

Game On! Going from red to green with Blackboard Ally

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a.k.a. changing Ally from  to 

by Sherri Parkins and Kevin Pitts, the Teaching & Learning Centre

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Have you noticed the Ally indicators attached to some of your course content in Learn@Seneca? These indicators provide some feedback about how accessible the content posted is. As explained in the Ally article from September 2020 ([Blackboard Ally is Coming to Seneca](#)), your students can't see the indicators.

Your first reaction is probably, "How do I go green"?

Here are the top three reasons why you might be "seeing red":

1. Missing alt tags and image descriptions
2. Not enough contrast
3. Not using headers

Keep in mind that when we fix these issues, we are improving the content for **all** learners.

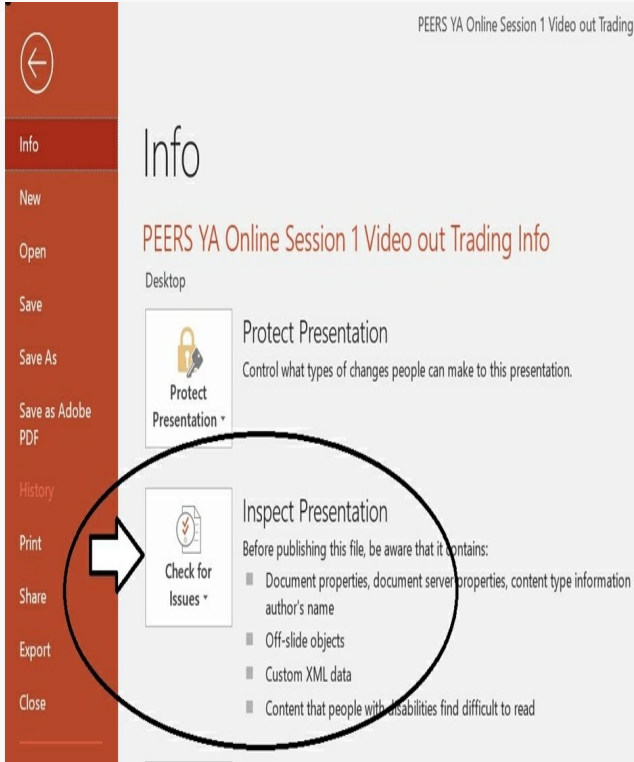
Here are some suggestions for how to fix those top three issues and turn those red indicators green.

Issue 1: Alt Tags and Image Descriptors

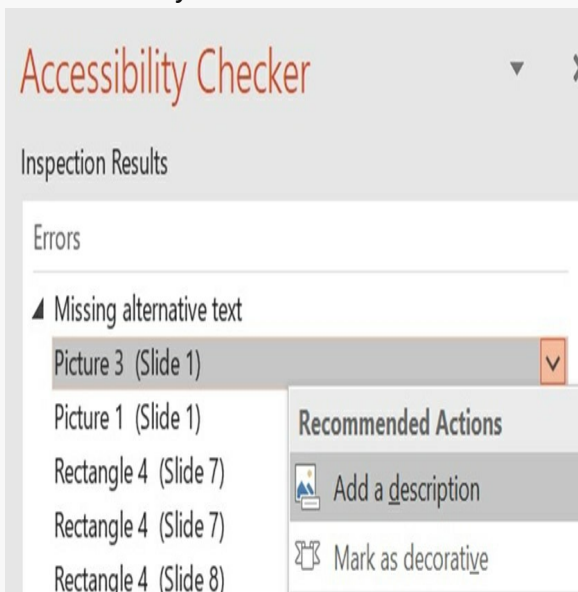
Why fix: Image descriptions provide learners with more context for deeper meaning. Sometimes pictures can be ambiguous in their meanings!

How to fix:

Step 1: Use the accessibility checker available in Microsoft Office first. For example, in a PowerPoint, go to File, and in the Info section, select Check for Issues:



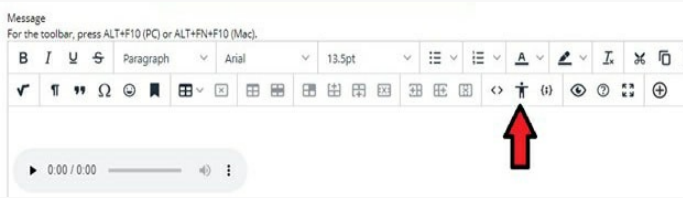
You will be presented with a list of errors/issues. When you click on an error, you will be taken to the location in the document where the error is and provided with information on how and why to fix the issue.



Step 2: Load your document into your Learn@Seneca course. Check the Ally indicator and fix, if necessary. Check out [how to add image descriptions to your images](#).

Tip: You can use the [accessibility checker in all Microsoft office products](#) as well as in [Adobe](#).

The new content editor in Learn@Seneca has a quick accessibility checker for items such as announcements. You will find the tool on the editor toolbar:



Issue 2: Not Enough Contrast

Why fix: Between 5% to 10% of the population is colour blind. Readability is greatly improved when the background colour and text colour are highly contrasted (a light background with dark text or a dark background with light text).

This applies to all media (documents, images). In the example below, the left pie chart has contrast issues where the text and background colours are both dark. Further, the descriptive text is separated from the visual. In the right pie chart, readability is greatly improved with high contrast between text and background, and by positioning descriptive text within the visual. Which one do you think is more easily read and understood?

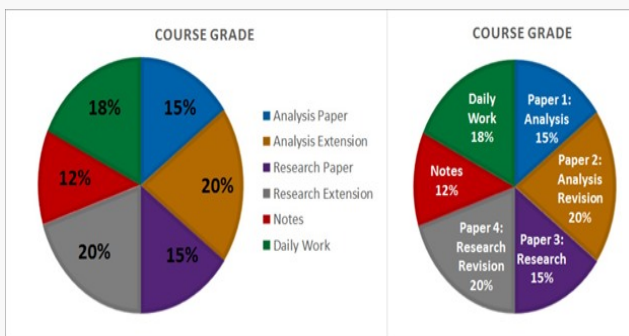
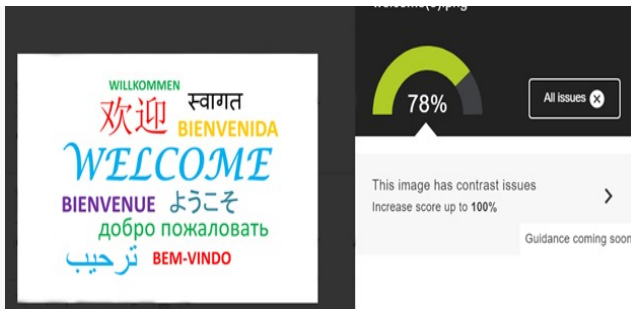


Image from [Accessible Syllabus](#)

How to fix: Before uploading documents or images to your course, visually examine them to check if they have high contrast throughout. Use the tools available in your word processor (e.g., font colour) or image editing software (e.g., image adjustment tool) to fix issues, if necessary.

Even after uploading, Ally may find contrast issues. In the example below, Ally identified that the "Welcome" image has contrast issues.





The image was converted to black and white using the [image adjustment panel in Photoshop](#) – a quick fix. (Note: you could also keep the colours and use the image adjustment tool to increase contrast.) Other tools like Windows Photo Editor can also be used.

The result is a more accessible image.



For more on fixing contrast issues, check out [Ally's support documentation on contrast](#).

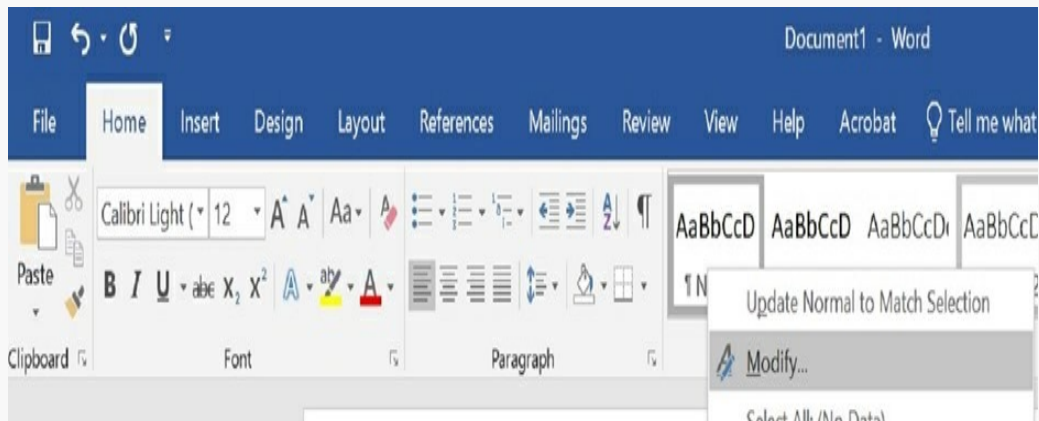
Tip: Do not rely on colour alone to convey meaning and try to stay away from coloured text on a coloured background. Instead, use high contrast (typically black text on a white background). Remember, high contrast improves readability for all learners.

Issue 3: Headers

Why fix: Imagine navigating an unfamiliar store without aisle labels; pretty frustrating! Those aisle “headers” help with navigation. Now imagine they were only at one end of the aisle, meaning that you had to start at the front end of the store and read them. That’s an analogy for why headers are critical bits of information both in documents and in charts and graphs. They help with navigation. Headers need to be clearly identified in charts and need to appear on each page of the chart.

How to fix: After running the accessibility checker on the program that produced the document, consult [Ally's help documentation on headers](#) for how to further improve using the Ally tools.

Tip: When using Microsoft Office Word, be sure to use the formatting toolbar to set up headers, titles, etc. You can modify to your preferences, keeping in mind contrast and recommended sans serif fonts.



To ensure properly formatted documents, use the Design tab in Excel and use the slide templates in PowerPoint.

Red to Green; Easy as 1,2,3!

1. Run an accessibility checker in the program used to produce documents.
2. Upload files to Learn@Seneca course content areas.
3. Use the information provided by Ally to fix any remaining concerns.

Additional Resources:

- Visit the Teaching & Learning Centre's information on [Blackboard Ally](#) for faculty and instructors
- Visit ITS's information on [Ally](#) for students

View the [December 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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