

Course Tools – Accessibility – Blackboard Ally Introduction

Ally is a tool that helps make digital course content more accessible. It automatically checks course materials against WCAG 2.0 accessibility standards. Ally can easily be used to increase the accessibility level of course materials and works with Blackboard to gauge how accessible course files are. Ally does not guarantee that files will be 100% accessible or usable by all assistive technology. Ally offers feedback on the accessibility of course files, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to improve the file to make it more accessible.

Instructor Feedback

Instructor Feedback tells the user (instructor, course manager, etc.) how accessible the content is. The four accessible icons show how accessible the file is in Ally's accessibility score ranges. The content must be available somewhere in the course other than the content collection, for Ally to check it for accessibility. There is a possibility that an image file could receive a false positive or a false negative (i.e., an image is embedded via the text editor and alt-text is provided during this process, but Ally will mark the image as not having alt-text.) If this is the case, alt-text can be added to the image via Ally.

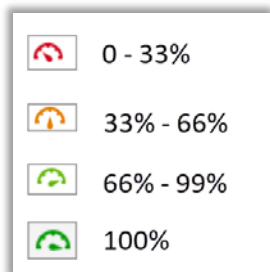
Accessibility Scores

Ally measures the accessibility of course files by giving them a score. Each score is composed of both a number and a colored gauge that reflects the number. The scores are determined by the severity of the issues in each file. A low score indicates the file has severe or multiple accessibility issues; a high score means there are minor or no accessibility issues. For accessibility scores less than 100 percent, Ally gives suggestions for improving the accessibility of the file. Some files will be measured for accessibility immediately, while others may take longer (if the file is not checked after 24 hours contact your college Blackboard representative)

There are four colors of accessibility icons: red, orange, green, and dark green, that measure a file's accessibility:

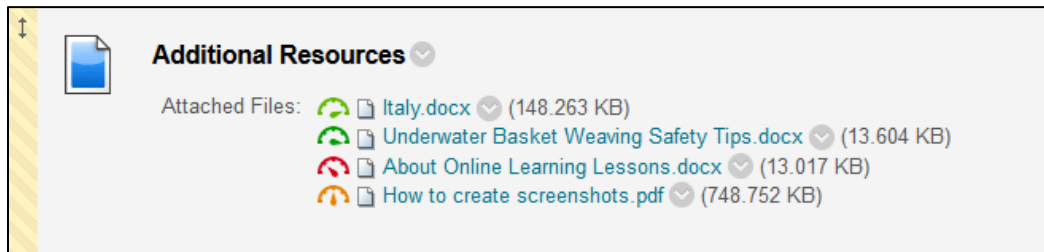
Color	Severity	Score Range	Description
Red icon	Severe	0 – 33%	The file is not accessible and needs immediate attention.
Orange icon	Major	33% – 66%	The file is somewhat accessible.
Green icon	Minor	66% – 99%	The file is accessible, but could be improved.
Dark Green icon	None	100%	The file has perfect accessibility. There is no action needed to further improve the file.

NOTE: While the icons are typically discussed based on their color the position of the gauge indicator can also be used to determine the score. For example, a gauge to the far right is 100 percent (see icons below).



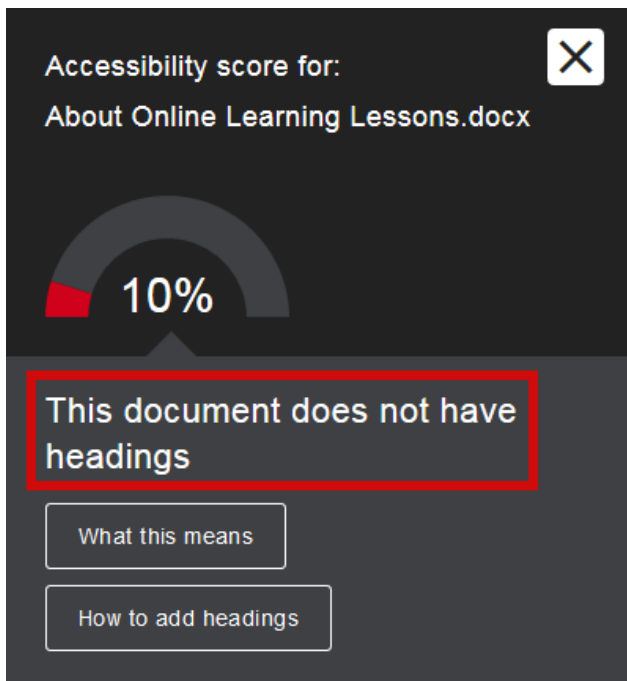
View File Accessibility

After files are uploaded to the course, Ally produces an accessibility score for each file. In items with multiple files, the accessibility score is shown for each file. In areas where users access files, the accessibility icon is located to the right or left of the file. Select the icon to view feedback and tips on how to improve file accessibility.



Improve File Accessibility

Once a file has generated an accessibility score, the user can begin to explore accessibility issues and make corrections to raise the score. Accessible documents are important for all audiences, and Ally gives instructors the tools to understand common issues and improve course files.



Alternative Accessible Formats

Ally provides alternative formats of the course files available to students and instructors. Ally uses these file types to make alternative formats: PDF, Word, PowerPoint, OpenOffice/LibreOffice, and HTML.

From those file types, Ally creates the following alternative formats:

- **HTML** – Converts into a format that screen readers can read.
- **ePub** – If you have a mobile reader, you can open an ePub document on an iPad, Kindle, or similar device.
- **Audio** – Generates an mp3 version of the audio.
- **Electronic Braille** – Braille ready file format that works well with electronic braille embossers or electronic braille displays.
- **OCR** – Automatically OCR scanned documents.
- **Tagged PDF** – Converts Word, PowerPoint, and OpenOffice/LibreOffice files into a tagged PDF version.

NOTE: The alternative format is only as accessible as the base document.

