down on manual captioning. Additionally, if you spoke clearly, YouTube can do a pretty good first pass of guessing what you said and will auto caption for you.

For additional support, please contact Educational Technology Services (<https://sites.tufts.edu/ets/>).

# Live Class Closed Captioning Options

- With Thanks from Samantha Brumer and Kristen Dabney

If you decide to hold live classes, please consider the following.

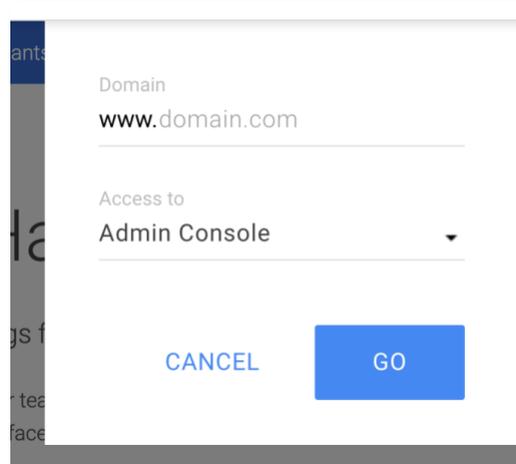
1. Please have one person speaking at a time.
2. Have students have muted microphones.
3. Clearly state who is speaking. For example: Tim please answer this question....
4. As the professor please repeat any questions for the students.
5. Use one of our recommended live captioning tools.

PLEASE NOTE: these are not totally ADA compliant however are great tools to increase accessibility. For the following options you will need to share your screen and use a microphone for clear voice for auto transcription. It is also to keep in mind that anything students say will not be captioned as it will be pulling from your microphone only. We still recommend recording all lectures for student access but understand that it may not be an option at this time.

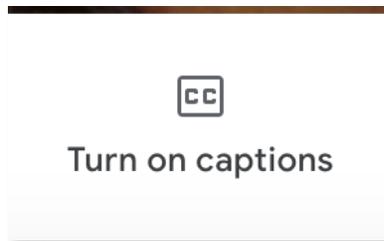
## Google Meet

[gsuite.google.com/hangouts/meet](https://gsuite.google.com/hangouts/meet)

1. This feature is through Google Suite a new Tufts online tool! To log in, enter tufts.edu for the domain.



2. Then enter your Tufts email address, you will be prompted to enter your Tufts UTLN and password.
3. Click Meet and start your meeting! Once in the meeting click "Turn on Captions" at the bottom right of the screen:



4. Live captioning will begin, and it will capture every user that speaks.

Note: if recording the meeting to share later, the captions will **not** be added. This is a great option for live meetings and if you were to screen record the meeting, it could be a fully captioned video through otter.ai,

## **Otter.AI**

Live transcription through artificial intelligence, Otter.AI is a highly regarded application for your desktop or your phone. It guesses punctuation in your speech as well as differentiating speakers. Accounts are free and provide 600 minutes a month, premium accounts allow you to integrate your text into captions for your videos.

<https://otter.ai/>

\*We had some luck with having Otter pick up on multiple microphones automatically, but you may need to dig into settings to have a similar experience.

## **PowerPoint**

The neat tool you saw in PowerPoint requires a plugin to be installed, of which you need to be an admin to do. But it would allow you to do captioning on your PowerPoint slides while you present. You can find more instructions on the [PowerPoint Website](#).

## **Google Slides with Auto-generated Captions**

Google Slides can use your microphone to create auto captions, these captions are never stored. So you are unable to use these in the future as a transcript. To set up captioning in Google Slides, please go to the [Google Support Webpage](#).

## **Google Documents with text to speech**

For auto transcription in real time use Google Document's Speech to Text feature. It is fairly easy to use and can be shared while you are presenting in either Zoom or Webex. The words will be captioned like a word document so please make sure the size of the font is big enough for the viewers. You can find out more on the [Google Documents Support Webpage](#).

## **Webcaptioner.com**

This site will just do automatic captions that default to whatever language your computer is in. So, if you would like to [speak in a different language](#), please follow the directions for changing your language. It doesn't look like it has default multi-language support at the same time by default. It only works on Chrome, and you can get reasonable captions off of a laptop microphone with it. This is an option for some basic captioning when conferencing if you can share your screen. To start application please go to [Webcaptioner.com](#).

## **CART: Communication Access Real-time Translation**

These options will require a person to transcribe the classes live. For Zoom and Webex you will need to authorize the CART options on each conference. Please share dates, times, and how many live sessions you will have so that accessibility office can hire a transcriber. This is usually an accommodation only made for students who are registered with the accessibility office.

## **Zoom**

Check out this video on how to use [Closed Captioning in Zoom](#). More information can be found on the [Zoom Closed Captioning Website](#)

## **WebEx**

To find out how to add captions to WebEx meetings, please follow this [WebEx Closed Captioning Website](#).

# How do you Accommodate Students with Disabilities in the Online Environment

As a result of the university's decision to suspend in-person classes, we understand that instructors are making extensive preparations to support students through remote platforms. Included in these preparations, may be maintaining compliance with accommodation implementation for your course and/or referring students to academic support resources. Please see the below guidance to support you through this academic transition.

Accommodation implementation may look different through online classes in comparison to remote implementation. Please see the below guide to outline the changes that may be required in your course. If you need your students to resend their accommodation letter, please send a note to the entire class asking those who have accommodations to send you their letters.

Accommodation	Implementation in Online Classes	Implementation in Face-to-Face Classes
Extended time on assessments (typically 50% or 100%)	If the exam is timed on Canvas, ProctorU, or another exam platform, professors will need to adjust time for each individual student according to their approved accommodation time. Please consult their letter for specific information.  Instructions for Canvas and ProctorU exam accommodations: can be found on the Tuft's <a href="#">ETS Keep Teaching Website</a>	Professor provides extended time with appropriate duration written in letter.  Professors utilized Lincoln Filene to help proctor their exams.
Distraction-reduced testing	Students are able to self-select distraction-reduced environment to take their online exam.	Students ask to take their exams in Dowling hall's testing space. SAS proctors your exam.
Note-taking for in-class lectures	No change/implementation need for instructors.	Hiring/implementation navigated by SAS.
Assistive technology device	Students will continue to use their assistive technology for access to the class as needed.	Student may have personal use of an assistive technology device.  Students may need to take their exams in Dowling's testing space.
Computer-use for exams.	Students will continue to use their assistive technology to take their exams.	Student places request to you for Dowling hall exam with computer use.
Student support through SAS or the ARC	No change for instructors. SAS staff will still be available to students (and instructors) for support.	Students meet in person or by phone with SAS staff for support throughout the semester.

## Additional notes:

- Please be mindful of the different time zones your students may be in. SAS suggests offering all course content and exams in eastern standard time (EST) and making that well known to your students.
- Faculty should include a [disability statement](#) in their canvas course, so that students know where to go if needed.

## **Adopting These Tips Will Positively Impact All**

One of the unforeseen benefits of quickly going online and paying attention to access is the larger impact it will have on your students. At this point, you may have received panicked emails or hastily noted discussion prompts from your students. In addition to the challenges faced by us as faculty and our students with disabilities, many of our other students are also struggling to adapt to this new “normal”. For some it is a lack of appropriate technology in their house. For others it is a time zone issue, or struggles getting the technology up and working. Some are sharing the inability to find a quiet space to work without distraction, or to be present in a live classroom without siblings, friends and animals darting through the background. These are all valid and very real situations that our students are navigating.

By creating documents with the styles feature and adding Alt-text to the images, charts and graphs in your content, you are enabling your students to “listen” to your content as well as or instead of reading it. This is particularly helpful for those who are navigating headaches as a result of a sudden onslaught of screen time. It also helps those who need to care for a family member, knowing that they can listen to the content at a later point in time, or even as they rock their sibling to sleep. The same is true with offering alternatives to how your students participate. Is a live presence necessary? If it truly is, if it fulfills a learning objective to your course, do you need to see that person? Or can they be a voice in a room, allowing them to maintain the privacy they hope to have.

Adjusting due dates and assessment formats also gives your students flexibility to show what they know with what they have. The lack of a physical library is daunting for some, being able to offer a recorded presentation instead of a 20 page research paper might be a better fit, and can still prove knowledge consumption. Allowing all of your students a bit more time on exams gives them the flexibility to adjust to taking an online exam, an experience that is very different than a traditional pen and pencil exam.

By thinking through access in terms of ensuring that everyone in your class has access, you are supporting both you and your learners as we all adapt to this new environment. Making these small changes, adopting these tips as habits, will significantly increase your students sense of support and appreciation in a time when it is needed.

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