

Creating Accessible Courses in Moodle

Heading structure in online courses helps all users more easily navigate content in Moodle, but it is especially important for assistive technology users. Six heading levels, H1 – H6, are used internationally. Moodle automatically provides some important and logical heading structure for you.

Boost Theme—Heading styles

In the Boost theme, the title of your course is always an H1; H2s are reserved for titles of blocks. Using the field Moodle provides to name a topic automatically makes the topic title an H3

If you wish to add sub-topics, the **Atto HTML editor** provides the option to create **headings 3, 4, and 5**. To manually create additional heading structure, follow these simple steps:

1. Highlight the text you want to convert into a heading.
2. Then from the Paragraph styles button in the Atto HTML editor, select the appropriate heading, Heading 3, 4, or 5. Notice that the HTML editor does not let you select H1 or H2 since these headings are automatically used by the system for other course content.

Notice that Moodle automatically sizes these headings for you, which saves you time.

When resources and activities open, Moodle automatically assigns heading structure (H2) to the title of the resource and activity.

Give all your headings clear, unique titles and keep them consistent with the language in your syllabus.

In addition to providing good heading structure, it is helpful to explain course navigation to your students and provide them with an orientation. A textual explanation or a brief screen capture video can effectively provide this information and will benefit all students.

Information about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course should be provided in the course syllabus or in the course orientation.

If some content will be opening in new windows in your course, explain this in your course orientation. General rule of thumb - any new content in Moodle always opens in the same window. Content external to Moodle, such as a PDF or an external website, opens in a new window. Remember that consistency will make course navigation better for all students, but especially for students who are new to the learning management system or who are assistive technology users.

Self-Describing Hyperlinks

When creating hyperlinks that take students to other information and locations, make hyperlinks self-describing. Name the link so that all users know where they will be taken when they click on it. Avoid using link phrases, such as click here, read more, etc.

- **Good link text:** Read more about HC's [Accessibility Services](#).
- **Poor link text:** For more information about UM's Student Conduct Code, [click here](#).

Text and Color

Atto Editor provides a sans serif font and creates font sizes for headings and regular text. These settings are used for screen readability and will provide textual consistency across your course. Follow these basic guidelines for stylizing text:

- Avoid using font variations such as **bold**, *italics*, underlining, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS and **colored text** to convey meaning since many users, including users who are colorblind or assistive technology users, will not get equivalent information from the font appearance.
- To remove font formatting that has been bolded, italicized, colorized, etc., highlight the text and click on the Clear formatting button (add graphic) in the Atto HTML editor. All formatting, except heading structure, will be removed and the default font format will be restored.
- Reserve underlined text for hyperlinks. Using underlined text for non-link purposes may cause confusion.

Important information can be emphasized in a variety of ways, without relying solely on color or other font styles for the emphasis.

- Improper use of color:
 - Assignments (optional extra credit assignments indicated in red): Collaborative writing assignment, Proposal for final project, **Journal entry**.
- Proper use of color:
 - Assignments due this week: Collaborative writing assignment (required), Proposal for final project (required), **Journal entry (optional extra credit)**.

If you want students to pay special attention to a particular sentence in a paragraph, use spacing to make that sentence a separate paragraph and set it apart with a word like "important," even adding an exclamation point at the end for additional emphasis. The red will still provide a strong visual cue, but all students, including those students who are colorblind or assistive technology users, will receive equivalent information.

Important: Class will meet online on March 4 only!

In addition to using special words, punctuation, or spacing, you can use symbols, such as an asterisk, to denote specific types of information (e.g. days when class will meet online). Use your syllabus to inform students how this symbol will be used throughout your course and use it consistently.

Other Text-Related Tips:

Online courses can be text heavy, which makes online learning difficult for many students, including students with print disabilities. Here are some suggestions for addressing this situation:

- Use descriptive and unique titles to name topics, links, and other content items throughout the course. These titles should be consistent with the language in your syllabus and should make sense in and out of context.
- Organize textual content in manageable “chunks.” Add an extra space between paragraphs for optimal on-screen reading. This will be particularly helpful for students accessing the course through mobile devices.
- When appropriate, use lists, either ordered (e.g. numbered list) or unordered (e.g. bulleted list), to clearly structure the presentation of your textual content. Use the two list tools in Atto to properly format your lists. Manually created lists lack the coding assistive technologies use and take more time to create.
- Supplement text with illustrations and other multimedia elements so that content is represented in ways that meet the diverse learning preferences of your students.