



# Blackboard Accessibility

The goal of Blackboard Learn is to provide an accessible platform for students and teachers for equal access to online courses. There is also a level of responsibility for instructors to make their course content accessible and for students to ask for accommodations if they need them. Find out how you can create and participate in inclusive learning experiences by using the accessibility features in Learn.

Blackboard is fully committed to ensuring that our platform contains no barriers for users with disabilities and is both usable and accessible by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or situation. Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility levels using two sets of standards: Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued from the United States federal government and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

## Attributions:

[https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_SP\\_12\\_and\\_SP\\_13/Administrator/035\\_Accessibility](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_12_and_SP_13/Administrator/035_Accessibility)  
<http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Learn/Resources/Accessibility/JAWS-Demo.aspx>

## Using Blackboard if You Have a Hearing Impairment

The Top 2 things you need to know about using Blackboard if you have a hearing impairment:

1. The new [Record from Webcam \(Video Everywhere\)](#) feature is embedded in the content editor and allows you to create video messages or submissions anywhere you have access to the content editor. That means that if you have other peers in your class who sign, you can record and view video conversations in a discussion forum, post a video blog, or even submit a video presentation to your teachers for assignments.
2. While the Blackboard Learn product does not auto-caption media files it does provide full support for captions in all media types that can be uploaded or viewed within your

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course content. With some forethought, even videos recorded with the Record from Webcam feature can be captioned. See [Best Practice: Captioning Video Content](#) for details.

### Using Blackboard if You Have a Visual Impairment

The Top 5 things you need to know about using Blackboard if you have a visual impairment:

1. Blackboard Learn is developed against the [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) to ensure its compatibility with the latest versions of assistive technology including screen readers such as [JAWS](#) and [VoiceOver](#).
2. Pages in Blackboard Learn follow a common structure to ensure familiarity as you navigate through the system. A combination of headings and ARIA landmarks are used to define the structure of the page. Tools such as the [global navigation menu](#) and [Quick Links](#) can help with faster more efficient navigation and all keyboard navigation follows commonly used web navigation models.
3. The [Quick Links](#) feature goes beyond traditional skip links allowing you to jump directly to any heading or ARIA landmark on the current page. You can open Quick Links with a keyboard shortcut (SHIFT+ALT+L) from anywhere in the page so it's always easy to move around.
4. Alt tags are used to identify all images used within Blackboard Learn. When teachers are building course content, they are prompted to add alt text to images they upload as well to ensure visual information is available to all users.
5. If you have defined high contrast settings on your local computer, you can enable high contrast styles on the login page of Blackboard Learn. Doing so will inform the system to respect your operating system selections to ensure the best visual experience based on your personal needs.

### Using Blackboard if You Have a Mobility Impairment

The Top 5 things you need to know about using Blackboard if you have a mobility impairment:

1. Keyboard navigation throughout the Blackboard Learn system follows common web navigation models to ensure consistency and familiarity with other web-based experiences.



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2. Quick links will aggregate up a list of all the headings and landmarks on the page allowing you to quickly find and navigate to elements in the middle of the page. It can be opened with a keyboard shortcut from anywhere in the page so it's always easy to move around.
3. Keyboard shortcuts are available for a variety of tools in the Blackboard Learn system in order to increase efficiency for keyboard users. Keyboard shortcuts are specific to the current page or tool in use and can be discovered by opening the Quick Links tool using Shift+Alt+L. See [Keyboard Shortcuts for the Content Editor](#) for detailed information for that tool.
4. If typing is difficult, the [Record from Webcam \(Video Everywhere\)](#) feature, which is embedded in the content editor, allows you to create voice responses to assignment, discussion boards, blogs or within any other Blackboard Learn area where the content editor is present.
5. Wherever content can be arranged on the page using drag and drop, keyboard options are available as well. You can see a list of all the elements on the page and use keyboard controls to move items up, down, left, or right in the list.

## Using Blackboard if You Have a Learning Disability

The Top 5 things you need to know about using Blackboard if you have a learning disability:

1. When you are in a course, you can collapse the course menu to reduce the clutter on the page and help you focus on the task at hand. The menu can be brought back at any time by holding your mouse on the left of the screen and clicking on the bar that is displayed. This control is also accessible with a keyboard.
2. Menu options, buttons, and controls that are not always needed are only displayed when the item they relate to receives focus from either the mouse or keyboard. This helps reduce the visual noise on the page and ensures you have access to the menus as soon as you need them.
3. Activity counters within the [global navigation menu](#) and My Blackboard tools can alert you to new items or information requiring your attention. As you review these items, the counters are cleared so that you are always aware of what is new or has changed since you last accessed the system.
4. If your system is enabled, you can set up individual notifications for new content, due dates, discussion posts, and other items within Blackboard Learn to alert you to



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information even when you are not logged into the system. These notifications are sent to you by email, shown in My Blackboard Updates, or the Notifications Dashboard. If Blackboard Connect is installed, you can receive alerts by text message.

5. The Blackboard Learn system allows your instructor to set up accommodations for tests based on your individual needs. If you require more time, more attempts, different display options, or an alternative testing location, please speak with your teacher to define the appropriate test exceptions.

## Accessibility Features in Blackboard Learn

Whether you are a teacher building and facilitating a course, or a student participating in a course, awareness and use of these features and tools creates an accessible environment for success.

### My Blackboard

My Blackboard aggregates information from across the Blackboard Learn system and focuses on the individual user. This provides each user with a single place to get a quick overview of everything related to various tools and courses as well as their academic or institutional network and community, and allows them to respond, review, and directly interact with the information presented there. Activity counters will quickly call attention to items requiring the users attention since the user has last accessed My Blackboard. Having a single place to go can simplify the overall experience for students with disabilities and help them feel more focused on the tasks they need to complete. Students can get an overview of outstanding information before diving into the details of their courses.

To learn more, see [My Blackboard](#).

### Global Navigation

The [global navigation menu](#) refers to the set of links that appears at the very top of Blackboard Learn and is accessed by clicking on your name or through the use of a keyboard shortcut. This menu provides a consistent, quick and easy way to find information and navigate to tools like My Blackboard, your courses and even some personal settings from anywhere in the system.

To learn more, see [My Blackboard](#).



## Adaptive Release

Instructors can create individualized learning paths for students using adaptive release. Adaptive release controls the release of content to students based on a set of rules the instructor creates. The rules may be related to availability, date and time, individual users, group membership, scores or attempts on any Grade Center item, calculated columns in Grade Center, or review status of an item in the course. Adaptive release can be used to target alternative content formats or additional materials directly to the students who need them.

To learn more, see [Controlling the Release of Content](#).

## Quick Links

Located in the top left, the Quick Links icon opens a list of all the ARIA landmarks as well as an outline of all content headings on the page you are viewing. Any available keyboard shortcuts for the current tool or page are also displayed. You can quickly locate any heading or section within any page in the Blackboard Learn application and jump directly to it. Quick Links is specific to the page being viewed and can be opened at any time with a keyboard shortcut (SHIFT+ALT+L). This functionality provides a significant increase in efficiency for users who rely primarily on their keyboard for navigating within the application.

To learn more, see [Quick Links](#).

## Test Exceptions

New settings have been added to the Test and Survey Options pages called Test Availability Exceptions. Using these settings, instructors can select one or more groups or students and make a number of exceptions to the already established availability settings for the test. Exceptions can be used to provide an accommodation to a disabled student (such as allowing the more time or attempts on the test), or provide accommodation for technology and language differences.

To learn more, see [Test and Survey Options](#) and [Using the Test and Survey Canvas](#).

## Keyboard Accessible Reordering

Located on every page where items can be reordered using drag and drop, this accessible alternative displays the items on the page as a list and provides you with keyboard commands to reorder the items.



To learn more, see [Editing and Managing Course Content](#).

### Record from Webcam (Video Everywhere)

A feature within the content editor, **Record from Webcam** (Video Everywhere) allows students and instructors to record video on the fly using their webcams and the YouTube recording technology. Video is seamlessly stored in your personal YouTube account and directly embedded in course materials, interactions, and feedback through the content editor. Visual feedback is extremely valuable for anyone using sign language and for users who need to replay interactions. Students have the ability to record video responses and submissions wherever they have the ability to generate content using the content editor, making it easier for them to communicate with their teachers or peers in alternative formats. The feature is based on the YouTube technology. You can even run these self-recorded videos through YouTube's automated captioning technology to build captions and transcripts.

To learn more, see [Video Everywhere](#) and [Best Practice: Captioning Video Content](#).

### YouTube Player Controls

The YouTube Mashup allows an instructor to search for and embed YouTube videos directly in the course content. When the video is displayed the student has access to accessible player controls which allow them to play, pause, stop and control the volume of the video with a keyboard or screen reader without requiring them to interact with the more challenging Flash based controls that are present with the default YouTube video.

### Notifications

Blackboard can be configured to send out notifications through a variety of channels, informing users that there are changes to their courses. Notifications are specific to the individual user so both instructors and students can set up what notifications will be sent to them as well as when and how they want to receive notifications. Clicking on a link within a notification takes you directly to the individual item without the need to consume all the surrounding content at the same time. When integrated with Blackboard Connect, users can optionally receive notifications via text (SMS), text-to-voice, and by telephone. These capabilities allow everyone to understand what is happening with their courses in the medium that is most comfortable for them.

To learn more, see [Notifications](#) and [Notification Dashboard Settings](#).



## Display Options and Content Folders

Instructors can control the visual display format of content on any content page or within any folder in their course. Options include showing only the text, showing only an icon to represent a content object and showing both the text and the icon. When there is a lot of content on the page it can be challenging to consume for students with cognitive disabilities. Putting things into appropriate folders and using the formatting options allow the instructor to control the amount of clutter that is on the page which can help the student to focus in on one element at a time.

To find out more, see Course Style Options, [Setting the Default Content View](#).

## Content Editor

The content editor in Blackboard Learn is based on 3rd party technology from TinyMCE. It provides accessible controls as well as keyboard shortcuts for formatting content created within it. The editor will properly clean up unnecessary HTML code that may be included when content is copied from Microsoft Office documents. This clean HTML will ensure that screen reader users can fully consume any content created in or copied into the editor. The formatting controls in the editor will also ensure that headings added to content by the instructor will not conflict with the overall semantic structure of the page on which the content is displayed. Building accessible content within the course is key to the success of your students and the content editor helps ensure that any content you create within it meets user and system expectations.

To find out see [Using the Content Editor](#).

## High Contrast Styles

On the login page for the Blackboard Learn system you can choose to enable a high contrast setting to ensure the system uses the contrast settings you have already defined in your operating system to display text, menus, and other navigation controls within the Blackboard Learn environment. For users with visual impairments the contrast settings defined within the operating system likely provide the most comfortable manner in which to view and consume information and the high contrast support in Blackboard Learn allows you to simply continue to use them.

To find out more, see [Logging In](#).



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## JAWS Screen Reader Demo

Improvements within Blackboard Learn™, Release 9.1 enable a blind person to more effectively interact with the Blackboard Learn platform - furthering not just accessibility technology, but educational advancement as well. The videos below are recorded sessions in which a blind user is using a JAWS screen reader to interact with and complete various tasks in Blackboard Learn including submitting an assignment, taking a test, building content and grading students.

- [Student Submitting an Assignment](#)
- [Logging into Blackboard Learn](#)
- [Incorrect Login Messaging](#)
- [Student Using "My Places" to Locate Courses](#)
- [Student Navigating the Course Homepage](#)
- [Student Navigating Course Content](#)
- [Student Taking a Test](#)
- [Student Viewing Grades](#)
- [Instructor Adding Course Content](#)
- [Instructor Creating Assignment](#)
- [Instructor Grading Assignment](#)