

Accessibility and Navigation in Brightspace Learning Environment

Learner Guide

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Document Change History

This version of the document replaces all previous versions. The following table describes the most recent changes to this document.

Revision Date	Summary of Changes
August 5, 2021	Updated topics to update HTML Editor to read as Brightspace Editor. Updated the Optimizing personal account settings for assistive technology topic to remove the bullet item - If you use a screen reader to navigate Brightspace Learning Environment, you can turn on Show secondary windows as pop-ups. Otherwise, some secondary pages may not be distinguishable from the main page. Removed topic - Using pop-ups with assistive technology.
July 1, 2021	Updated the Navigating the HTML Editor with a keyboard topic.
April 1, 2021	Update to About Web Accessibility at D2L topic to include a link to the related Committed to Accessibility in Education topic.
January 2, 2020	Updated the Using browser access keys topic to remove reference to Internet Explorer.
August 1, 2019	Updated the Accessibility for Learning topic to mention the OpenDyslexic Font for Chrome for learners with dyslexia.
November 1, 2018	Updates to remove pre-Daylight interface content.

Accessibility and navigation

Web accessibility refers to how easily people with disabilities can navigate and interact with websites. Disabilities may be physical (such as blindness, low vision, deafness, or fine motor skills difficulty), or cognitive (such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder). People with disabilities often use assistive technologies to help them navigate the web. An assistive technology is any device that helps a person with a disability. Common web assistive technologies include modified mouse or trackball devices and keyboards, screen readers, braille readers, and screen magnifiers.

Web accessibility occurs when websites support web accessibility standards, are compatible with assistive technologies, and are easy for people to navigate and understand.

At D2L, we follow web accessibility standards closely and work with interested clients to test the usability of our products for people with disabilities. We believe that instructional practices should focus on helping people learn, and should not be limited by the learning management system the material is delivered in.

Accessibility topics for learning

Many features in Brightspace Learning Environment can be adjusted to improve access for individuals with disabilities. We recommend that individuals who use screen readers, screen magnifiers, or navigate primarily by keyboard, read the accessibility topics to help ensure that the features and settings they use best support their needs.

About Web Accessibility at D2L

Web accessibility refers to how easily people with disabilities can navigate and interact with websites. Disabilities may be physical, such as vision impairments including blindness or low vision, hearing impairment such as deafness, or fine motor skills difficulty; or cognitive, such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder. People with disabilities often use assistive technologies to help them navigate the web. An assistive technology is any device that helps a person with a disability. Common web assistive technologies include modified mice and keyboards, screen readers, and screen magnifiers.

Web accessibility occurs when websites are compatible with assistive technologies, support accessibility standards, and are easy for people to navigate and understand.

D2L follows web accessibility standards closely and works with interested clients to test the usability of products for people with disabilities. D2L believes that instructional practices should focus on helping people learn, and should not be limited by the learning management system in which the material is delivered.

For more details about our commitment to accessibility and our accessibility conformance reports, see [Committed to Accessibility in Education](#).

Accessibility for Learning

You can adjust many features in the D2L Learning Suite to improve access for learners with disabilities. It is recommended that learners who use screen readers or screen magnifiers, or who navigate primarily by keyboard ensure that they use features and settings that best support their needs.

Accessibility is a requirement of all D2L projects. Brightspace products have equal and inclusive learning opportunities and comply with WCAG AA accessibility benchmarks. WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility standards ensure maximum interoperability with assistive technologies, browser plug-ins (for example, the [OpenDyslexic Font for Chrome](#) for learners with dyslexia), and operating system preferences for alternative display and access to web content. This includes, but is not limited to: screen readers, braille outputs, screen magnifiers, color contrast plug-ins, and tools to support reading comprehension. D2L Project Management reviews and documents any exceptions, and shares those exceptions in the VPAT documentation.

D2L also supports simplified navigation and formatting, and responsive navigation for tablets, mobile devices, and other narrow screen displays adhere to and enhance the accessibility benchmarks D2L sets for users requiring assistive devices.

D2L has created responsive, accessible content templates that are free to use. Daylight Content Templates, for use in the Content tool, are available under a creative commons license on the Brightspace Community. These templates allow instructors and instructional design teams to create HTML documents that match the look and feel of the Brightspace interface.

Accessibility Features for Screen Readers

The D2L Learning Suite includes features aimed at improving the usability of the system for learners using assistive technology. Design decisions that D2L uses to benefit screen reader users include the following items:

- Standard page design. Similar functionality appears in the same place and is accessed in the same way across tools.
- Simple heading structure across all tools. Heading 1 is used for page titles. Heading 2 is used for widgets and major page sections. Heading 3 is used to organize information within widgets and subsections.
- Unique, contextual link names and button names.
- Title attributes on links that open the link in a new window. It is recommended that you adjust your screen reader settings to read the title attribute. When this setting is turned on, the screen reader alerts you when a link opens in a new window.
- Descriptive alternative text on all system images and graphics. Brightspace Learning Environment also prompts course designers to include alternative text when uploading images.
- Table row and column markup and table summaries or captions.
- Toggle icons, such as show/hide, indicate the state of the control.
- Skip navigation links and ARIA landmarks so you can skip sections of a page.

- Account settings that enable you to simplify the layout of many tools. There are specific settings related to accessibility, including system font and font size, the option to change modal dialogs to windows, and the option to turn off the Brightspace Editor.
- Full keyboard accessibility. The tab order is logical and tab focus is visually indicated. Drag-and-drop and other dynamic interaction features have keyboard alternatives.
- WAI-ARIA markup for links, context menus, error messages, and confirmation messages to help improve navigation.
- Support for browser and assistive technology scaling and contrast options. System content uses styles that you can overwrite using cascading style sheets (CSS); however, the complexity of the system requires detailed style sheets.

Using personal settings with assistive technology

The minibar includes a personal menu with links to tools that store your personal information and settings. To open the personal menu, select the link containing your name. There are three links on the personal menu:

- **Profile** - Edit your shared personal information
- **Notifications** - Set how you receive notifications about activity in your courses
- **Account Settings** - Change display settings for Brightspace Learning Environment

Optimizing personal account settings for assistive technology

The **Account Settings** link contains several tabs, depending on the role you have within the Brightspace Learning Environment. You can adjust the settings in these tabs to meet your personal needs; however, the following settings might be of particular interest if you are using assistive technology devices or software applications.

In the **Account Settings** tab, consider the following configuration options:

- You can configure the **Login Destination** option to log directly into a course, rather than **My Home**. This option can simplify navigation if you are only taking a few courses.
- The **Font Face** and **Font Size** options adjust the appearance of text Brightspace Learning Environment. Choose options that provide the best results for your needs. To adjust the size of icons, you can use a magnification tool such as the zoom feature built into most browsers.
- If you use a screen reader or you only use a keyboard to navigate Brightspace Learning Environment, you can select the **Turn off rich text editor and view source** option. Using this option, you can upload HTML content authored in an external editor.
- To automatically detect embedded videos, turn on the **Optimize video presentation for programmatically-driven assistive technologies** option.

In the **Discussions** tab, consider the following configuration options:

- To simplify the layout of discussion lists, turn off the **Always show the Discussions List pane** option.
- Turn off the preview pane and show topics in grid view.

In the **Email** tab, consider the following configuration options:

- To simplify the layout of your inbox, clear the **Show the Message Preview pane** and **Show the Folder List pane** check boxes.

The **Metadata** tab is available only to administrators and instructors. Consider the following configuration option:

- To simplify movement through the main metadata page, select the **Basic** and **Expand all Categories** options.

Navigating Brightspace Learning Environment

Brightspace Learning Environment enables you to access course material online. Within the system, there are a number of learning tools that contain course content. This section of the guide discusses how the system is laid out, and how different functionality, settings, and preferences benefit individuals that navigate the system using a screen reader or other assistive technology that interprets the contents of a page.

Different assistive technologies have specific functionality, shortcuts, and commands. Ensure that you review the help material for your assistive technology to ensure you are getting the most benefit and assistance.

Logging in to Brightspace Learning Environment using assistive technology

By default, the Login page for Brightspace Learning Environment has three form elements: **Username**, **Password**, and **Log in**. The **Username** field has focus when you enter the page. The **Password** field and **Log in** button are the next tab options. Your institution might have customized the Login page to display different form elements.

There are two additional options displayed as links:

The **Forgot Password** link opens a new window where you can request a password reset link. An email containing the link is sent to the email address associated with your username.

The **System Check** link must be turned on by an administrator. If it is turned on, the link opens a new page that checks your computer for the minimum requirements of Brightspace Learning Environment. If you do not meet one of the minimum requirement criteria, a message appears that explains which components need to be updated.

Logging out of Brightspace Learning Environment using assistive technology

The **Log out** link is available in your personal menu on the minibar at the top of all pages. The personal menu opens when you click your name on the minibar. You can open the personal menu using an assistive technology's links list, or by tabbing through the minibar links at the top of the page.

Your institution might have a policy to automatically log you out of the system if you are inactive for an extended period of time. Your administrator can determine the amount of inactive time before you are automatically logged out. A JavaScript warning provides an option to remain logged in before your time expires.

Understanding site organization using assistive technology

Brightspace Learning Environment is organized into two levels of information. Organization-related information that appears on My Home, and course-related information that appears on Course Home and different course tools.

My Home

When you log in to Brightspace Learning Environment, My Home is the first page you access. It is a central area for checking institution-wide news and events, and opening organization-level tools.

Like all pages in Brightspace Learning Environment, My home has a navigation area across the top of the page that includes the minibar and the navbar. The navbar contains links to different tools. Since My Home is an organization-level page, the links on the navbar for My Home usually go to organization-level or course-independent tools, such as Email and Brightspace ePortfolio. For screen readers and other assistive technology, the navbar has a hidden default Heading 2 called Navigation, and it is organized using ordered lists. There might be other headings depending on institution configuration needs.

Other My Home content is organized into Widgets. Typical widgets include News, My Courses, Tasks, and Calendar. Using an assistive technology program, you can navigate and search for widgets using Heading 2, and navigate across sections using Heading 3.

One of the main purposes of My Home is to provide access to organization-level tools and information. If you are using a screen reader, you can view a list of links or headings on My Home to familiarize yourself with the available options.

Course Home

Course Home is the first page you visit when you enter a course. To access a Course Home, you must select it from the My Courses widget, or use the search feature to find the course. If you are using the My Courses widget and have more than one role in Brightspace Learning Environment (for example, you are both a graduate student and a teaching assistant), you select

the role tab, and then view the courses for that role. Depending on the screen reader, tabs might be read as tabs or links. In both cases, tabs are read as the first content immediately following the widget heading.

Course Home is a central area for accessing course-specific information. Like My Home, Course Home pages have a navigation area across the top of the page, and a number of widgets that contain information and links. Information and links on Course Home are specific to the course, unless the information relates to course-independent tools. For example, depending on the implementation, the navigation area for Course Home contains links to Grades, Discussions, and Quizzes for that specific course. Use Heading 2 to navigate to the main Navigation area and the different course widgets.

Landmarks

Landmarks are waypoints that a screen reader uses to navigate a page. In general, Brightspace Learning Environment uses two landmarks:

- The navbar has a landmark called Navigation.
- The main body of all pages has a landmark called Main.

Understanding the general page layout

Pages in Brightspace Learning Environment have been designed so that the layout is similar across all tools. The way you interact with the navigation area, links, headings, action buttons, context menus, tables, tabs, forms, expanding and contracting text areas, pop-ups, search, and other content areas is the same on all Brightspace Learning Environment pages.

Using the navigation area with assistive technology

At the top of each page is a navigation area that includes the minibar and the navbar. You can skip the navigation area on any page by selecting the **Skip to main content** link.

The minibar appears at the top of every page. It contains links to **My Home**, a course selector that you can use to switch between courses, alerts about events and updates for you and your courses, and a personal menu for setting your preferences and logging out.

You can jump to the navbar by selecting the hidden heading **Navigation**. The navbar typically contains an unordered list of tool links for the course you are viewing. If you are not in a course, the navbar list contains tool links for My Home or a department. Depending on how the navbar was set up, the links might be organized into link groups. Link groups do not appear in the links list. You can locate link groups by checking the form fields list or navigating by button.

Using headings and ARIA landmarks with assistive technology

Headings and ARIA landmarks help you navigate pages throughout the system:

- Heading 1 and Main landmarks navigate page titles.
- Heading 2 navigates through widgets and major page sections.
- Heading 3 organizes information within widgets and page subsections.
- Navigation, Search, and Complementary ARIA landmarks provide context on a page.

Using tool navigation links and action buttons with assistive technology

Tool navigation and action buttons navigate areas and perform tasks within a specific tool. Typically, the tool navigation links divide complicated tools into different types of tasks. For example, in Grades, the tool navigation divides the **Enter Grades** and **Manage Grades** areas. Tool navigation links are available from the hidden Heading 2 **Tool Navigation**.

Action buttons control page-specific tasks. For example, the **Manage Grades** page includes a **New** action button to add grade items or categories.

Using context menus with assistive technology

Use context menus to select an action for a specific item on a list page. Every context menu has unique link text that references the item to which it applies. For example, in your Locker, files have context menus called **Actions for [file name]**. The context menu opens a menu that contains actions you can perform on that file.

Using tables with assistive technology

Tables and grids organize content within a tool. All tables use heading and table summaries or captions. In some cases, you can navigate rows of a table by check box, since some table items have a **Select [Item]** check box before the item name. In some cases, table rows have a context menu after the item name. These context menus have unique link text so you can locate the correct context menu for the item you want to interact with.

You can select multiple items from a table using the **Select [Item]** check boxes, and then choosing an action to apply to the selected items. Actions that you can apply to multiple items appear at the top and bottom of a table and use the alt text format **[action] Selected Items**. For example, you can use a links list to choose **Select [Topic 1]** and **Select [Topic 2]**, and then choose **Edit Selected Items**.

Complex tables might have drop-down lists for filtering information in the table. For example, some tables have a **View** drop-down list to change the sort order. Most drop-downs have an **Apply** or **Go** button that initiates the action. Some drop-down options, such as the drop-down for the number of items on each page, update when you make a selection. To use these, press **ALT+Down Arrow** (for Windows or Linux) or **Option+ Down Arrow** (for Mac) to open the drop-down menu, and then use the **Up Arrow** or **Down Arrow** and **Enter** key to make a selection.

If your table consists of more than one page of items, use the **Page** drop-down list, the **Next Page** icon, or the **Previous Page** icon to navigate to other pages.

Using Forms with assistive technology

Form fields on pages in Brightspace Learning Environment have a logical tab order. When you press tab, the focus moves to the next location identified as a link. In most cases, you cannot progress past the first mandatory field until you have entered information into the field.

Mandatory fields are designated with an asterisk (*). The last tab locations on a form are usually **Cancel** and **Save**, or another action related to completing the action, such as **Select** or **Upload**.

In some cases, you can create content using Brightspace Editor. The editor is fully accessible by keyboard; however, it lacks the non-visual feedback when options or formatting are selected in the editor view. You can make changes in the source view, so you can read your changes in the code as you work, or you can turn off the Brightspace Editor in your Account Settings. If you turn off the Brightspace Editor, it is replaced by basic text fields that accept HTML coding.

Some form pages contain links to additional actions that might not be recognized as form elements by your form reader. For example, there is a link to create a New Folder on the Add Contact form in Email. It is a good practice to check for links when filling out a form in Brightspace Learning Environment or other D2L products.

Most form pages provide either a confirmation or error message when you submit the form using an ARIA alert. The message appears at the top of the page and should take the focus. If there are errors in your submission, the message explains each error and provides links to the appropriate fields so you can resolve the issues.

Reading equations outside of Forms Mode with assistive technology

If you complete a quiz, survey, or self-assessment, and answer choices contain equations made with an equation editor, you might get the best experience with an assistive technology device if you do not read the equation using forms mode. Out of forms mode MathPlayer can render the equation more comprehensibly. If you read equations within forms mode, your assistive technology might read out MathML code instead of the equation.

Using treeviews and frames with assistive technology

In some tools, such as Manage Files and Email, treeviews and frames help to format complicated lists of items and options. Most of these pages have options to **Hide Tree** (as in Manage Files or **Show (or Hide) the folder list pane** (as in Email). A good best practice is to check a tool's settings and tool bars for ways to simplify the page layout.

Using help text with assistive technology

Many forms contain inline help. Help icons and links to additional help material appear either immediately after the page heading or section heading, or after individual fields. Read the entire contents of a form before filling it out, and look for help text or a help link immediately after a field if you have difficulty understanding the purpose of that field.

Using expandable and collapsible areas with assistive technology

Some pages have sections that are collapsed by default. Collapsed sections contain advanced or supplemental information that is not required to complete standard tasks. To expand a collapsed section using a keyboard or screen reader, select the appropriate **Expand** or **Show** link.

Using Load More links with assistive technology

When a list contains more items than the page currently displays, a **Load More** link appears on the bottom of the list as the final list item. Click the link to append more items to the list.

Using Search with assistive technology

Most pages that contain lists of items or user names have a **Search For** field near the top of the page. To perform a search, enter a word or partial word in the **Search For** field and select the **Search** button or press **Enter**.

Use the **Show Search Options** link to select advanced search options.

Use the **Clear Search** link to clear the contents of the **Search For** field.

Understanding the Calendar Page layout

The Calendar displays events from multiple calendars in one view.

Using calendar view modes

The mode in which you're viewing the calendar is read to assistive technology devices as part of the Heading 1 on the calendar page. You can configure your calendar to display in **Day**, **Week**, **Month**, **Agenda**, or **List** view.

The **Agenda** view groups course events from your active course calendars by date, course, or type. Events appear in chronological order and all-day events display at the top of each grouped listing.

For learners with visual impairment, the **List** view displays all events from your active course calendars in chronological order. You can filter the List view by event type. To view more details about the event, click an event's name. If the list contains more items than fit on the page, a **Load More** link appears as the last entry on the list. To append more items to the list, click the link.

Using the default calendar

The default calendar always displays the course from which you accessed the Calendar tool. The course name appears as a link on the page. If you have permission to create course events, those events appear on the default calendar.

You can change your default calendar by selecting the link labeled with the default calendar's name. When the calendar selector opens, choose a course calendar to view. When you change your default calendar, you also switch your current course in Brightspace Learning Environment to correspond to the course calendar you select.

Using the calendar selector

The calendar selector appears to assistive technology as a bulleted list of available calendars. Each calendar corresponds to an individual course you are enrolled in. If one of your courses is missing from the calendar selector, you can add calendars to your list by selecting the **Add Calendar** link. Select a course link from the bulleted list to display the calendar events in the main calendar display.

If you set the calendar to display all calendars, events in the main calendar display do not indicate which course the events belong to. To distinguish which course an event is part of, select the event name to display event details.

Navigating Brightspace Learning Environment using a keyboard

Brightspace Learning Environment is a learning management system that enables you to access online course material. Users who navigate the system using a keyboard or assistive technologies that emulate a keyboard can use keyboard shortcuts and other navigation tips to more easily use the learning management system.

Using keyboard navigation

Certain keyboard keys have specific actions you can use to navigate the system

- Use the **Tab** key on your keyboard to navigate through the options on a page. Use **Shift+Tab** to return to a previous option. Brightspace Learning Environment highlights page elements that you can interact with (such as links, fields, and buttons) as you tab through them, which makes it easier for you to complete tasks and select options.
- Press **Enter** or **Return** to select a link or button.
- Use the **Down Arrow** and **Up Arrow** keys to navigate drop-down lists that have an **Apply** or **Go** button to select the option.
- Use **Alt+Down Arrow** keys (Windows and Linux) or **Options+Down Arrow** keys (Mac) to open drop-down lists that do not have an **Apply** or **Go** button, and then use **Up Arrow**, **Down Arrow**, and **Enter** keys to select an item from the drop-down list.
- Use the **Enter** or **Return** key to open a menu (such as a context menu, an alert, or the course selector list). Then, use the **Tab** or **Enter** key to select a link.

- Use the **Space Bar** to select a check box or radio button option.
- Use the **Down Arrow** and **Up Arrow** keys to change a radio button option.
- Do not use Alt+F4 to close pop-up windows or pages. This action closes your browser window.

Using browser access keys

Different browsers use different keystroke combinations to activate access key shortcuts:

- For Firefox: Use **Alt + Shift + [accesskey]** (Windows/Linux) or **Control + [Accesskey]** (Mac).
- For Chrome: Use **Alt + [accesskey]** (Windows/Linux), or **Control + Option + [Accesskey]** (Mac).
- For Safari: Use **Alt + [accesskey]** (Windows/Linux), or **Control + Option + [Accesskey]** (Mac).

Navigating Brightspace Editor with a keyboard

The Brightspace editor has comprehensive screen reader and keyboard navigation support. You can move through toolbar items with the **Arrow** keys; use **Tab** and **Shift + Tab** to quickly switch between the toolbars and content area.

- Use the **Tab** key to switch focus down to the content area, and **Shift + Tab** to shift back up to the toolbar
- If a context toolbar is visible, it is positioned between the main toolbar and content area
- Use the **Arrow** keys to move between toolbar items
- Use the **Control + Arrow** keys (**⌘ + Arrow** keys on Mac) to move between toolbar groups
- Use the **Return** key to select and toggle toolbar items, or open drop-down menus

Keyboard shortcuts

Shortcut	Description
⌘+Shift+F (Mac) Ctrl+Shift+F (Windows)	Enter / exit full screen
Esc	Exit full screen Close dialog Close menu
⌘+Alt+Shift+A (Mac) Ctrl+Alt+Shift+A (Windows)	Accessibility checker

⌘+Alt+Shift+C (Mac) Ctrl+Alt+Shift+C (Windows)	Word count
⌘+Alt+Shift+H (Mac) Ctrl+Alt+Shift+H (Windows)	Code editor
⌘+Alt+Shift+P (Mac) Ctrl+Alt+Shift+P (Windows)	Preview

Navigating the Brightspace Capture portal

Use the Tab key and Shift + Tab keys to move through the Brightspace Capture portal. The first tab stop enables you to **Skip over Navigation**. The second tab stop displays the controls for playing content in the media player. These player controls also have access key shortcuts:

- Press access key 1 to toggle playback.
- Press access key 2 to seek reverse.
- Press access key 3 to seek forward.
- Press access key 4 to increase the volume
- Press access key 5 to decrease the volume
- Press access key 6 to focus the video.

Within the media player, you can use the **Space Bar** to select an option.

Accessibility features for low-vision users

Some design decisions benefit users with vision impairments who use screen magnifiers, zoom, and color contrast functionality.

- Standard page designs provide similar functionality located in the same place and accessed in the same way.
- Support for browser and assistive technology scaling and contrast options. System content uses styles that you can overwrite using cascading style sheets (CSS); however, the complexity of the system requires detailed style sheets.
- The keyboard provides a fully accessible experience. The tab order is logical and the tab focus is visually distinctive.
- Code is compliant to accessibility standards. If your screen magnifier supports basic screen reader features, such as reading the cursor location or navigating by links, you can use these features effectively.
- Account settings that enable you to simplify the layout of many tools. There are specific settings related to accessibility, including system font and font size, the option to change modal dialogs to windows, and the option to turn off the Brightspace Editor.

- System information is not communicated only by color.
- All pages meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements for color contrast (with the exception of user-generated content).

Using Magnifier and zoom functionality

In some cases, users who have difficulty reading online and users with fine motor skills difficulty use magnifiers and zoom functionality to increase the target for selectable content such as links, icons, and form fields.

To increase the size of content in Brightspace Learning Environment:

- Use the Account Settings tool to increase the system font size. This increases system fonts only, not icons, other graphics, or user-created content.
- Use an assistive technology or browser that supports zooming in. This increases the magnification of the entire page. This option works well in the Brightspace Learning Environment as images and navigation panels resize well.
- Use a screen magnifier to magnify a portion of the page, such as the area around the cursor. Some users prefer screen magnifiers because they preserve the layout of the page, but allow you to focus on the content in a specific area.
- If you are using equations built with Equation Editor, double-click on inline equations to view them at a larger size.

About D2L

A global leader in EdTech, D2L is the creator of Brightspace, the world's first integrated learning platform.

The company partners with thought-leading organizations to improve learning through data-driven technology that helps deliver a personalized experience to every learner, regardless of geography or ability. D2L's open and extensible platform is used by more than 1,100 clients and almost 15 million individual learners in higher education, K–12, healthcare, government, and the enterprise sector—including Fortune 1000 companies.

The company has operations in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Brazil, and Singapore. www.D2L.com

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