Maximize Usability
In Course Design

The visual elements in a course play an important role in course design and affect course usability. Improve learning by using visual elements strategically.

Course Navigation

- Use consistent labeling and organization throughout course
- Organize navigation menu, move important items to the top and hide/remove unused
- Ensure all links in the course are working

Documents
Microsoft Word® and PowerPoint®

- Use built-in features to create columns, tables, and lists
- Apply "Styles" to change the appearance of text
- Create a linear reading order
- Use PowerPoint template slide layouts
- Run accesibility checkers

Documents
PDFs

- Run Optical Character Recognition (OCR) on scanned PDFs
- Save PDFs from Word using "Save As" so that "Document structure tags for accessibility"
- Use Adobe® Acrobat Pro® to check acessibility of PDFs

Text Readability

- Provide sufficient white space
- Use fonts that are easy to read
- Align text consistently, avoid center alignment for long passages of text
- Reserve underlines for hyperlinks
- Use descriptive link phrases instead of URL or filenames
- Use color sparingly; use sufficient contrast

Headings

- Use headings to create hierarchy, chunk information, and indicate topic changes
- Use heading styles or HTML headings instead of bold or italics
- Do not skip heading levels
- Keep headings short

Tables

- Add tables as text elements, not as images
- Use tables to display data, not for layout
- Specify table headers for columns and rows
- Provide a caption or alternative text (alt-text) to describe the purpose of the table

Images

- Use alternative text (alt-text) field to describe simple imges
- Use long descriptions or captions for complex images
- Set decorative images' alternative text to blank (or null)
- Make sure images are of sufficient quality so that the content is clear

Multimedia

- Check for clear audio and quality visuals
- Keep videos under 20 minutes or divide into brief segments
- Provide captions for videos
- Provide transcripts for audio recordings
- Provide an equivalent text-alternative for multimedia that cannot be made fully accessible

Tools

- Use tools that allow students to control playback, size of media and presentations
- Let students know if "high band-width" is required
- Choose tools that are cross-platform/browser
- Inform students about platform/browser requirements
- Include links to tool accessibility (e.g., Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs))