

S.C.U.L.P.T. Accessibility Guidance

S.C.U.L.P.T. - an acronym to help you think about accessible practice when working with text, images and tables

Contents:

1. [S - Structure](#)
2. [C - Colour and Contrast](#)
3. [U - Use of Images](#)
4. [L - Links or hyperlinks](#)
5. [P - Plain English and Communication](#)
6. [T - Tables and Data Visualisations](#)

Top tip:

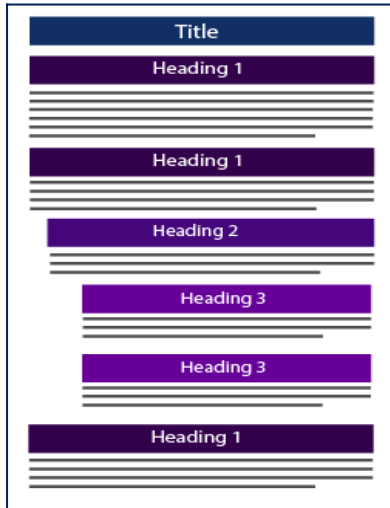
If you are using Microsoft Office software to create content, use the [Microsoft Accessibility Checker](#). It will pick-up 99% of accessibility issues prior to uploading your content to My Studies. [Microsoft have a set of short training videos](#) for each piece of Office software which you may find helpful.

Terminology check:

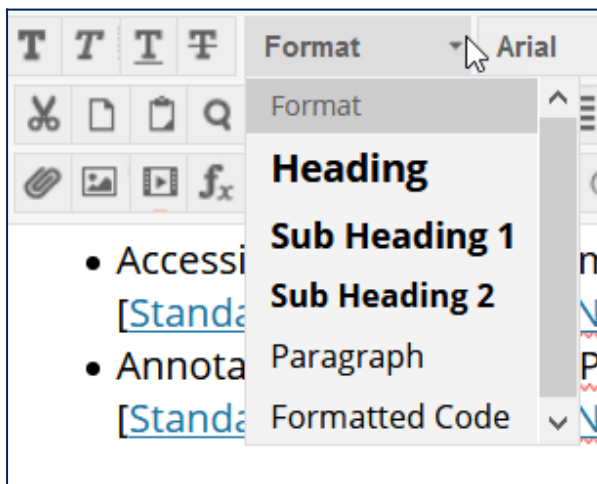
WYSIWYG text editor ~ this is the technical term that Blackboard use to describe their built-in text editor. It is important to explain it here because it is referenced in Blackboard's help materials. WYSIWYG stands for *What You See Is What You Get* and it refers to the idea of editing text in a form close to the final appearance rather than as code.

S - Structure

- In **Microsoft Word** and other word processing tools ensure that you use [headings](#) to delineate your sections. E.g. document title, then heading 1 (h1), heading 2 (h2), heading 3 (h3). Use the [navigation pane in Word](#) to see the structure of your document and check for any gaps between sections.



- When writing in a **My Studies content item**, you should also use basic headings. "**Heading**" should be used first followed by the sub-headings.



Where to find the formatting options in the My Studies WYSIWYG text editor

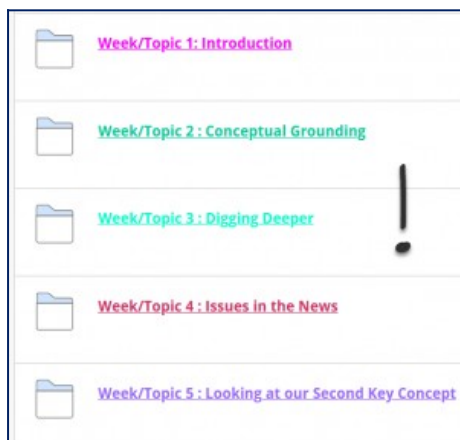
- ✓ **In My Studies:** do add a brief description explaining the purpose of each item or content folder. Add content as items, not 'files' ([Content Items](#)).
- When creating slides in **Microsoft PowerPoint:**
 - ✓ Do use default slide layouts whenever possible.
 - ✓ Do check that each slide has a title.

- ✓ Do check that slide titles are not duplicate.
 - ✓ Do check the [Reading Order](#) on complex slides.
 - ✓ Do use 'sections' to signal each block/topic in your presentation.
 - ✓ Do check your use of font styles and line spacing.
 - Don't use ALL CAPS, underline or cursive (serif) font styles e.g. Times New Roman is not good, use Calibri, Arial, or Helvetica.
- When creating content in **Microsoft Excel**:
 - ✓ Do format spreadsheet data as a Table. How: Home tab >> click in table >> Format as Table.
 - ✓ Do check that header and first columns are tagged.
 - ✓ Do delete any empty sheets.
 - ✓ Do name (rename) all sheet tabs.

[Back to top](#)

C - Colour and contrast

- In **all documents** and **My Studies content** items and content folders check the following:
 - ✓ Do check that light colours are not on light backgrounds and ensure that the contrast is sufficient. [Use the 'who can use' tool](#) to check your colour combinations.
 - ✓ Do use your judgement as well, e.g. does a diagram/graphic have sufficient contrast to include? Blackboard Ally is particularly good at picking up these types of issues, so if you are not sure Ally can help.
 - Avoid using lots of bright colours in combination. For more on creating Accessible Content Folders, please see the videos in the [Well Organised Learning](#) section.



*What **not** to do. There are too many colours and the contrast is poor in this example 'Study Materials' area. It is also good to include some written description on the folders.*

- **In Microsoft PowerPoint:**

- ✓ Do make sure that the template that you are using has sufficient contrast.
- ✓ Check that hyperlinks have sufficient contrast in comparison to slide background colour.

Tip: this is a frequent issue, we recommend using either blue or black for hyperlinks, but you may need to change the shade for contrast reasons. You can access this setting by using the PowerPoint search box (at the top of the window) to search for "theme colours" and then at the bottom of the list you will see the option to 'Customize Colors'. You can select your own colours and apply them to your theme.

[Back to top](#)

U - Use of Images

- Visual content includes pictures, SmartArt graphics, shapes, groups, charts, embedded objects, ink, and videos. When using images consider the following:
 - ✓ Do use images to support your text-based information.
 - ✓ Do use correct image sizes (on the web it is best to have images around 150kb). So if using image from websites like [Pixabay](#) or [Unsplash](#) select the smallest image options as the images from these sites are typically very large.
 - ✓ Do use alternative "alt" text on images. This is essential for screen readers and Blackboard Ally audio files. It is also helpful if your image is not loading for some reason. Here is some helpful guidance from [University of Leicester on writing effective ALT text](#).
 - ☐ Don't use an image instead of text.
 - ☐ Avoid using flashing GIF images as these can trigger photosensitive epilepsy.
- In **Microsoft Office documents (Word and PowerPoint)** dependent on the version you have installed on your computer:
 - [How to add alt text to visuals in Office 365 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
 - [How to add alt text to visuals in Office 2019 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
 - [How to add alt text to visuals in Office 2016 \(opens in a new window\)](#)

- In **Microsoft PowerPoint**:
 - ✓ Do resize/compress your images and any media elements, e.g. audio narration.
 - ☐ Avoid using images as slide backgrounds.
- In **My Studies**:
 - ✓ Do use images sparingly to help sign post content and add personality to your module area. Blackboard Ally will automatically flag any missing alt text from images in content items and content folders. It provides [a very easy tool to add a description or mark an image as decorative](#).
 - ☐ Don't attach large graphics/posters to emails/announcements. Do link to the image as an item, ensuring there is also a text description of the content. For more on creating accessible emails/announcements please watch the video below.

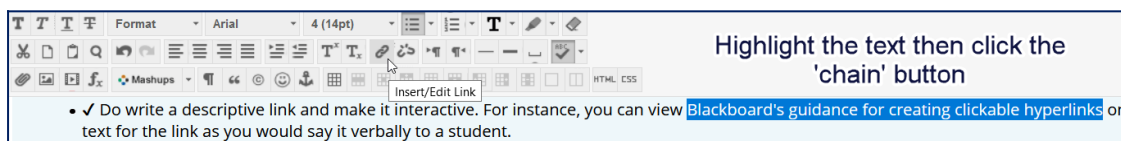
[Link to video on YouTube](#)

[Back to top](#)

L- Links or Hyperlinks

Using web links (hyperlinks) in My Studies, but many of the same principles apply when you include links in documents:

- ✓ **In My Studies**: do use the [Blackboard weblink tool](#) where you can as this is an easy way to highlight important websites.
- ✓ Do write a descriptive link and make it interactive. For instance, you can view [Blackboard's guidance for creating clickable hyperlinks](#) on their help website. **Tip:** write the text for the link as you would say it verbally to a student.



Screenshot showing how to highlight text and then add a web link to it so that it becomes an interactive hyperlink

- ☐ Don't include a link in full unless you have a technical reason why it needs to be included in full (e.g. computer coding class). For instance, this Blackboard guidance link in full - just an example - do not share links in this format:
https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Course_Content/Create_Content/Create_Course_Materials/Work_With_Text#add-links_OTP-8
- ✓ **In Microsoft PowerPoint**: do use hyperlinks to include video or media content, do not use the YouTube embed feature as it not reliable and does not include

closed captioning access. In an in-person teaching session, play these materials in a web browser such as Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome rather than via PowerPoint.

See also: [Instructions and video for creating accessible hyperlinks in Microsoft Word.](#)
[Back to top](#)

P- Plain English and Communication

Plain English is a way of writing clearly with your audience in mind. It avoids technical language, unexplained acronyms, jargon, long sentences and complex grammar. In a university we are in the business of learning about subject-specific language. We can explain this language. Taking time to explain supports a more inclusive learning environment.

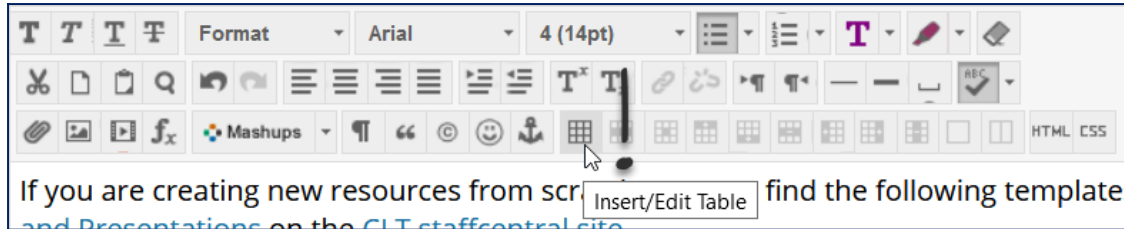
- ✓ Do consider your audience, e.g. level of study and appropriate language for that level.
- ✓ Do write clearly and avoid long blocks of text.
- ✓ Do try to limit the amount of text per slide in PowerPoint presentations. No more than 5 bullet points.
- ✓ Do provide a transcript or closed captions to go with your audio/video files.
- ✓ Do use free web applications such as [Hemingway](#) or [Grammarly](#) to check your writing.
- ✓ Do save your document with a filename that is meaningful (Guidance on filename), e.g. SS400_week1_welcome is good.
- ✓ Do Use a minimum font size of 12pt on documents, min. 28pt on slides. Use sans-serif fonts: e.g. Arial, Calibri.
- This was also covered under *structure* but it is equally as important to communication.

[Back to top](#)

T- Tables and Data Visualisation

- **When using tables** in a Microsoft Word document:
 - ✓ Do Include a table header row and enter column headings.
 - ✓ Do mark your header row. How: Table Tools >> Design >> check Header Row & First Column.
 - ✓ Do repeat header row on all pages. How: Table Tools >> Layout >> Repeat Header Rows.
 - ✓ Do add Alt text for the table. How: Table Properties >> Alt Text.
 - ☐ Don't Merge or split cells.

- **Avoid using tables in My Studies content items.** These tables cannot be made accessible and also do not resize on mobile devices.



The screenshot above shows the table tool in the My Studies WYSIWYG text editor - please provide tables in a document instead of using this tool.

- In **Microsoft PowerPoint** and **Microsoft Word**:
 - ✓ do use actual tables within PowerPoint rather than images of tables. In the case of statistical data, where possible try to produce the content as an actual table rather than an image.
 - ✓ do provide written description of plots/graphs/data where provided only as an image.
 - ✓ Where you Describe data verbally in a lecture/seminar do add more description in the reference copy of PowerPoint slides or in a handout document.



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Based on work at [Worcestershire County Council](#). Some of the checklist elements are based on [University of Stirling Digital Accessibility Quick Checklist](#). [Back to top](#)