

Brightspace Accessibility Tips for Screen Reader Users

Before we begin

Brightspace uses common HTML elements for which screen-readers already have shortcuts. In preparation for your training session, please familiarize yourself with how to navigate by heading, by frame, by ARIA landmark, by form field, etc. because this will come in very handy in moving around Brightspace quickly and easily. Other helpful tips before you begin:

- Before you start using Brightspace, it's a good idea to confirm that your screen is maximized. If it isn't, the system will think you are using a smaller screen and will hide things inside menus. This might be confusing, especially while learning.
- If you are using a smaller screen, like a phone, the navigation bar will be compressed inside a menu. Once you open it, when you want to activate an item, if it will not activate by double tapping it, you may have to activate it using your version of the links list, either the links option in the rotor or the links option in the local context menu.
- Because you might have chosen the preference to have secondary windows show up as pop-ups, and sometimes things appear in new windows or tabs, remember to allow pop-ups on this site. Links to instructions on setting site- specific popup preferences for several popular browsers are located in the last section of this document.
- Sometimes, because things can happen without needing the page to refresh, screen-readers can get behind on what is going on. They often have a keystroke that can be used to make them redraw the screen and look for anything new. Knowing that keystroke would be helpful. For example, JAWS uses JAWS key plus escape, NVDA uses NVDA key plus F5.

General navigation

Reliably, each page will contain the minibar, the navigation bar, and then the

main body of the homepage. The minibar contains links back to My Home, the ability to enter another course with the Course Selector, check for Alerts and updates, alter personal settings or access other Admin Tools depending on a user's role. The minibar is located at the top of the page and is made up of mostly buttons except for the link back home. Next is the navigation bar where all the main tools on a given page can be found. They will change depending on the course. Sometimes, groups of tasks can be listed together under one button or button menu. It is always a good idea to explore the navbar of each course to see how it is organized so navigation can be more efficient.

The main content is indicated by a heading at level 1 as well as an ARIA main landmark. Sometimes the main landmark is positioned slightly higher than the level 1 heading to encompass things that aren't part of the navigation bar but come before the heading. There is also the "Skip to main content" button at the top of the page.

Some preferences of note

In the minibar, access the button with your name on it. This will open the personal menu, which contains Account Settings. There are several settings which should be pointed out.

Under the Account Settings tab

- **Font settings:** See what font size works for you.
- **Dialog settings:** Some people prefer to have any dialogs open in a new window. Give it a try and see which option works for you.
- **HTML editor settings:** These allow the user to turn the rich text editor off. Turning the rich text editor off removes the toolbar with various formatting options and creates a simpler interface. Also, when the rich text editor is off, HTML code for formatting can be used instead of using the buttons in the toolbar. If the rich text editor is on, there is a link that will skip past the toolbar and place focus in the edit box.

- **Reading content:** In discussions, posts can be marked as read as the user scrolls. If the user doesn't scroll, this could be problematic. Turn this off if using assistive technology or the method of scrolling could be misunderstood by the system.
- **Video settings:** Turning this setting on ensures that screen-readers can locate and interact with the controls on embedded videos.

Under the Discussions tab

- Eliminate clutter by turning off the discussions list and preview panes, as well as the search bar.
- See whether grid view or reading view works better. Some screen-reader users have preferred grid view.
- Decide whether the original message is included in the reply.

Some small tips and tricks

- If you don't quite know where you are, check the window title. Most times, the title will change to reflect what page you're on.
- Throughout our system, there are "context menus" usually located close to an item. These are buttons and they have all been labeled with "Actions for" followed by the item with which they are connected. These items would allow you to delete or edit a discussion post you wrote, download a content topic, any number of actions. After you have pressed enter on them, press tab once to see the items inside. Feel free to explore these menus and learn what kind of functionality lives within them.
- When you first enter the content tool, take a quick look for headings and regions on the page. There is a region labeled "Table of Contents" that encompasses the course overview, bookmarked topics, course schedule and a table of contents. This area follows you around no matter where you go in content, so if you need to find a topic quickly, you can.
- When inside a content topic, the fastest way to get to the topic is to look for the frame. There is a heading 1 nearby, but it is above some additional functionality. So, the frame is where the content topic lives.

- Upon entering a module, look for the heading labeled “list of modules and topics for {insert module name here}.”
- If the content topic opened is a Microsoft Office file, to make the inline view provide more structure in the document, find the button labeled “view as text”. Once this preference is set, it will remain set to view as text until it is changed.
- A small note about taking quizzes: Each question has a heading, but the questions text isn’t part of the label for the choices because some questions can be quite long. So, Use your arrow keys to read the question’s text, then when you have read all the text of the question, if it is a multiple choice question, tab into the choices, make your selection and escape out of the field so you can find the next question.

Resources

Many of these tips are in the Brightspace Help topics. Here are a few links:

[Brightspace Accessibility Help](#)

[Accessibility features for screen readers](#)

[Using magnification and zooming functionality](#)

[Accessibility features for low vision users](#)

[Navigating Brightspace using the keyboard](#)

[Optimizing personal settings](#)

Additional Resources for popups in Firefox, Chrome or Safari

[Instructions for Firefox](#)

[Instructions for Chrome](#) Note: When the instructions for Chrome say go to the address bar, use F6 to find it.

[Instructions for Safari](#)