Course Design Tips for Instructors

Here are a few simple design tips to keep in mind as you create content accessible for all students.

Tip 1: Create and Format Course Content

- **Color contrast**
  Choose a color scheme that presents a sharp contrast between the text and background.

  > ✓ **dark text with a light background**

  > ✓ **light text with a dark background**

  > ✘ **Course Information** (avoid using busy & graphical backgrounds)

- **Check your color contrast.** A simple way to test the effectiveness of your color scheme is to step away from your monitor a few feet and see if the text stands out from the background.

Fonts and Font Size

- **Web content**. Use easy to read sans-serif fonts:
    - Arial
    - Verdana
- **Printed documents**. Use a serif font such as:
    - Times New Roman
- Font size should be at least 12 point
- Limit use of fonts to three or less throughout your course and documents
- Limit use of font sizes to three or less throughout your course and documents
- Use fonts and font sizes consistently throughout your course and documents

Formatting Text

- Use text formatting sparingly (**bold**, *italics*, and CAPITAL LETTERS)
- Avoid underlining text. Underlined text could be confused as a web link.
- Avoid using color as the only means of conveying information
    - ✘ complete the items marked in red below
- **Text formatted with color should be bold**
- Limit use of text colors to three or less throughout your course and documents
- Avoid using blinking or animated text in your course

Formatting Hyperlinks

Provide the following info when formatting hyperlinks:
1. Description of where the link goes
2. What happens when the link is clicked? (opens in a new window, etc.)
3. Web address without the hyperlink

- ✔ [Durham Technical Community College opens in a new window](http://www.durhamtech.edu/)
  http://www.durhamtech.edu/
- ✘ http://www.durhamtech.edu/
- ✘ [Click Here]

Tip 2: Set Up Course Structure for Easier Navigation

- **Remember the 3-Click Rule**. Structure your course so it takes three clicks (or less) to get to any file, folder, or the main course page.
  - ○ **Example**: From the main course page, click on Lesson folder (click 1), click on Assignments (click 2), click on Week 1 (click 3)
- Use the tab button to navigate your way through the course

Create Effective File Names

Keep the following in mind when creating files names:

- **Short and sweet**. Limit your file names to 32 characters or less.
- **Nice and neat**. Avoid using spaces in your file names.
- **ABCs and 123s**. Use a combination of letters and numbers.
- **Start out right**. Begin your file name with a letter.
- **Use special characters sparingly.**
  - ✔ Acceptable special characters include hyphens (–) and underscores (_)
  - ✘ Avoid using special characters like (!), (#), ($), (%), (&) in file names.