# Making Everyday Curriculum Materials Accessible for All Learners

Module 2: Accessible Documents

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## Presenters

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### Stay connected:

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## Review from Module 1

In Module 1, we addressed the following topics:

* The mission and goals of the National Center on Accessible Educational Materials (AEM Center)
* Definition of AEM
* The importance of AEM and accessible technologies for student learning
* Examples of accessible digital materials and technologies
* A tour of relevant resources on the AEM Center website

You can access the recording from the 1-hour launch webinar for the module, the digital handout and the slides from the [Module 1 page on the AEM Center website](http://aem.cast.org/about/module-1-new-educator-training.html#.W4QsBS2ZOL4).

## Best Practices for Document Accessibility

As you practice the skills that will be discussed in this module, we encourage you to have growth mindset and remember that becoming proficient with any aspect of accessibility is a process, and you can work at your own pace. A quote from Maya Angelou is a good reminder: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/) (WCAG), now at version 2.1, are an international standard for accessibility. These guidelines can be confusing even for experienced developers. Fortunately, they can be distilled into a set of simpler principles, as captured by the acronym **POUR**, that define four qualities of an accessible user experience: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable and Robust.

The AEM Center has developed [Designing for Accessibility with POUR](http://aem.cast.org/creating/designing-for-accessibility-pour.html#.W4R2By2ZOL4) as a collection of practical tips and techniques that will help you implement the four POUR principles when you develop your own educational materials. During a 1-hour webinar, we can only address a few of these techniques, but we encourage to bookmark and revisit the page to learn additional techniques throughout the course.

### Perceivable

[Perceivable](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-perceivable.html) materials provide alternatives for how learners can access information without the need to rely on any one sense. To make your materials Perceivable, you can:

* [Add alternative text to images and other visuals](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-perceivable.html#alttext)
* [Close caption videos or provide a transcript](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-perceivable.html#captions)
* [Provide sufficient contrast between text and its background](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-perceivable.html#contrast)

Determining the appropriate alternative text for images is as much art as it is science. The appropriate description for any single image will depend on the context where the image is used, as well as its function. The following resources provide additional guidance on how to develop useful alternative text:

* [Alternative Text](https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/) (WebAIM)
* [Image Description Guidelines](http://diagramcenter.org/table-of-contents-2.html) (DIAGRAM Center)
* [An alt Decision Tree](https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/decision-tree/) (WAI)

Making sure there is sufficient contrast between the text and its background is also important in order for materials to be perceivable. The [Colour Contrast Analyser](https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/) (from Paciello Group) is available for color contrast testing on both Windows and the Mac.

### Operable

[Operable](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-operable.html) materials are easy to navigate and support multiple methods for interaction. To make your materials Operable, you can:

* [Provide a clear structure with properly marked up headings](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-operable.html#headings)
* [Create descriptive links that make sense out of context](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-operable.html#links)

With both headings and links, learners who are blind will often use a keyboard shortcut to access them as a list. For the headings and links to make sense when they accessed in this way, outside their original context, they need to be unique and descriptive.

For presentations, the slide titles perform a similar function as headings. It is important to [make slide titles unique](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25#bkmk_macuniquetitles) for them to be useful to screen reader users as they navigate a presentation using the Outline view. Google Slides does not have an Outline view, but you can assign a template that has a slide title placeholder to add a unique title manually.

Finally, it is important to [name each worksheet in an Excel spreadsheet](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/rename-a-worksheet-3f1f7148-ee83-404d-8ef0-9ff99fbad1f9) (the steps are similar in Google Sheets). This will make it easier for screen reader users to determine when they are in the desired worksheet.

### Understandable

[Understandable](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-understandable.html) materials behave in a predictable way and logical way that makes it easy for learners to figure out how they work. They are also written in plain language that is easy to comprehend.

In Microsoft Word, you can [check your document’s reading level](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/test-your-document-s-readability-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2) when you do a spell check. You should aim for a lower secondary reading level (7-9 years of school). This is a score between 60 and 70 for Flesch-Kincaid and 7.0 and 8.0 for Grade Level on the Microsoft Word reading statistics, which are shown when you complete the spell check.

As an alternative for Google Docs, you can copy and paste your text into the online [Hemingway Editor](http://www.hemingwayapp.com/) to check its reading level.

### Robust

[Robust](http://aem.cast.org/creating/accessibility-robust.html) materials follow best practices that will ensure they work with both current and future technologies. As you work, you can check to make sure you are following best practices by [performing an accessibility check](https://youtu.be/siochpC2Dlw). For Google Docs, you can use the free [Grackle](https://www.grackledocs.com/) add-on to perform a similar check.

## Upcoming Dates

**Office hours:** we will be offering two virtual office hours for you to ask questions and seek clarification on any of the topics covered in the course. The dates for the Module 1 office hours are as follows:

* Week 3: September 20th, 4 PM ET
* Week 5: October 4th, 4 PM ET

The next module (How to Locate Captioned Videos and Make Your Own) starts on **October 17th, at 4 PM ET** with a 1-hour webinar.