


Online Tools that Make Learning More Accessible

There are many accommodations that may be adopted as sound instructional practices for the benefit of more students than just for students with disabilities. First, given our current and evolving technologies, the rise of open educational resources, and the necessity for compatibility and integration among multiple devices, we simply need to monitor the functionality of our educational technology. Second, as part of brain-based learning, multisensory approaches to teaching engage students and increase their likelihood of connections to and retention of the learning material (Shams & Seitz, 2008).

Below is a list of our favorite resources to enhance teaching and learning for all of your students in all classroom modalities. The information provided will give you a general overview of the major considerations to increase student access to learning. The listed tools are multipurpose, have multiple uses, and appeal to diverse student populations and classroom environments.


QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR ONLINE COURSES

Quality Matters (QM) Rubric Standard 8 on Accessibility and Usability



(<https://www.qualitymatters.org/rubric>) is a nationally-recognized program that relies on the QM rubric and faculty peer reviews to improve the course design of fully online, blended, and competency-based courses. Standard 8 identifies criterion that ensures accessibility and usability in your online courses. OU's e-Learning and Instructional Support has adapted its own Online Course Quality Scorecard for online learning design, which can be found at oakland.edu/elis.


Online Course Quality Scorecard



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INFORMATION ON LEARNING ACCESS

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations



(<https://askjan.org/links/atoz.htm>) focuses on employment and workplace solutions for individuals with disabilities. However, their A-to-Z resource materials on disability accommodations are quite detailed and can be applied directly or adapted to various learning environments.

National Center on Disability and Access to Education (NCDAE) Cheatsheets



(<http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/>) – If you have ever experienced technology incompatibility issues with different software, apps, and devices, or if you need to make specific accommodations for your students, then you will want to refer to NCDAE Cheatsheets for Microsoft (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel) software, Adobe (Acrobat and InDesign) software, websites, and YouTube videos to create usable and accessible content.

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Created by Christina Moore. Published February 2017.

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TOOLS

Amara



(<https://amara.org/en/>) Amara is an accessible video tool and nonprofit professional organization, which provides support for captions, subtitles, and translations for your instructional videos.

Google for Education



(<https://www.google.com/edu/products/productivity-tools/>) is a set of collaborative productivity tools, which includes Classroom, Gmail, Drive, Calendar, Vault, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Sites, and Hangouts. These tools help you create your course content, communicate with your students, teach, manage course activities, and track student progress.

Jing



(<https://www.techsmith.com/jing.html>) is a multimedia communication and collaboration tool. Specifically, Jing is a screen shot (image, audio, and/or video) and online screencast (storage and sharing) tool. Jing is beneficial for visual and auditory learners and for increasing interest and engagement with enhanced course content.

Online OCR



(<http://www.onlineocr.net/>) is an optical character recognition software. Some productivity software can easily be converted into PDF files while maintaining their original text and object properties. However, some PDF files are only images. If you need to identify text for the purpose of “copy & paste,” or to use with a screen reader, or if you would like to activate included hyperlinks, then OCRs are useful with translating PDF documents (as images) back to its original texts and objects.

Screen Readers (ChromeVox for Chrome; VoiceOver for Apple products; NVDA for Windows, Firefox, and Microsoft; ReadSpeaker and WebAnywhere for web)



(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_screen_readers) – The listed screen readers are helpful for individuals when using the associated software/applications. Screen readers are beneficial to individuals with visual impairments or blindness, visual learners, ESL learners, and others. When scrolling is necessary on a screen, screen readers help those with limited mobility navigate. Screen readers are also helpful when you use small screens, when you are on the go or multi-tasking, and with using multiple devices.

Zamzar



(<http://www.zamzar.com/>) is an online file conversion tool, which will allow you to provide multiple file types of the same document to ensure technology compatibility and access to the document.

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