

# ADA COMPLIANCE (SECTIONS 504 & 508)

## INTRODUCTION

When planning the learning resources for students, keep in mind that some students may have difficulty accessing electronic resources due to motor limitations or a vision or hearing disability. The law states that resources must be accessible quickly and easily for all students, including those with permanent or temporary disabilities.

## A CLOSER LOOK

### Sections 504 and 508

Part of the original Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 ensures that individuals with disabilities have equal access to programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance, including public colleges and universities. The law requires that educational institutions provide auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure that individuals with disabilities can fully participate.

Section 508 is a 1998 amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and specifies electronic- and IT-related accessibility requirements for federal agencies. These requirements have become the standard for how individuals with disabilities interact with educational, commercial, and federal government websites and other digital materials.



### Keep ADA compliance in mind when:

- Choosing multimedia and open educational resources (OERs)
- Selecting texts and images
- Planning assessments
- Writing electronic content

## PROCESS

Many learning management systems provide a layer of accessibility assistance with internal and external tools that can scan your course for accessibility. For example, Canvas provides an internal Canvas Accessibility Checker, which scans pages for 11 accessibility issues. Canvas also offers a free external tool called UDOIT, which can scan the entire course for 21 accessibility issues and help you address any issues it finds.

One of the roles of an instructional designer is to help apply ADA requirements to your courses. Your instructional designer can help you ensure your course contains the components necessary for maximizing the usability of the online course content. Another resource for accessibility is a media specialist. Media specialists will ensure media content they create and curate for your courses meets

standards of accessibility. However, you can also take some fairly simple steps to ensure compliance in your course planning:

- **Multimedia:** Choose multimedia (e.g., videos, simulations, animations) with transcripts or closed captioning.
- **Images:** Include a textual description of any image that is considered essential so it is accessible by screen-reading software. Alternative text (Alt Text) should be provided for non-decorative images, including data-populated images such as charts, graphs, and infographics.
- **Electronic file attachments:** Format uploaded content (e.g., Word documents, PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, Excel spreadsheets, etc.) so it is accessible by screen-reading technology. For example, use built-in headings and styles, and use meaningful text for hyperlinks.
- **Curated content:** Ensure all third-party resources (e.g., YouTube, MIT OpenCourseWare, MOOC, Khan Academy) are compliant. Many resources offer an accessibility statement that explains their compliance.

If you would like to check the compliance of some of your content, the checklists found on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website (see the “Additional Resources” section below) may be helpful to you.

When students need assistance with auxiliary aids and services, they can contact their local university’s Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC can help identify a plan for addressing the need of the individual student.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Section 508](#) by the U.S. General Services Administration
- [Ten Practices for Developing Accessibility Material](#) by the Online Learning Consortium
- [Section 508 Checklist by Web Accessibility in Mind](#)
- [Accessibility Compliance Checklists](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- [The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education](#) by the PACER Center, Inc.
- [Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities](#) by the U.S. Department of Education