Digitally Accessible Communication Strategies

A guide by the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)

Record of Attendance.

What is Electronic Communication?

The transfer of knowledge, ideas, data, or messages via digital means is referred to as electronic communication or digital communication. Electronic communication includes a broad range of methods, such as email, instant messaging, text messaging, online chat rooms and forums, social media platforms like X formerly Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat, and video conferencing tools like Zoom.

What is Electronic Accessibility?

Electronic accessibility is about reducing the barriers that exist in the electronic environment.

Barriers to Accessibility:

- **Visual Impairments** – Screen readers, read electronic content aloud for people who have low or no vision including alt text and audio descriptions.
- **Hearing Impairments** – Need captioning and subtitles for sound
- **Physical Disabilities** – Such as navigating via the keyboard without using a mouse
- **Cognitive Disabilities** – Plain language that is easy to read and understand
- **Machine Impairments** – Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ingesting

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA

Four "**P O U R**" Principles

Perceivable	**O**perable	**U**nderstandable	**R**obust

- **Perceivable** through senses regarding captioning for audio, color contrast, etc.
- **Operable** with assistive technology using only the keyboard, no flashing or transitioning.
- **Understandable** in terms of content and predictable on how to operate the site.
- **Robust,** accessible using a variety of technologies and as technology improves.
- The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) develops standards and support materials to help you understand and implement accessibility; https://www.w3.org/wai

Reasons to Care

- It's the **LAW**!

- It's a **Civil Right**!

- Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Requires Digital Accessibility to State and Local Government Organizations (Section 508).

- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended in 1998, is a federal law that requires agencies to provide individuals with disabilities equal access to electronic information and data comparable to those who do not have disabilities.

- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)

    - Guidance for Web Accessibility and ADA

    - Rule on Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps Provided by State and Local Governments

- Disability impacts ALL of us – (ex. Aging, Injury, etc.)

- Saves money and time – Lawsuits are costly, and content still has to be made accessible!

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Trends in Digital Accessibility Lawsuits by Year

Year	Lawsuits	Increase
2016	262	210% increase from 2016
2017	814	210% increase from 2016
2018	2,314	184% increase from 2017
2019	2,890	25% increase from 2018
2020	3,503	21% increase from 2019
2021	4,011	14% increase from 2020
2022	4,061	1% increase from 2021

4,605 digital accessibility lawsuits filed in 2023.

Basic Digital Access in Action: Checkpoints

- Writing
- Structure
- Color
- Media
- Links

Writing: Content and Language

- Keep it short and simple (K.I.S.S. Principle)
- Use plain language that is easy to read
- Acronyms and Abbreviations: spell out first use
- Phone numbers: avoid periods – use dashes!

  (A period is math and considered a decimal.)
- Check spelling and readability (built-in, free tools) and a second set of eyes!
- **Be respectful and inclusive**

Writing: Font and Format

- **Limit:** all caps "shouting", italics, and scripts (decreases readability, and with a screen reader, all caps is read letter-by-letter.)
- **Size minimums:**
    - **Body Text**: 12 pt
    - **Footer**: 9 pt
    - **PowerPoint**: 24 pt
    - **Large Print**: 18 pt
- **Line Spacing:** 1.15 to 2
- **Font:**
    - **Serif**: easily read on paper (Times New Roman)
    - **Sans-serif:** (easily read digitally ex. Helvetica)
- Consider L I 1, in some fonts they all look the same!

Structure: Headings

- **Required** – Heading Level 1 to 6.
- Use in order!
- Length Maximum: 60-80 characters
- Format in Styles pane
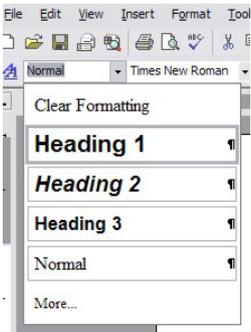
- Use Lists – Don't type dashes or astericks
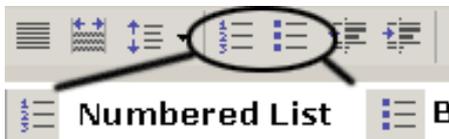
Good Heading Usage

1. Clear and Descriptive:
   - **Good:** "How to Create Accessible Web Content"
   - **Why:** This heading clearly describes the content, making it easy for users to understand what the section is about.

2. Proper Hierarchy:
   - **Good:**

   ```
   <h1>Main Title</h1>
   <h2>Subsection Title</h2>
   <h3>Detail Title</h3>
   ```

   - **Why:** Using a logical hierarchy helps users and screen readers navigate the content effectively.

Bad Heading Usage

1. Vague and Uninformative:
   - **Bad:** "Stuff You Should Know"
   - **Why:** This heading is too vague and doesn't give users a clear idea of what the content will cover.

2. Incorrect Hierarchy:
   - **Bad:**

   ```
   <h1>Main Title</h1>
   <h4>Subsection Title</h4>
   <h2>Detail Title</h2>
   ```

   - **Why:** Skipping heading levels or using them out of order can confuse users and assistive technologies.

Color

- **Don't rely on different colors to convey meaning.**

- This may exclude those who are colorblind and may be impacted by cultural differences.

- Check that color alone is not required to understand.

Color Contrast

- **Create visuals with high contrast**

- High contrast makes graphics easier to interpret

- Ensuring the colors in your graphics have a 4.5:1 contrast will help **make the text on your graphics visible to everyone**.

Examples of high vs low contrast text and backgrounds

High contrast	Low contrast	Low contrast	High contrast
Low contrast	High contrast	Low contrast	High contrast

sproutsocial.com/insights   **sprout**social
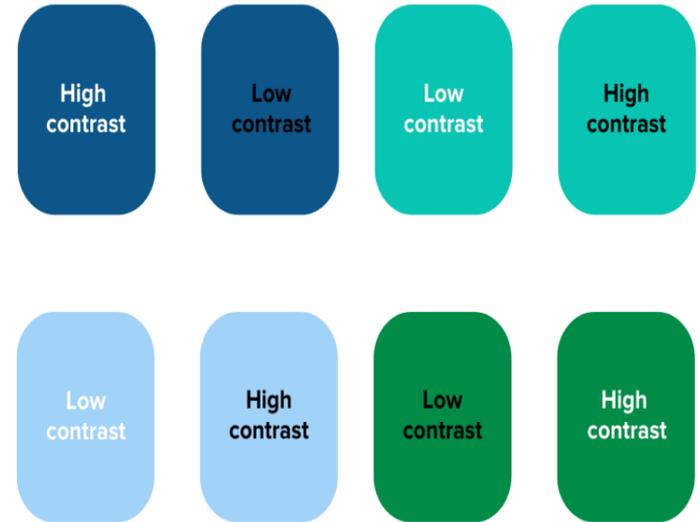
Media: Accessible Images

- Alternative text, or "alt text," is a short yet informative description of an image that screen readers use to describe that image.

- When writing alt text, ask yourself, 'What about my image is vital for someone to know?'

- Don't overthink it. Alt text is subjective. As Alexa put it, "As the content author, you have the power to decide what details are important in not only your image, but your entire post as well."

- Helps Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – Text is readily searched, and images are not.

Alt Text: Recap

When describing a picture in English, follow these guidelines:
1. Start with a general overview, identifying the main subject.
2. Detail key elements like objects, colors, and people.
3. Describe the mood, atmosphere, and composition.
4. Use specific adjectives and, if relevant, similes or metaphors for vivid imagery.
5. Consider using captions, alt text, or image descriptions for different contexts.
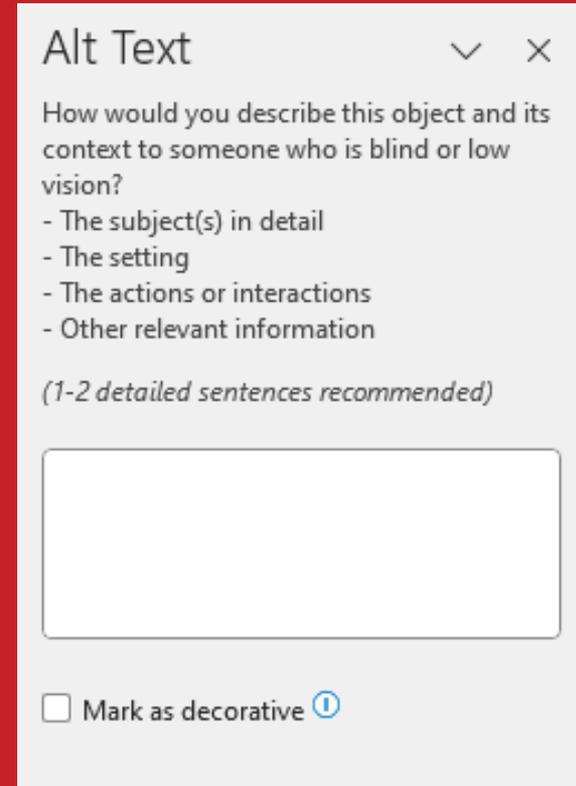
Alt Text

How would you describe this object and its context to someone who is blind or low vision?
- The subject(s) in detail
- The setting
- The actions or interactions
- Other relevant information

(1-2 detailed sentences recommended)

☐ Mark as decorative ⓘ

Example of Alt Text

President Timothy Caboni poses for a selfie with five WKU Spirit Masters in front of the Craig Administration Center.

Alt Text: Pro Tip!

- Add video descriptions, too.

Don't Forget: Visual Content Warning

Include a warning for people with photosensitivity.

Closed Captions and Subtitles

- Captions: Text displays in the *original* language being spoken

- Subtitles: *Translated* text displays of what's being spoken

- As Alexa put it, "Captions make videos accessible for a variety of users—from those with hearing loss or cognitive disabilities to those learning a new language to people who simply don't want to wake their sleeping partners or babies."

Here are a few common **best practices**:
- **Go beyond what's being said.** Subtitles write out what's said, but closed captions add extra information for context like sounds in the background or music being played.

- **Ensure captions aren't covered by platform content.** Especially important in formats like Reels and TikTok.

- **Create high contrast captions.** Make sure your captions are visible against your background, like white text against a black highlight, or vice versa.

What about Transcripts?

Definition: A transcript is a written record of all spoken content in an audio or video file. It includes dialogue, but typically does not include non-speech elements like sound effects or music unless specified.

Usage: Transcripts are useful for making audio content accessible, such as podcasts or interviews. They can be read independently of the audio or video and are often used for reference, study, or SEO purposes.

Hyperlinks (Links)

Link text should:

- Clearly and accurately convey the link's purpose

- Indicate the destination or purpose of the link

- Be the name of the linked page or document.

- Clearly state in the link text if it is not a web page.

- Not be ambiguous or reuse the same link text for links that lead to different destinations.
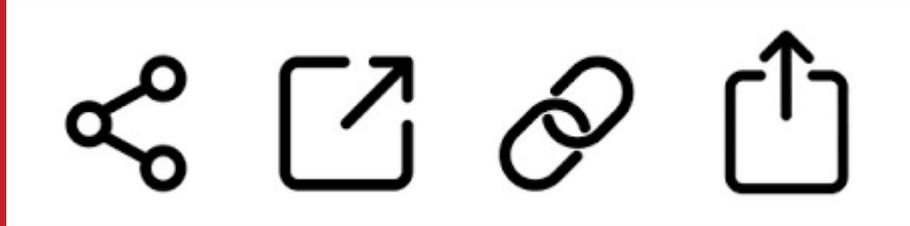
Links: Example 1

✗ Bad example

I think you should read [this](#) article about link text.

This link has text that does not indicate its purpose when read out of context: The screen reader would just announce "link: this." Screen readers also provide dialogs that list all the links in a page. If "this" was one of the links listed, it'd be impossible to tell where it might take you.

✓ Good example

I think you should read this [article about link text](#).

After adjusting the link text, when the link is focused, screen readers will announce "link: article about link text." This link text is successful because its meaning is independent of its surrounding text.

Creating Accessible Digital Content

➜ **Accessible Webpages:** Ensures all users can access and navigate your content.

➜ **Accessible Emails:** Ensure all recipients can read and understand your messages.

➜ **Accessible Documents:** Ensure all recipients can read and understand your materials.

➜ **Accessible Social Media Content:** Ensures all users can engage with your content

Accessible Websites

To ensure website accessibility:
- All WKU CMS templates have been designed to be compliant and are always being updated for improvements in accessibility. For most things, you don't need to worry about anything.

Accessibility Scan:
- In addition to the using the WYSIWYG best practices, the Final Check feature scans the code on your page for any accessibility issues. Final checks also verify links and check spelling.

Publishing Webpages:
- Pages containing any Critical Problems will be prevented from publishing.
- If a page contains a Critical Problem, the publish button will be disabled until it is repaired.

Accessible Websites

Accessible Emails

- **Subject lines**: Use descriptive subject lines to tell users what the email is about.

- **Font**: Use a font size of at least 14 points; Use sans serif fonts (like this one - Arial)

- **Links and buttons**: Check that all links and buttons have the correct URL destination and are formatted properly with an underline or bold.

- **Video and Audio**: Add captions for videos and transcripts for audio content.

Digital Access: Emails!

- Your email should NOT be made up of only images!

- Don't use images of text!

- Add ALT TEXT or Image Descriptions to your Email Signature Graphics!

- Or add a bracket underneath the image and describe!

[Email Signature Graphic for WKU First Gen.]

Event Emails

Greetings!

Our **ONE WKU Lunch & Learn** series is back! The first one is a bit longer than usual, but we have an outstanding speaker coming to campus – it'll be worth it! This Lunch & Learn workshop will focus on healing from the organizational trauma caused by discord.

Sept 27, 12:00noon-2:00(ish)pm, HCIC Multipurpose room (the big room in the back right on the first floor)
Students are encouraged to attend as well – please spread the word!
You may come and go as your schedule allows -
Register HERE: https://www.wku.edu/citl/events/index.php?eventid=82670&view=event
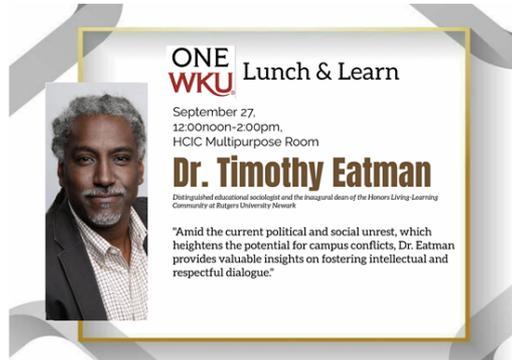
Text on flyer: [WKU is delighted to welcome] Dr. Timothy K. Eatman, a distinguished educational sociologist and the inaugural dean of the Honors Living-Learning Community at Rutgers University Newark. Amid the current political and social unrest, which heightens the potential for campus conflicts, Dr. Eatman provides valuable insights on fostering intellectual and respectful dialogue."

Register HERE: https://www.wku.edu/citl/events/index.php?eventid=82670&view=event

Accessible Documents

Turn on the **accessibility checker** for Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Outlook! Microsoft support makes it easy with <u>step-by-step instructions!</u>

Adobe also makes it easy to <u>check PDF accessibility</u>, too!

Basic Digital Access in Action: Social Media

- Add alt text to images
- Make your text accessible
- Be mindful of emojis
- Add closed captions and subtitles to videos
- Make your visual content accessible
- Use inclusive language
- Prioritize inclusivity in your images
- Make accessibility and inclusion part of your routine

Make Your Text Accessible

- Format your **hashtags** the right way
- "CamelCase,"
- So instead of #nashvillenorth, write #NashvilleNorth like President Caboni did!

- Include **@ mentions** at the end of your posts

- Avoid run-on sentences

- Present the most important information first

- Use special characters correctly, and in moderation

WKU President Timothy C. Caboni · Follow
February 28, 2023 · 🌐

Great evening in Nashville at @WKU night at the @PredsNHL game. Second most tickets sold of any university. Great @WKUAlumni turnout and support. BNA is a WKU town!! #NashvilleNorth

👍❤️ Andrea Strange, Destyn Wester and 169 others   6 comments 2 shares
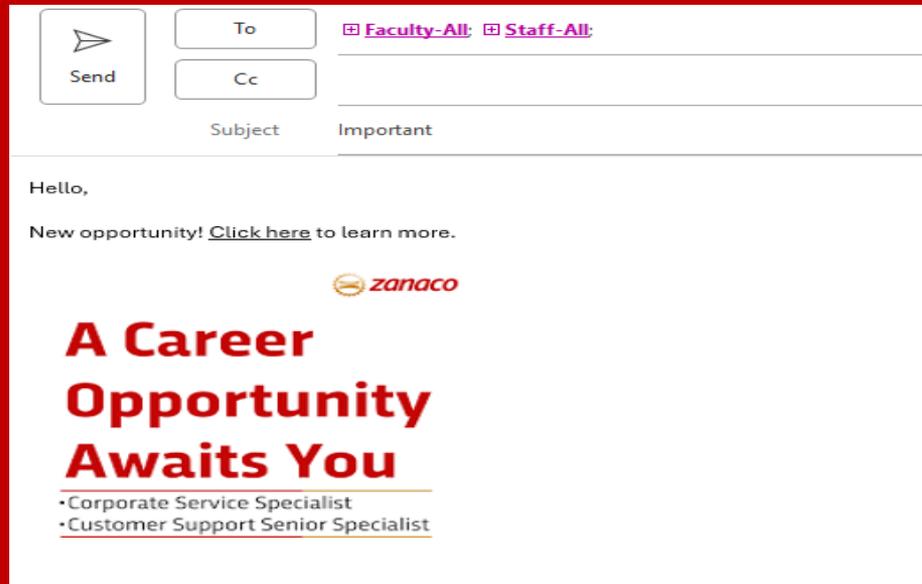
I Love Emojis!

Here are some tips:

- Use emojis in moderation

- Put them at the end of a social post

- Custom emojis

Your Turn

Email Check

Email Check

You are a winner!

+ To learn **more**

+ **Click here**

+ **Download**

+ Form: www.register-pdf.com

Image Check

Color Check

Color Check

Information in **green** is required.

*Required fields

Color Review
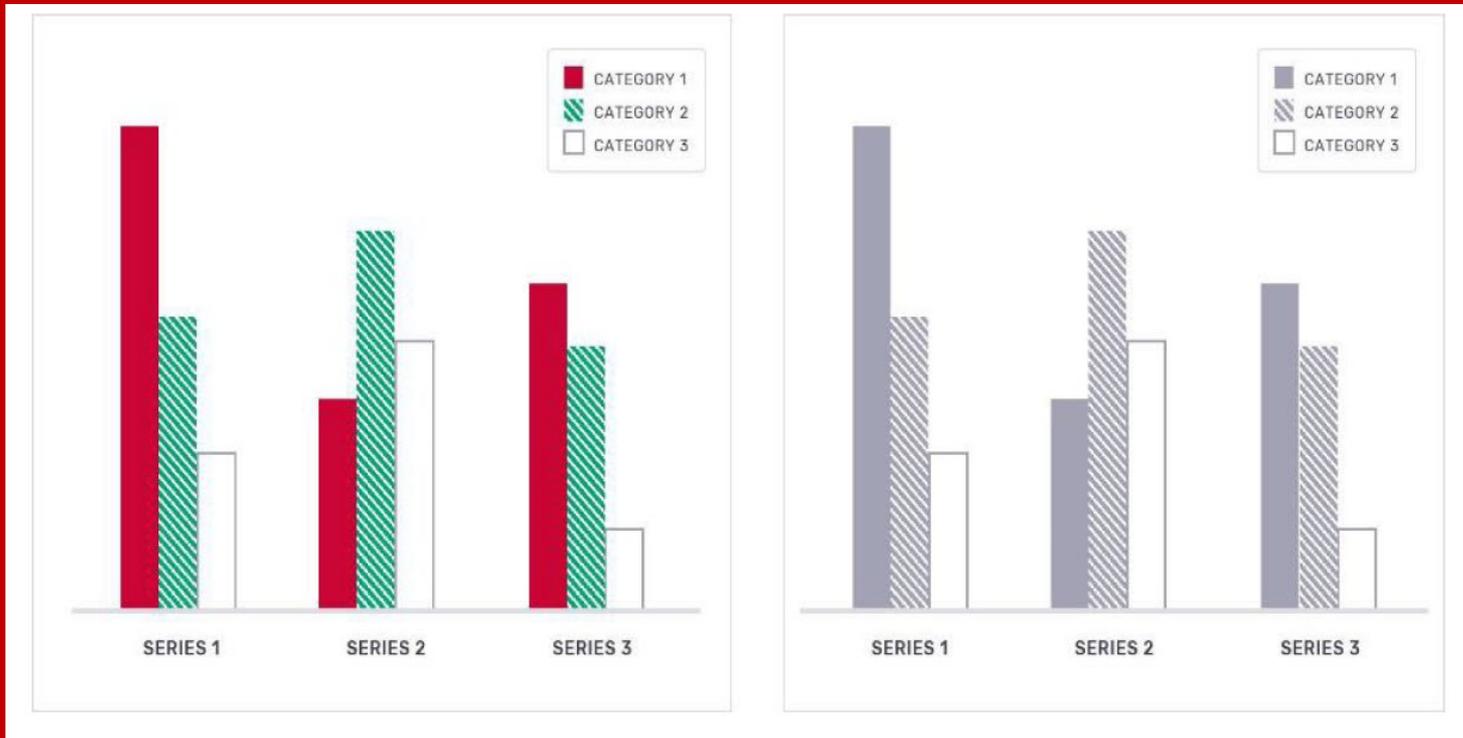
My food allergies are highlighted in red.
- Nuts
- Gluten
- Tomatoes
- Bananas
- Peppers

Color Review: Bar Graph with Fill Textures

Alt Text Review

Social Media Review

Looking for Work? #greatestcompanever

http://www.greatestcompanyever.org

We are Hiring! Contact us. Apply here.

Emoji Check

I ✏️ love ❤️ writing ✍🏻 content 💻

Everyone ⌄

🌐 **Everyone can reply**

Tweet

Video Review
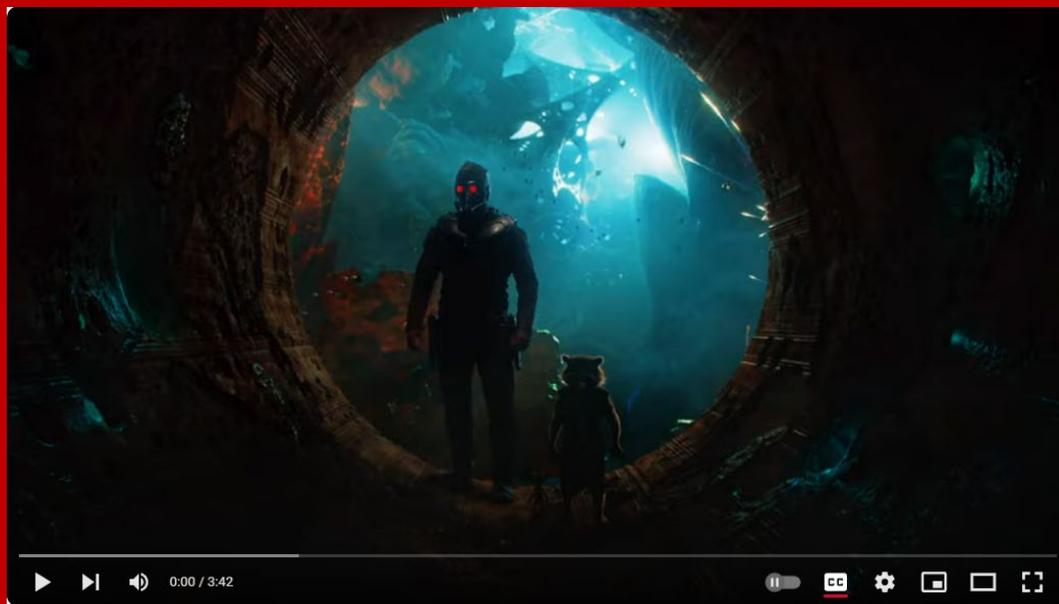
Baby Groot "I Am Groot" Scene - Bomb Scene - Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 (2017) Movie Clip

Baby Groot "I Am Groot" Scene - Bomb Scene - Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 (2017) Movie Clip

Digital Access: Points to Remember!

- Equal Access is the Law.
- Perceivable, Observable, Understandable, Robust (POUR Principles)
- Access depends on Structure (i.e., use clear email subject lines and headings)
- Keep It Short and Simple (KISS)
- Alt Text
- Color Contrast and Possible Alternatives
- Link etiquette
- Captions, visual descriptions, transcripts

Accessibility Statement

Western Kentucky University is committed to ensuring its electronic communication including **websites, mobile applications, social media posts, etc. are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities**. We are continually improving accessibility by following recommended guidelines outlined in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. We strive to adhere to the guidelines and standards established by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 at level AA conformance. These guidelines define how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities, and conformance to them improves the web's usability for all people. Information Technology Services (ITS) provides training courses and assistance to all employees on accessibility best practices. When creating WKU websites, final accessibility checks are required before publishing.

If you are experiencing difficulty accessing any element of this website or other means of electronic communication, please contact ITS at (270) 745-5000 and report the access issue to the ADA Coordinator, Chantel Wilson, at chantel.wilson@wku.edu or (270) 745-5121. Please describe the nature of the problem and where the difficulty was encountered.

For main campus obstruction free walkways and accessible building entrances, here is a map. If you encounter a physical barrier or other physical obstruction on campus, please report the access issue, such as a push button for a door or an elevator not working, to the Department of Facilities Management at (270) 745-3253 and report the access issue to the ADA Coordinator, Chantel Wilson, at chantel.wilson@wku.edu or (270) 745-5121. For assistance after hours with physical access, contact the WKU Police Department at (270) 745-2548.
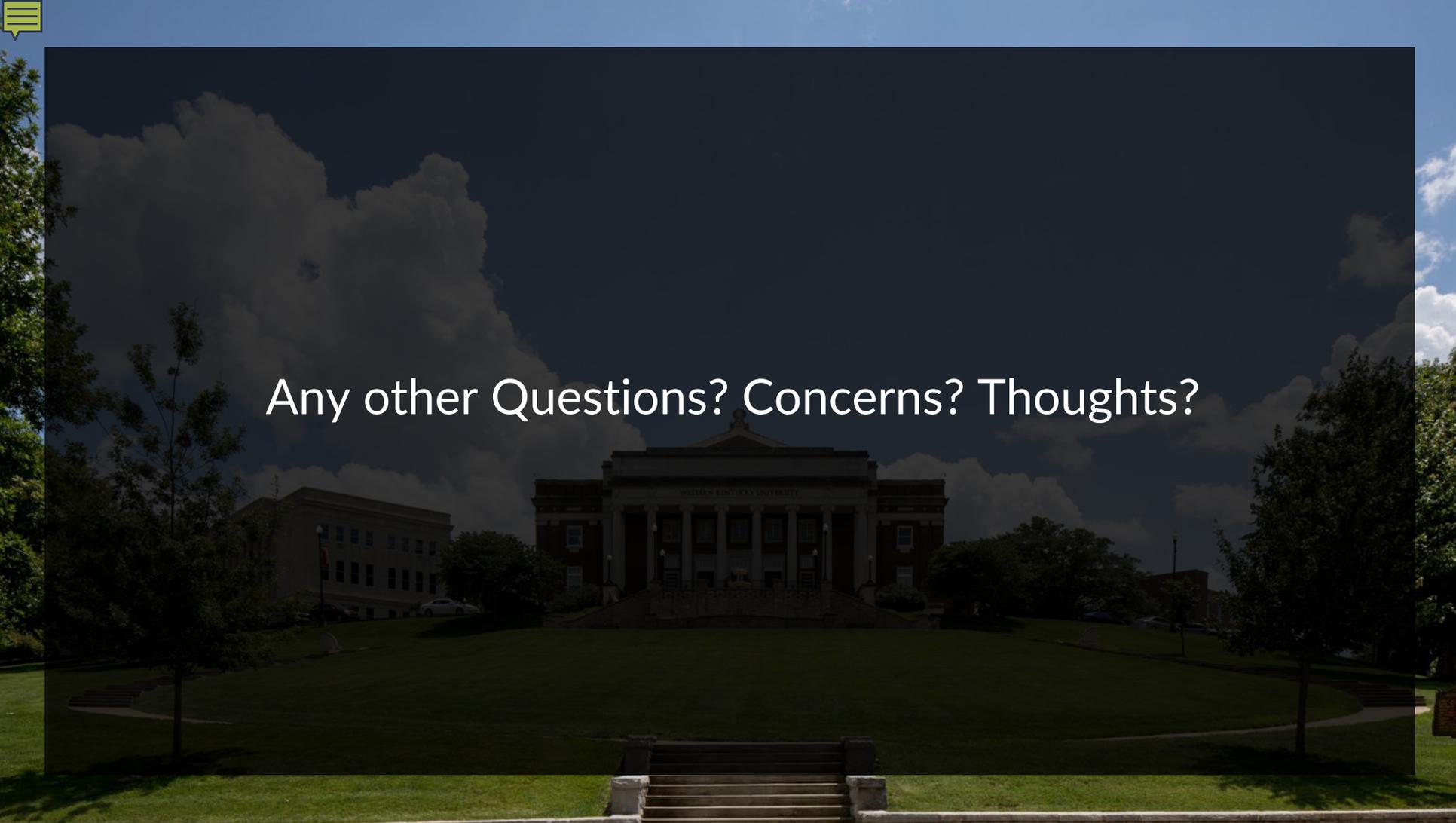
Resources

ADA National Network: Digital Access - Search Results

Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
Video Series: Digital Access in Education

Digital Access Basics: Check. Test. Eval.

Any other Questions? Concerns? Thoughts?

Survey/Feedback
Please Tell us what you thought of this presentation.

Work Cited

Accessibility Best Practices | Western Kentucky University

Hill, C. August 8, 2024. "9 guidelines to make social media posts more accessible." https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-accessibility/

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