Blackboard Ally Basics

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Purpose of This Training

This training takes a look at the Ally tool for Blackboard:

- what it does (and does not) check
- what the symbols mean
- how it can help you create more accessible instruction
- how accessible files translate to alternate formats

Measurable Outcomes

After this training you will be able to

- Identify and explain the symbols used by the Ally tool
- Navigate the Instructor Feedback panel
- Find and double-check alternate formats of files
- Compare what types of issues/items Ally does and does not check

What is Blackboard Ally?

Ally is a tool in Blackboard.

It helps gauge the accessibility of uploaded files.

It creates alternate formats of files for students.

Understanding the Signs – The Meter

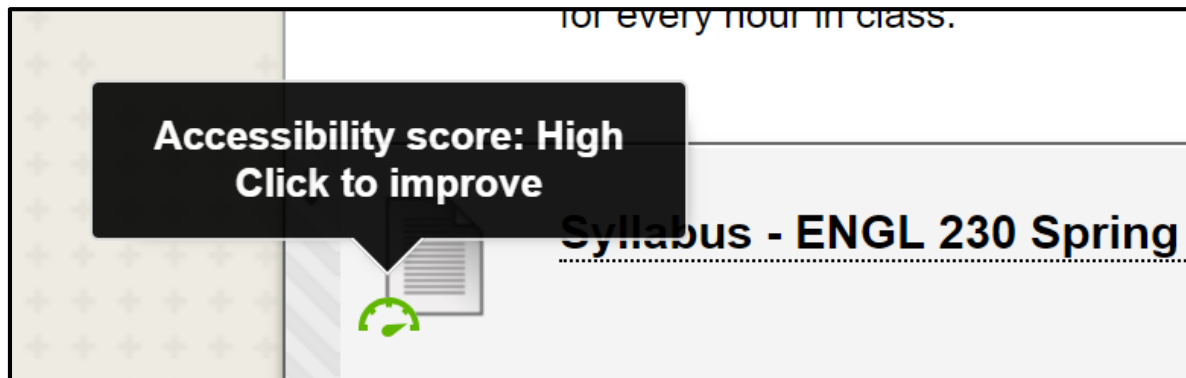**Red and low for inaccessible**

Green and full for very accessible

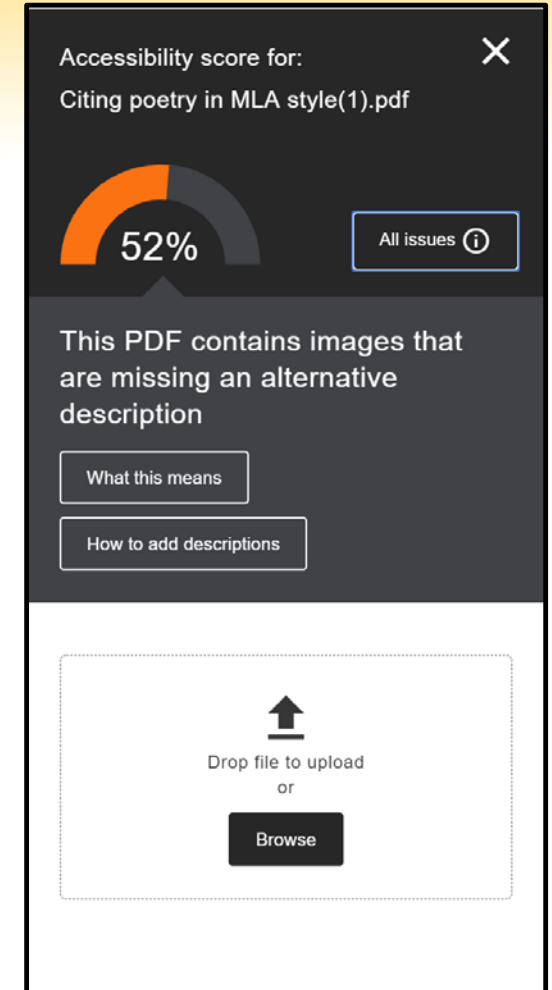# Taking a Closer Look – Instructor Feedback
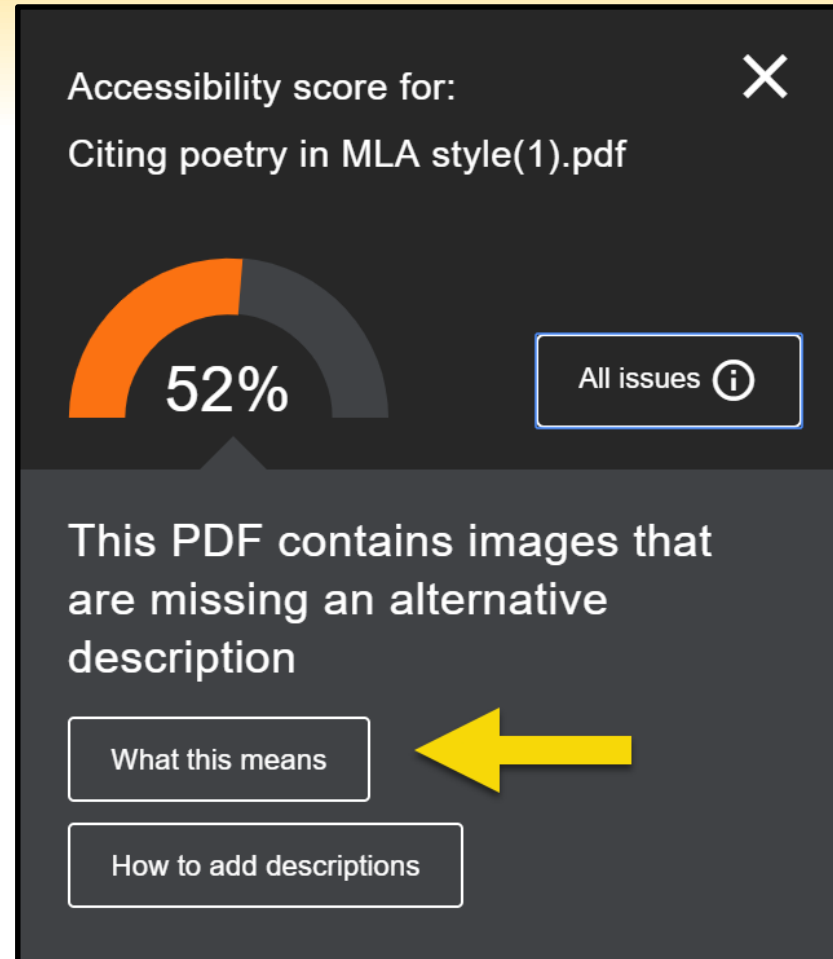
See your general rating and select to get feedback.

for every hour in class.

Accessibility score: High
Click to improve

Syllabus - ENGL 230 Spring

Instructor Feedback Screen:

- **Main issue**

- **All issues**

- **Explanations**

- **An upload box to upload your fixed file**

Accessibility score for:
Citing poetry in MLA style(1).pdf

52%   All issues ⓘ

This PDF contains images that are missing an alternative description
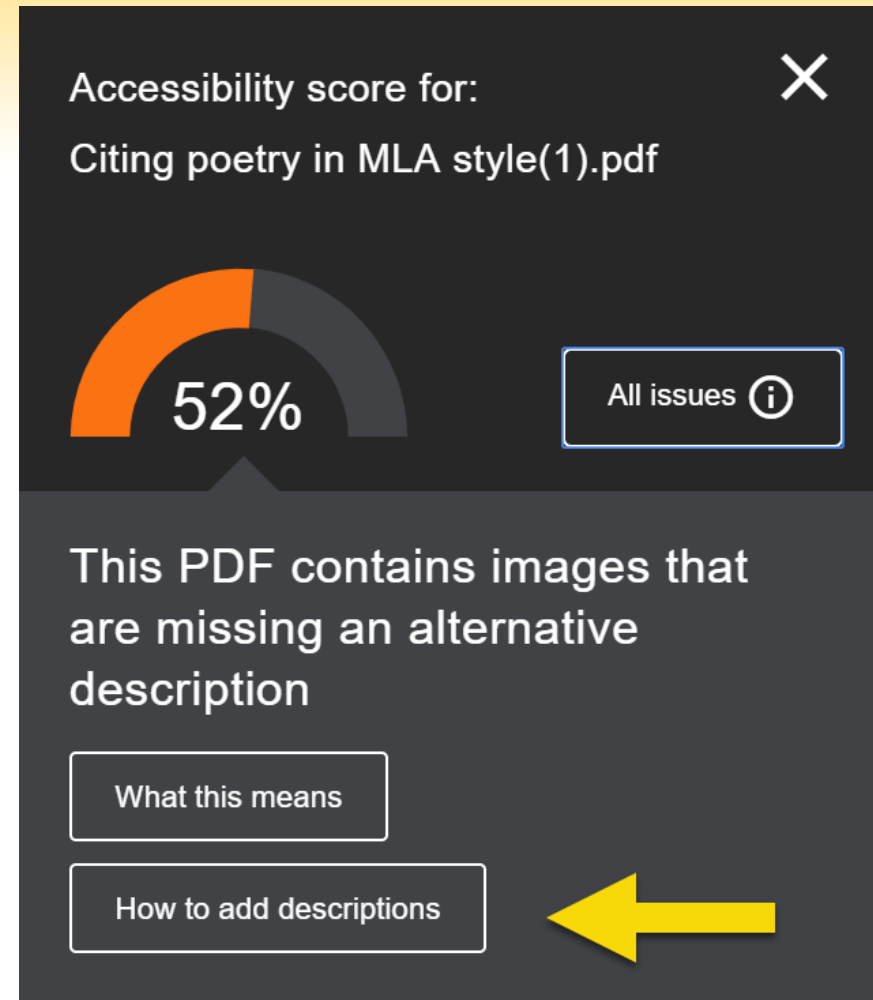
What this means

How to add descriptions

⬆
Drop file to upload
or
Browse

Explanations – "What this means" tool

- Two types of explanations

- "What this means" box explains why.

- May have several screens of information

Explanations – "How to" tool

- The "How to" tool explains how to fix the primary issue.

- Selecting it opens a walkthrough for fixing the issue.

- May ask you questions to determine the process.

The "All Issues" feature

The "All Issues" tab lists any issue that Ally has identified.

Gives you:

- Percent improvement for fixing each issue

- When available, the option to fix it
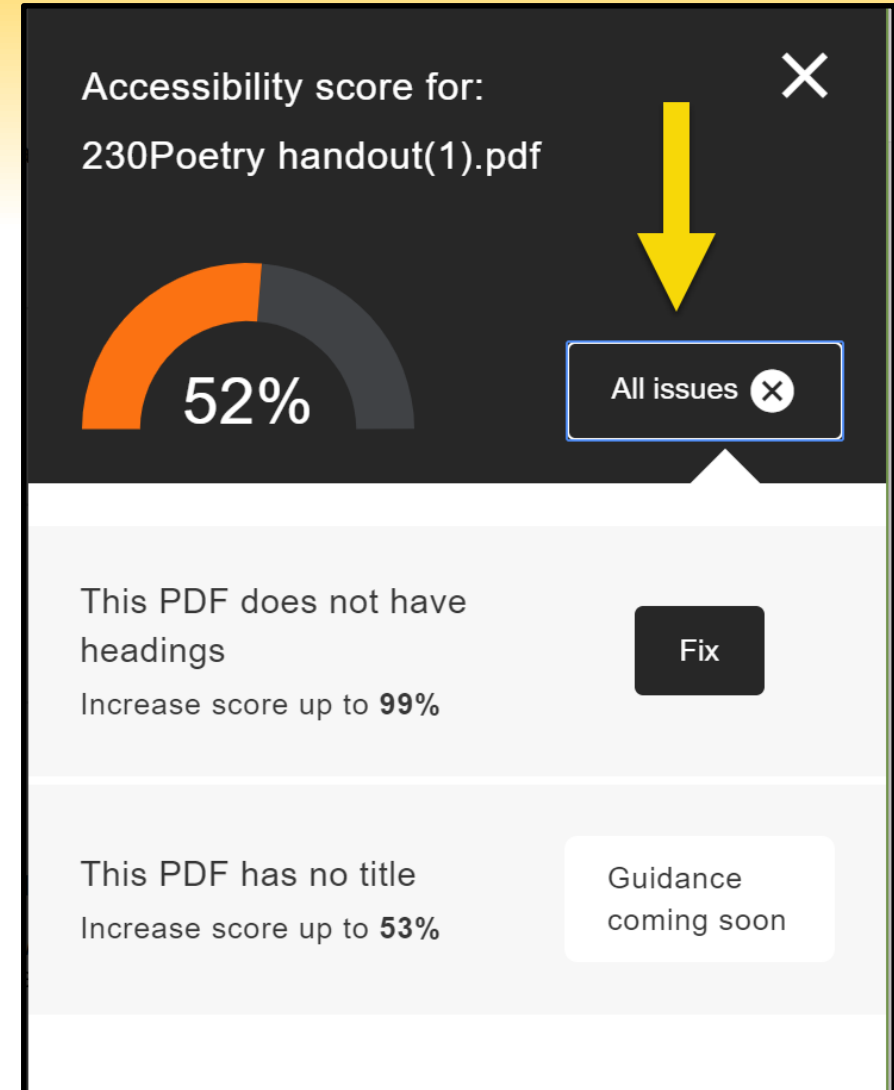
Your Turn –
The Feedback Screen

Images

In the Instructor Feedback pane for images, you can:

- edit or add an alternative description

- mark the image as decorative

- remove the description

- get information on alternative descriptions

Your Turn –
Adding Alternative Text

Microsoft Documents

Ally looks for headings, color contrast, table headers, alternative text, and more.

Most issues have a Fix option.

Drop File box or Browse button for easy upload

Accessibility score for:

Word document with tables(1).docx

48%

All issues ⊗
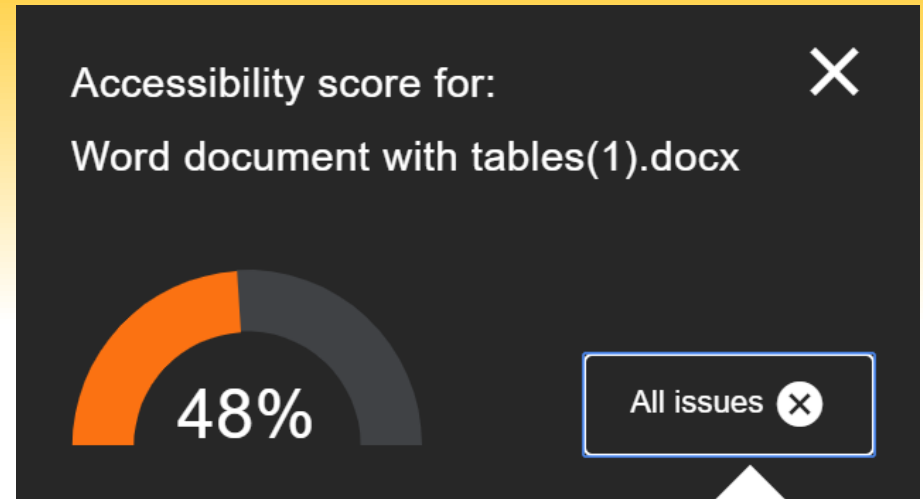
This document contains images that are missing an alternative description

Increase score up to **68%**

Fix

This document contains tables that are missing headers

Increase score up to **52%**

Fix

PDFs

Ally looks at PDFs for similar things.

Ally gives different guidance for PDFs: it asks if you have access to the original document.

Your Turn –
Replacing Documents

Understanding Alternative Formats

Alternative formats offer different ways of interacting with content.

Know your options. Choose a format that's right for you.

Format		Format Advantages	
OCRed PDF Automatically extracted text		**Improved scanned documents** Better reading and text search	
Tagged PDF Structured PDF for assistive technology		**Improved structure for navigation** Essential for screen readers	
HTML For browser and mobile		**Customize your text** Adapts text to mobile screen sizes	
ePub Reading on tablets and e-book readers		**eBooks on tablets** Annotating and highlighting	
Electronic braille BRF version for electronic braille displays		**Read more quickly** Essential for visual impairments	
Audio MP3 recording of text		**Listen and learn on the go** Engage different modalities	

Image courtesy of Blackboard Ally Instructor Package: Resources and Support - Attribution 3.0 Unported (CC BY 3.0)

Alternative Formats in Ally

Any document that Ally has checked will have the option for alternative formats.

Not all items will have all formats available:

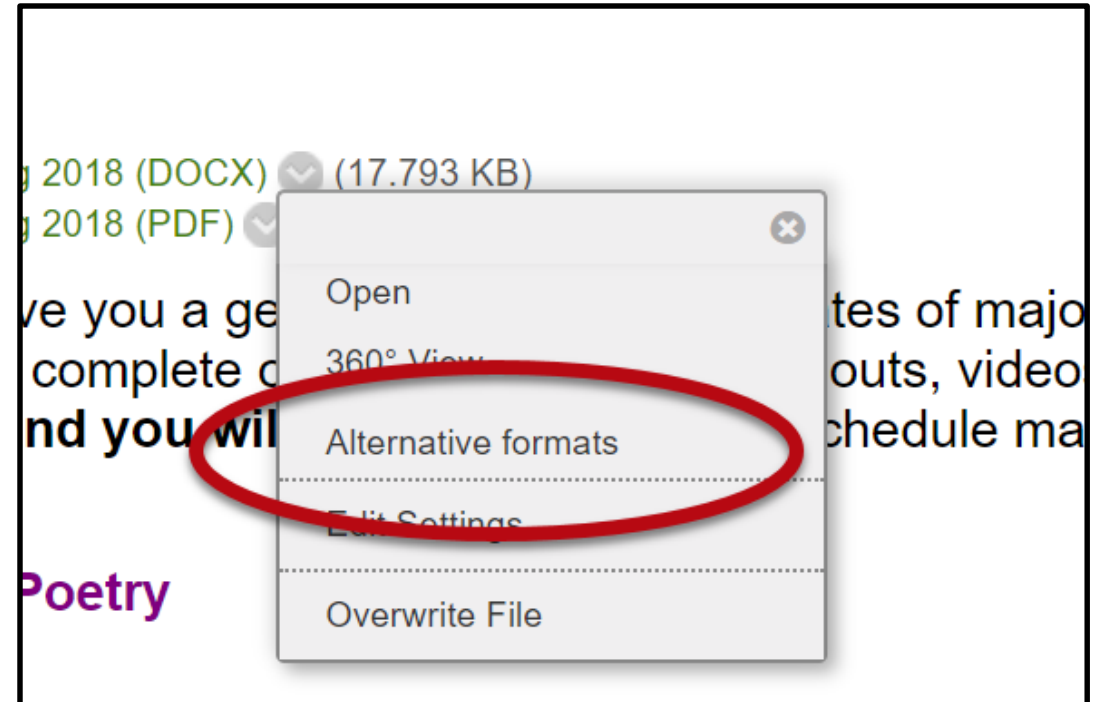- A PDF will not have the Tagged PDF option because it is already a PDF.

- A Microsoft document, however, will have the Tagged PDF option.

Downloading Alternative Format – Steps 1-3

1. Hover over the title.

2. Select the chevron.

3. Select the alternative format option.

Course Schedule

Attached Files: Course Schedule - Spring 2018 (DOCX) (17.793 KB)
Course Schedule - Spring 2018 (PDF) (36.181 KB)

g 2018 (DOCX) (17.793 KB)

g 2018 (PDF)

Open

360° View

Alternative formats

Edit Settings

Overwrite File

ve you a ge... tes of majo...
complete ... outs, video...
nd you wil... chedule ma...

Poetry
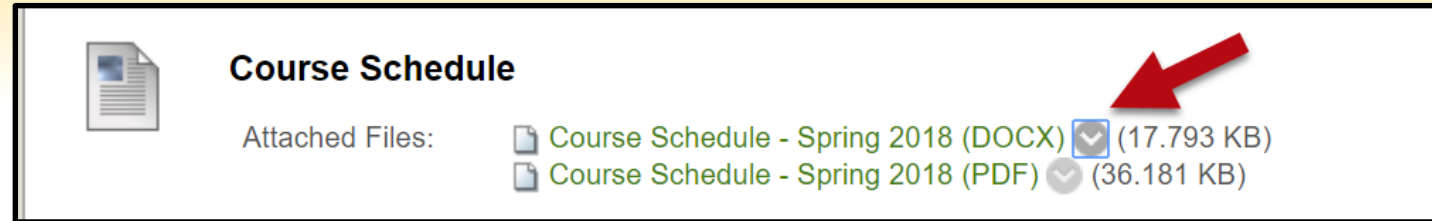
Downloading Alternative Formats - Steps 4 - 6

4. Select the format you want to download.

5. Select the Download button.

6. Open the file from your download area.
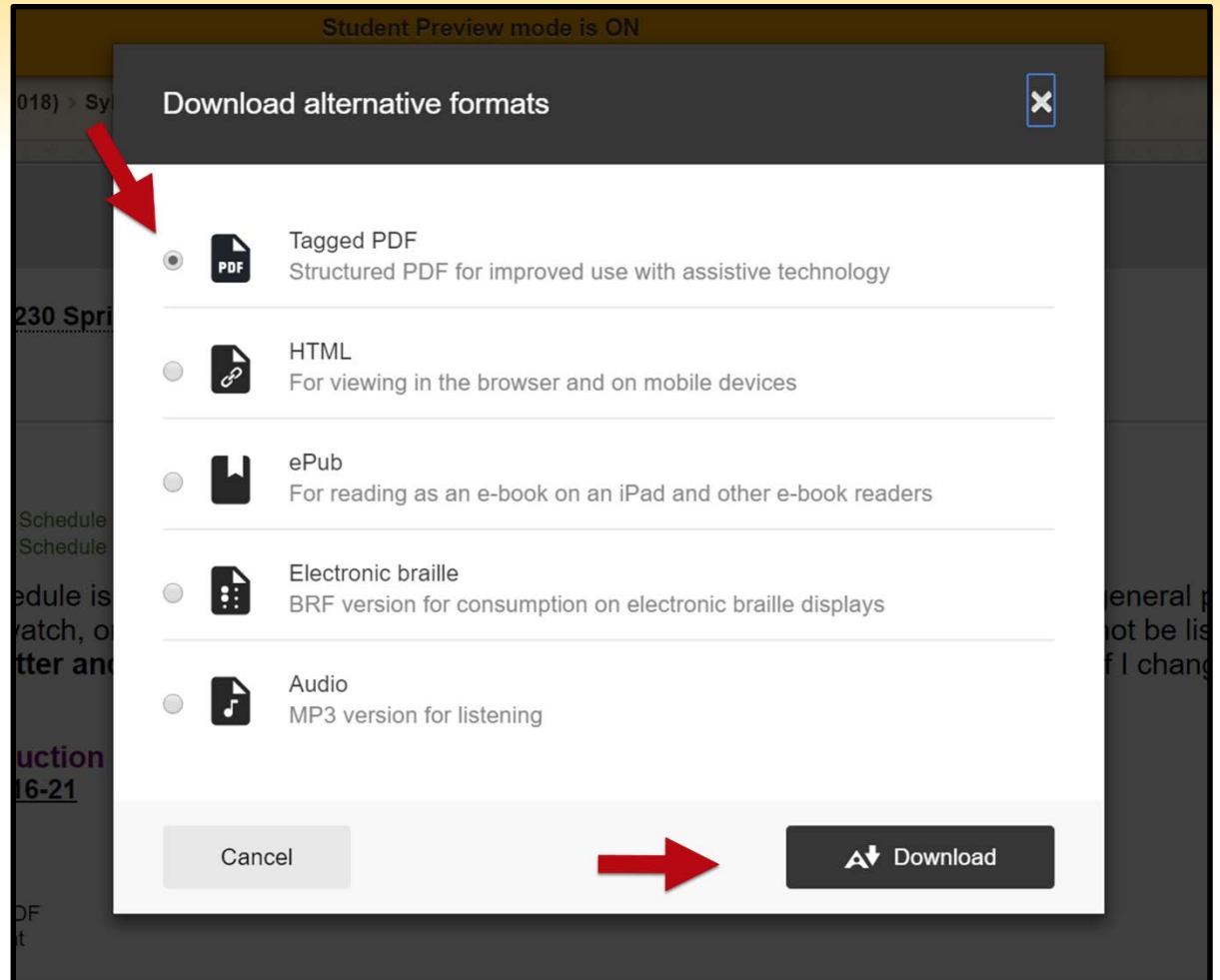
The Student's Perspective

Alternative formats are only as good as the material we put in.

Check the alternative formats for availability and accuracy.

Ally must generate each alternative format the first time it is accessed.

Your Turn – Alternative Formats

What Ally Does Not Check

Ally does not check for:

- Captions on any videos (Camtasia, YouTube or other)

- Header rows or reading order of tables built in Blackboard's content editor

- Raw URLs in Blackboard's content editor

What Ally Does Not Check, cont.

Ally does not check for:

- The accessibility of linked websites or articles on those websites

- The accessibility of third-party or publisher learning tools.

- Google Docs

Other "Nots"

Ally does not offer **guidance** on:

- Contrast issues

- Fixing PDF titles

Ally does not offer **alternative formats** on:

- Images directly inserted into the editor

- Anything that does not have a meter by it

Resources

[Blackboard Help – Ally for Instructors](#)

[Blackboard Ally Instructor Package: Resources and Support](#) (PDF)