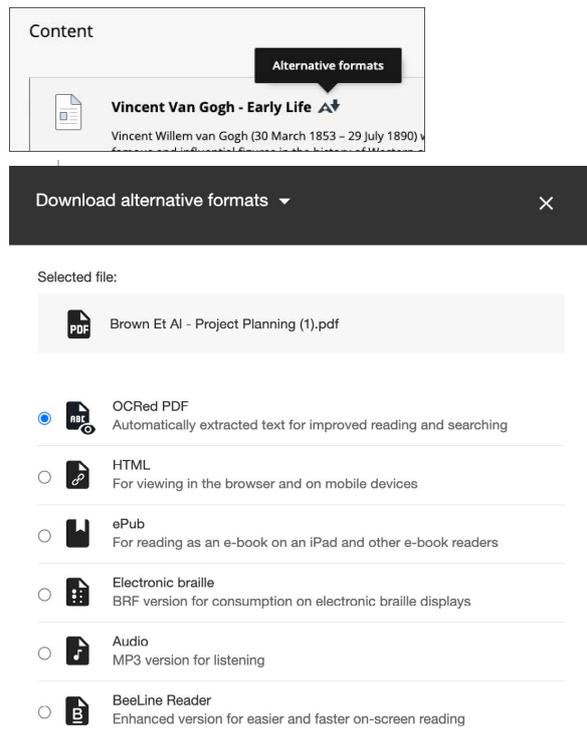# ALLY

Blackboard®

Basics
Accessible content is better content

Supporting Diverse Student Needs

Your class is full of diverse students with unique learning abilities, needs, and devices. Course content created with inclusion in mind can benefit not only your students with disclosed disabilities such as visual impairments and dyslexia, but improve the learning experience for all your students. Ally's Alternative Formats and Instructor Feedback help make your course more inclusive for all!
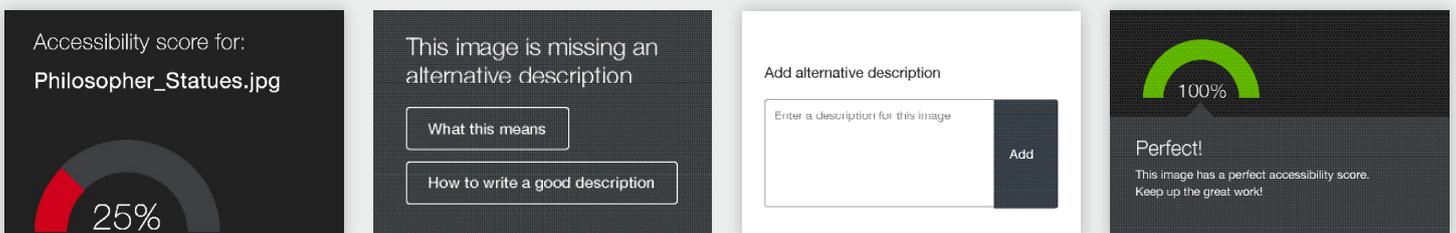
Alternative Formats

Ally automatically generates eight unique "Alternative Formats" of your course files and HTML content, and makes them available for download to you and your students. Formats are designed to work better with assistive technologies, mobile devices, and study tools. Select the "A" icon or anywhere you see "Alternative Formats" in your course to open the modal (pictured right). Based on the original file, you will see your list of available options. Choose the option you want and click "download." Your original file will not be affected by the alternative formats.

Content

Alternative formats

Vincent Van Gogh - Early Life

Vincent Willem van Gogh (30 March 1853 – 29 July 1890) w...

Download alternative formats ▼ ✕

Selected file:

PDF Brown Et Al - Project Planning (1).pdf

○ OCRed PDF
Automatically extracted text for improved reading and searching

○ HTML
For viewing in the browser and on mobile devices

○ ePub
For reading as an e-book on an iPad and other e-book readers

○ Electronic braille
BRF version for consumption on electronic braille displays

○ Audio
MP3 version for listening

○ BeeLine Reader
Enhanced version for easier and faster on-screen reading

Accessibility Indicators

Addressing accessibility issues with your course content can improve the quality of the Alternative Formats for your students. To help you address those issues, Ally provides accessibility feedback within your course workflow. Log-in to your course site, and you will find the Accessibility Indicators (pictured below) next to files (Word Docs, PowerPoints, PDFs, Imagers). If you have no course files yet, upload one, and an indicator will appear next to the file name after a few minutes. Select the indicator to view the Instructor Feedback. Follow along step-by-step to address the issues identified.

Needs help!   A little better   Almost there

Accessibility score for:
Philosopher_Statues.jpg
25%

This image is missing an alternative description
What this means
How to write a good description

Add alternative description
Enter a description for this image   Add

100%
Perfect!
This image has a perfect accessibility score. Keep up the great work!

Click the Indicator →   Read the Feedback →   Improve your file →   Increase your score

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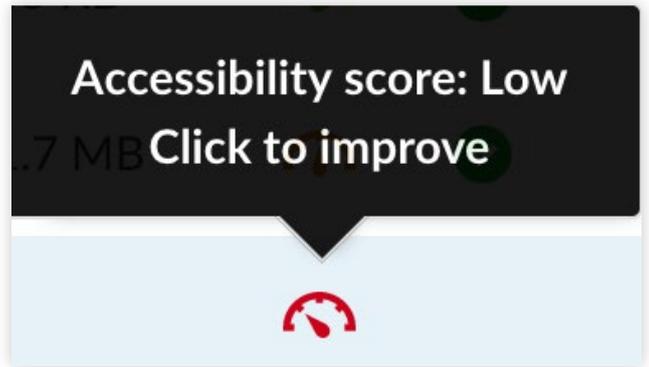
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Instructor Feedback
Learn how to fix accessibility issues with your course content

Not sure about how to identify and correct accessibility issues with your course content? Not to worry. Ally provides you detailed feedback and support to help you become an accessibility pro. Learn about accessibility issues, why they matter, and how to fix them. Green is the goal!

Find the Ally Indicators

Your course files and content will now have color "dials" next to them. They indicate the file's level of accessibility, and are there to help you prioritize which files you want to fix first. Don't worry, your students can't see them. If you hover over the indicators, you'll see if the accessibility score is "low," "medium," or "high." Select the indicator to see the percentage score, specific issues affecting the file, and instructions for improving the file.

> **Accessibility score: Low**
> **Click to improve**
> .7 MB

Navigating Ally Instructor Feedback

What's the issue? ➡️ How can I fix it? ➡️ Success

> Accessibility score for: ✕
> Plato_Presentation.pptx
>
> 32%   All issues ⓘ
>
> This presentation contains images that are missing an alternative description
>
> What this means
>
> How to add descriptions
>
> ⬆️
> Drop file to upload
> or

1. Score shows level of accessibility
2. View all the file's accessibility issues
3. Description of the most important accessibility issue
4. Explains how the issue affects inclusive learning
5. Detailed steps how to fix the issue
6. Add your changes in the dialogue box or upload new files

> Accessibility score for: ✕
> My Image.jpg
>
> 100%
>
> Perfect!
> You have successfully added a description.

100% means Ally hasn't detected any more issues, and your students will have a more accessible version to download Ally alternative formats. Congratulations! You're on your way to a more inclusive learning environment for your students.

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View All File Accessibility Issues

Choose which issues to address first with "All Issues" tab

Creating accessible digital learning content can be a challenge, and a single course file may contain multiple issues impacting its accessibility for students. Ally gives you options for fixing those issues, allowing you to craft an accessibility strategy suitable to your course needs. Prioritize high-impact issues, or focus on quick fixes first with Ally "All Issues."
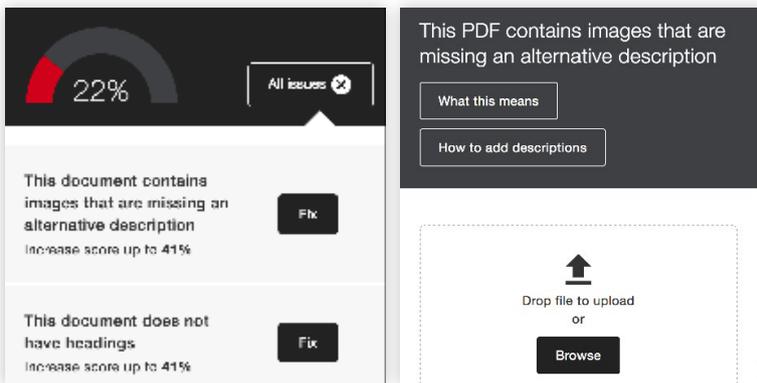
Scenario: **A course file has multiple issues to address**

1
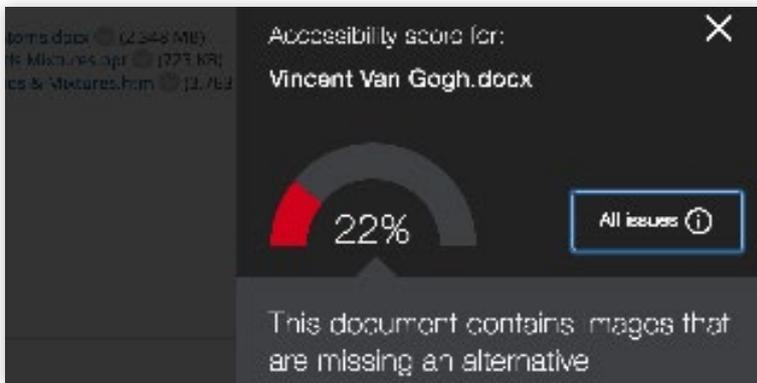
When you select an Ally indicator, the instructor feedback window will let you know the most pressing accessibility issue to correct. It also provides an option to view "All Issues" when the file has multiple accessibility issues to address.

2

From the "All Issues" tab, you can see a list of all the accessibility issues Ally has identified in the file. Ally lets you know how much each issue fix will improve your accessibility score.

3

Choose how you want to proceed in addressing each issue. Select "Fix" to view step-by-step details on how to correct each issue. Upload or add your changes with each issue, or address them all at once. The closer to 100% the score means the closer you are to a more inclusive learning environment for your students.

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Accessibility Checklist

A quick-start reference to creating more accessible course content

Accessible course content makes it easier for everyone to read and access your materials and can help improve overall quality and usability. There are many low-effort adjustments you can make to start creating more accessible content.

Use a font size of at least 12px.

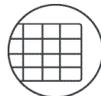Ensure that there is sufficient contrast between text and background. The Paciello Group Contrast Analyzer is a great tool.
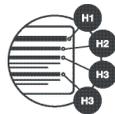
Ensure that proper heading styles are used.

Ensure that a logical heading structure is used.

Ensure that images have an alternative description that can convey the full meaning of the image.

Ensure that tables are used for tabular data only.

Ensure that all tables have column headings.

Ensure that all lists use built-in list functionality.

Ensure that all links have text that describes the target.

Ensure that built-in PowerPoint slide templates are used.

Don't use scanned PDFs.

Ensure that all PDFs are tagged.

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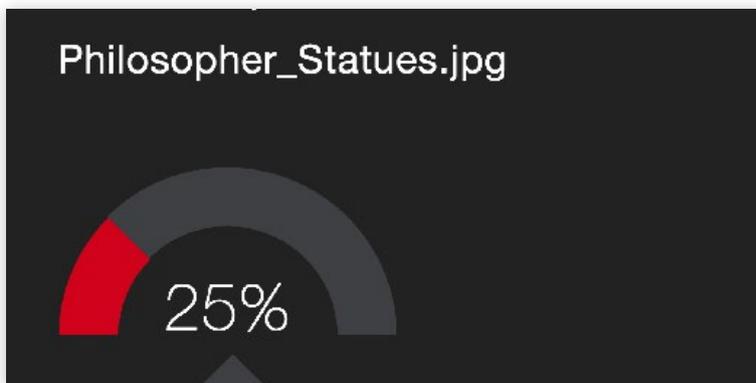# Add Alternative Description for Image Files

Add a rich description to images and graphs to improve comprehension

Ally Micro-Learning

Images can be a great way to engage your learners with different modes of learning, and can help communicate complex ideas to students. For students with visual impairments, "alternative descriptions" that explain the content of an image are crucial for their learning. For all students, text descriptions can provide deeper context to aid their comprehension.

Scenario: You add an image file to your course for students
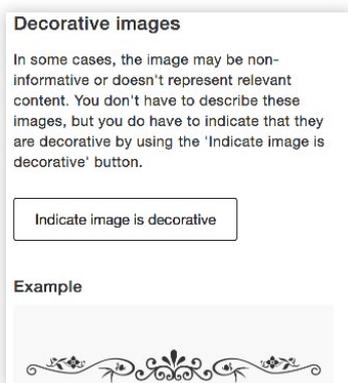
1

Philosopher_Statues.jpg

25%

If your image lacks a text description, the Ally indicator will appear "red." Selecting the indicator will reveal that the file is only 25% accessible because it lacks an alternative description. Click the "What this means" button for an explanation, and "How to write a good description" for some quick tips.

2

Add alternative description

Enter a description for this image

Add

When you're ready, simply add your alternative description to the text field in the Ally feedback window. You can also edit existing text in the box. When you're done, select "Add." Make sure your description is more than just the title of the file, or Ally will report an accessibility error. Describe the image and what's important, and mention any text in the image to improve your score.

3

Decorative images

In some cases, the image may be non-informative or doesn't represent relevant content. You don't have to describe these images, but you do have to indicate that they are decorative by using the 'Indicate image is decorative' button.

Indicate image is decorative

Example

Accessibility score for:

Philosopher_Statues.jpg

100%

Perfect!

You have successfully added a description.

If your image is only for visual effects, and does not contain info relevant to the learning content, you can also mark the image as "decorative." This means no alternative description is necessary , and your accessibility score will improve. This helps assure students of the purpose of those files.

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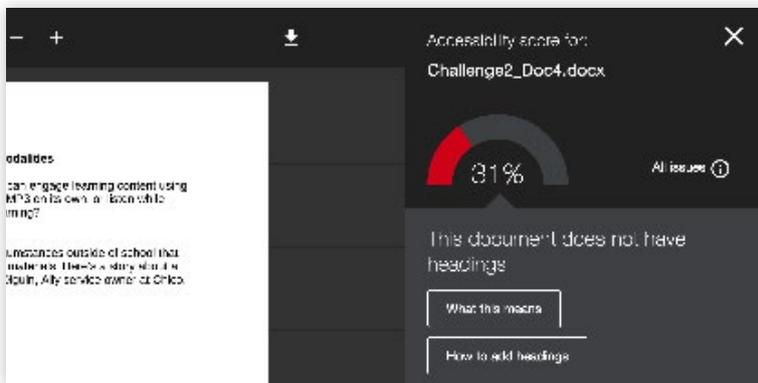# Add Headings to a Word Document
Headings make navigating documents easier for all

Ally Micro-Learning

Reading long, dense text documents can be a daunting task for learners. Well-structured documents help students organize and process texts. By using headings in your Word document styles, you can design sections and sub-sections for your documents. Headers can help students navigate and comprehend texts, and are essential for screen readers.

Scenario: **Ally tells you your Word Doc is missing headings**

1 You add a MS Word document to your course site, and notice a red Ally indicator, so you click it. Ally tells you that your document is missing headings. You'll need to download the file, open it up in MS Word to make your changes, and then upload your new version of the file to improve your score.

2 Check out the Ally feedback to learn more about why headings are important, how to use headings effectively, and where to find tutorials to help you add headings to the document. Think of headings like the outline of a paper and remember headings should provide a clear, consistent structure for students to follow throughout the doc.

3 If you're using MS Word, first highlight the text you want to change into a heading. Then, find "Styles" and select the appropriate heading type. You can adjust the font and color of the heading if you don't like the default. Use a logical heading order, and try not to exceed 6 levels. Once you've corrected the heading structure, save the Word file and upload to Ally.

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# Add Headers to your Data Tables in Word
Headers make navigating tables easier

Ally Micro-Learning

Using tables in your documents can be a great way to help organize complex information for students. To creae accessible tables, only use tables for data, and not for visual layouts. This means you should avoid blank or merged cells, and ensure that the content in rows and colums align. By adding headers to your tables, you will improve how your students navigate tables, especially if they use a screen reader.

Scenario: **You upload a Word Doc with tables**

1
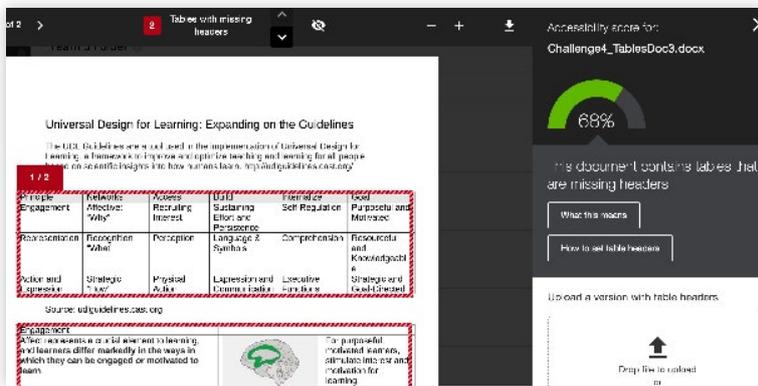
When uploading a Word document to your course, you notice a light green indicator. You select the indicator and discover that Ally reports tables in your document are missing headers. In the preview to the left, you see red outlines around the tables missing headers. Select "What this means" in the sidebar to learn more about accessible tables.

2
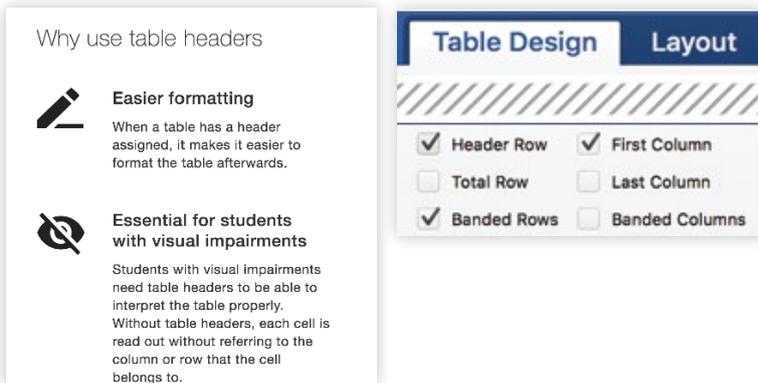
To correct the issues, download the file and open it in MS Word or your authoring tool.

Add headers in Word by:
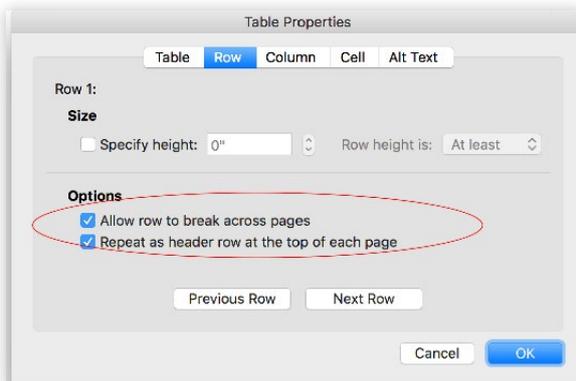
1. Highlight the first row in your table that explains what's in each column

2. From the "Table Design" tab at the top, check the box for "Header Row".

3

3. Next, right select your highlighted row, select "Table Properties", and check "Repeat as header row"

4. Once you've corrected the heading structure, save the Word file. Then select the Ally indicator for the Word File you fixed, upload your saved file by dragging into the box or selecting 'browse' at the bottom of the Instructor Feedback.

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Export a Word Doc as a Tagged PDF
Ensure that your Word Doc stays accessible when converting to PDF

Ally Micro-Learning

Although keeping your documents as a .doc or .docx file is the best way to ensure the document remains accessible, many instructors prefer to export their Word docs as PDF. When exporting as PDF, it is important that you check your export settings to make sure that the PDF will be tagged, as this will make sure the document is easy to navigate.
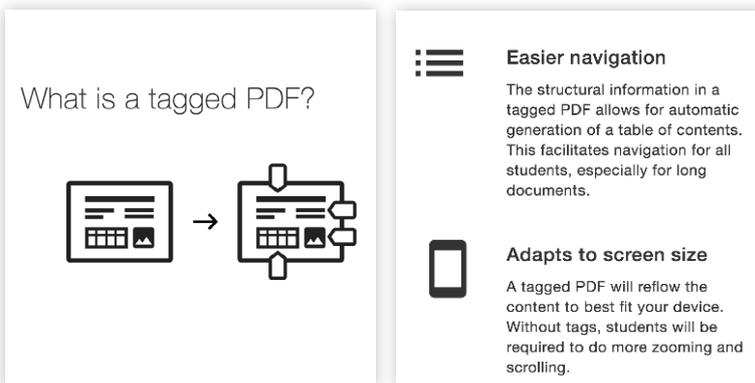
## Scenario: **You upload an untagged PDF of your syllabus**

1
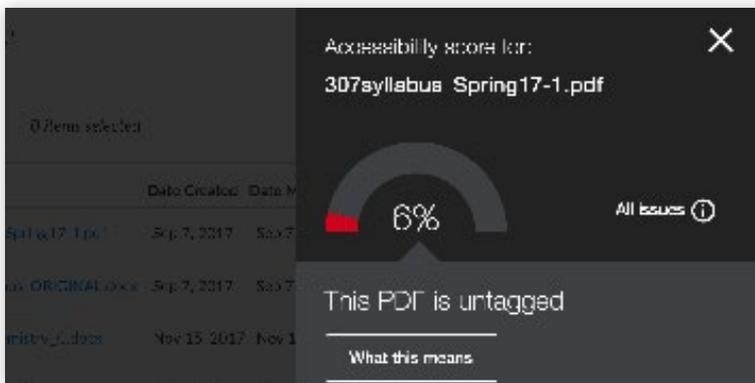
You created your syllabus in a Word doc, exported it as PDF, and added it to your course. A red Ally indicator appears next to your file, and informs you that your PDF is untagged.

2

A tagged document provides readers with improved navigation, helps keep texts organized, and is essential for students who use a screen reader. You can upload the Word file to maintain accessibility, or your Word doc as a PDF with the correct settings.

3
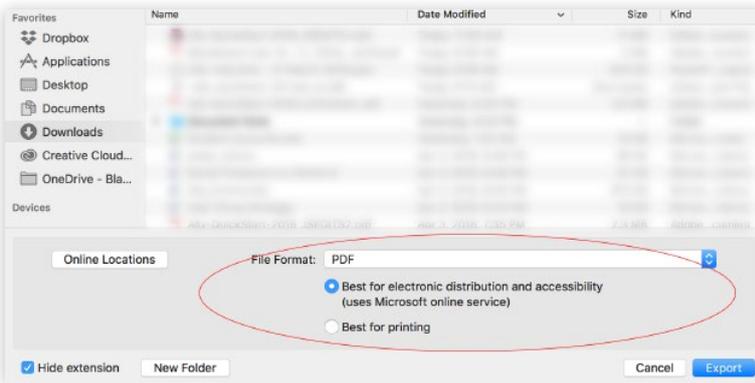
To export a Word document as a tagged PDF, go to "File," select "Save As" then select PDF from the drop-down. You will notice a dialogue box, check "Best for electronic distribution and accessibility." Then upload your newly tagged PDF to Ally.

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