

## Creating Accessible Course Reading Material

Creating accessible course material helps to ensure that students with disabilities can access the information they contain. It also supports the learning of all students who benefit from alternate formats. Accessibility is a campus-wide responsibility, and our goal is to equip you with the knowledge and tools to achieve basic levels of accessibility for your course readings. Since most reading material in Canvas is in PDF format, below is guidance on how to create clean scans and convert your PDFs to accessible documents.

Many PDFs are simply images of text that were created by scanning hard copy documents (such as articles and book chapters). To test whether a PDF is accessible, try selecting/highlighting the text. If the entire page highlights and you are unable to select specific text, then it is an image file and is not accessible. These image-based PDFs cannot be used with text-to-speech software, frequently used by students with learning disabilities and visual impairments to listen to the readings.

An Optical Character Recognition (OCR) tool is used to create an accessible PDF document from a scanned page. The easiest way to convert an image-based PDF file to an accessible format is to use our [SensusAccess Document Conversion](#) tool. SensusAccess can be found on the [LAS website](#) under the “Accessibility and Disability Services” tab. Just upload your file, choose the target format and a converted file is sent to your email inbox within minutes (the email comes from [pony@sensusaccess.com](mailto:pony@sensusaccess.com)). You can distribute this version to all your students.



SensusAccess can also be found within Canvas. You will see a small, black, script “S” by any uploaded reading material. Click on the “S” to convert the document to an accessible format. The converted file will be emailed to the person signed into Canvas. Here is a [short video](#) demonstrating how to use it.

Alternately, you can manually convert your scanned documents if you have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro. To achieve basic accessibility, open your image-only PDF document in Adobe Pro.

1. Under “All Tools,” click on Scan and OCR> In the file> Recognize text. This completes OCR for a single file.
2. Go to “Prepare for Accessibility” and click on “Automatically tag PDF.”
3. Save the converted document.

**Keep in mind that the quality of the converted file will depend on the quality of the original scan.**

Some scanners (such as the one in the Wheaton Library) have built-in OCR capability, and you can scan and save a document as “Searchable PDF”. Here is how to create a high-quality scan:

- Use original source material when possible.
- Start with a clean document-no highlights, underlining, markings, or notes in the margins.
- High resolution-DPI (dots per inch) set between 300-400.
- Scan in black/white.
- Push the spine of the book down while scanning to avoid curving, distortion and disappearing text.
- Do not combine pages (limit each print to one electronic page) or scan upside down.

