Creating Accessible Learning Content

Introduction

Designing accessible learning content ensures that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can engage with and benefit from your material whether it is a workbook or feedback.

While PebblePad provides the accessible building blocks for your content, the way you create content within it makes all the difference. By incorporating inclusive design practices, you provide a better learning experience for all users, including those with disabilities and those using assistive technologies.

This guide offers practical tips to make your content clear, engaging and accessible.

Text & Instructions

Long blocks of text with justified alignment can be difficult to read, especially for people with dyslexia or visual impairments. Providing clear and well-structured text helps all learners access your content more easily.

- **Keep it clear and concise:** Use plain language and break down complex concepts into digestible sections.
- **Use bullet points:** These help readers scan information quickly.
- **Present information gradually:** Introduce content step by step to avoid overwhelming learners.
- **Left-align text:** Justified text can create uneven spacing that reduces readability.
- **Be consistent:** Maintain uniform tone, terminology and formatting.
- **Use clear fonts:** Opt for sans-serif fonts like Arial, Verdana or Roboto, which are easier to read.

Clear instructions not only benefit users with cognitive disabilities but also improve the overall learning experience for everyone – see next page for examples.

Figure 1 INACCESSIBLE

1. Text and Instructions

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Figure 2 ACCESSIBLE

1. Text and Instructions

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2

Media

Visual and audio elements can enhance learning, but poorly chosen media may confuse or exclude users. Providing multiple formats ensures learners can engage in the way that works best for them.

- **Offer alternatives:** Provide the content in different media such as audio, video, presentation or text to cater for different learning preferences.
- **Provide transcripts:** Offer transcripts for all audio and video content for users who are deaf, hard of hearing or prefer reading.
- **Use alt text:** Describe images concisely, focusing on their purpose and context (see Section 3).
- **Balance visual content:** Use images, videos and graphics purposefully to support the text and provide visual intrigue rather than distract from the content.
- **Identify decorative images:** Mark images as decorative by not adding alt text when they don't convey essential information, so screen readers can skip them.

Providing media alternatives increases flexibility and improves comprehension for all learners.

Figure 3 ACCESSIBLE – Transcript example

April Product Showcase 1.4.25

Transcript

And welcome to the April customer showcase.

In this webinar, we'll be reviewing our latest feature releases and giving you helpful insights into our capabilities and the value they bring to you. So without further ado, gonna introduce the presenters.

And they are, well, Rachel Ward, as you can see on this hello, Rachel. James Littlehales, and myself, Gareth Daley. We also have Mitch Williams who'll be joining us, to demonstrate one of our new LTI features.

So let's go through the agenda.

We've covered the welcome, so now let's step through what we want to discuss, which is the January, February, and March releases.

If you have any questions, please drop them in the chat, and we'll answer them at the end of the each of these sections or at a suitable point during the session. So let's get started. So we're gonna have a look at the January release. And first of all, we have the account settings hub, a new centralised hub that streamlines users management, makes it easy to update your preferences, and for personal information, security, and notifications, they're all settings are in there.

We've also learned launched a new fully accessible keyboard shortcut viewer for both Pebble plus and SV2, making it easier than ever to find and use shortcuts seamlessly on both Windows and Mac, boosting efficiency, accessibility, and workflows.

Alt Text Tips

Alt text provides meaningful descriptions of images for users who rely on screen readers. Effective alt text improves comprehension and ensures no information is lost.

- **Be concise and relevant:** Describe the key information conveyed by the image.
- **Provide context:** Tailor the description to the purpose of the image within the content.
- **Avoid redundancy:** Skip phrases like 'image of' or 'picture of' as screen readers will announce these automatically.
- **Mark decorative images:** If an image is purely decorative, do not include an alt text label and PebblePad will mark it as decorative, preventing unnecessary interruptions for screen reader users.

Thoughtful alt text makes visual content accessible and informative for all users.

Figure 4 ACCESSIBLE – Adding alt text to image example

Alt text

Alt text helps screen readers describe your image to people who may have trouble seeing it. Leave empty if the image is purely decorative.

Sunset view of Edinburgh from Calton Hill with the Dugald Stewart Monument and city skyline.

4

Colour

Colour is a powerful design tool – but poor contrast or reliance on colour alone can make content inaccessible to people with low vision or colour blindness.

- **Ensure strong contrast:** Text should have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 against its background. Use tools like the WebAim Contrast Checker to verify compliance.
- **Choose the right colour:** In the PebblePad colour picker, use any of the first column colours with the white text and any last column colours with black text.
- **Stick to a colour palette:** Limit your use of colours to maintain clarity and avoid visual clutter.
- **Avoid using colour as the sole indicator:** Use text labels, patterns or icons alongside colour to convey meaning.
- **Provide alternatives for colour-dependent content:** Ensure learners can access information through other means, such as clear text descriptions.
- **Avoid text over images:** If you're using banners, select 'Text below the image' in the properties panel to avoid any contrast issues between the banner image and the text colour.

Following these guidelines will make your content more readable and accessible.

Figure 5 INACCESSIBLE

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Figure 6 ACCESSIBLE

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5

Layout

Overly complex navigation and deeply nested content can be frustrating for users, particularly those relying on screen readers.

- **Keep layouts simple:** Reduce the number of layers users must navigate to access information.
- **Use clear headings and structure:** Organise content logically with descriptive headings. Use the 'Title' property on blocks to make it easier for screen readers to navigate the page.
- **Provide overviews:** Include an introductory summary to guide learners through longer content. Make it clear what is covered on each page and who is responsible for each section if multiple users are expected to access the content.

A well-organised layout supports efficient navigation and enhances the learning experience – see next page for examples.

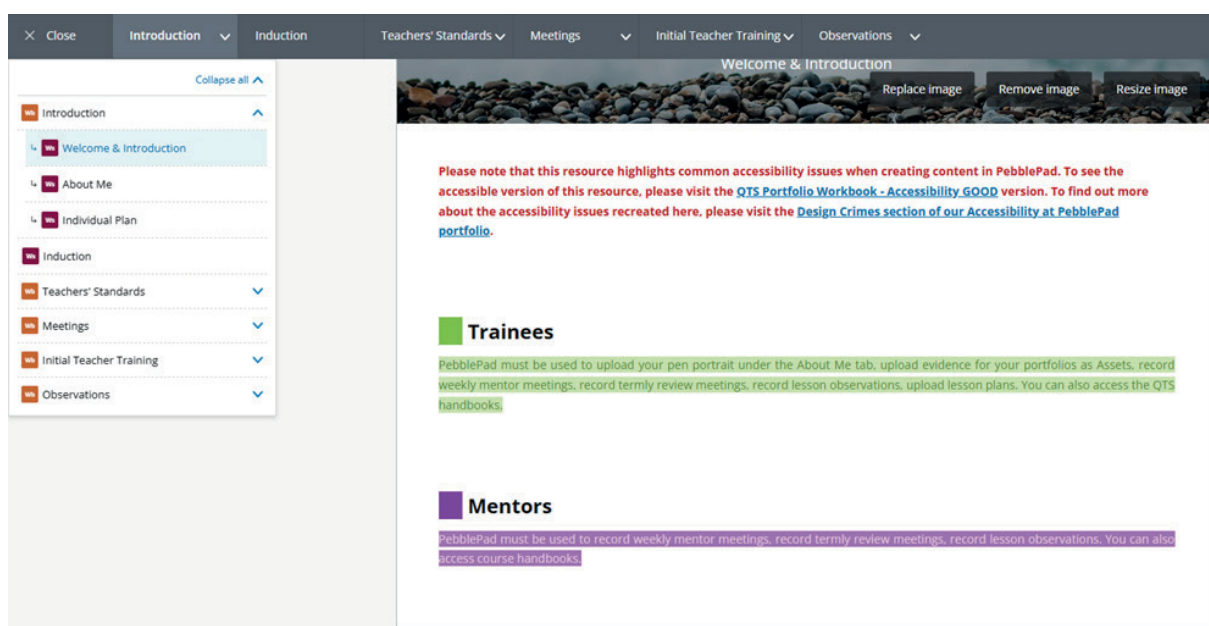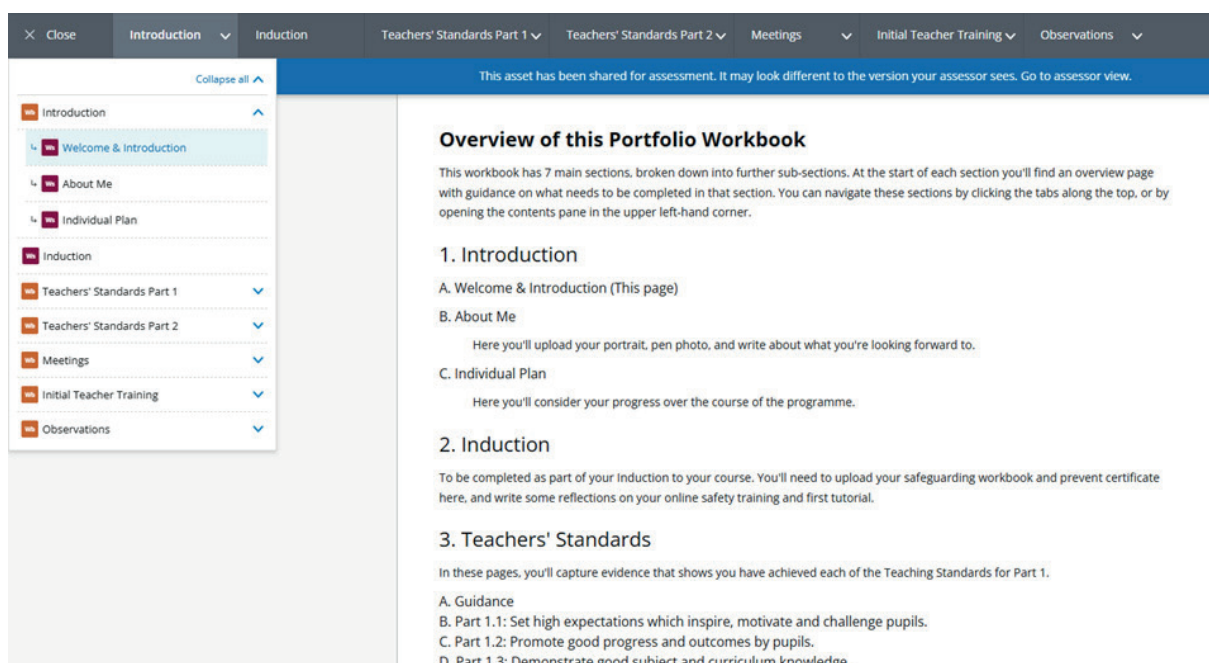**Figure 7 INACCESSIBLE** – Workbook intro example

Figure 8 ACCESSIBLE – Workbook intro example

Descriptive Links

Vague link text like 'Click here' provides no context for users relying on screen readers. Descriptive links improve clarity and accessibility.

- **Be specific:** Describe the destination or purpose of the link (e.g., 'Read our accessibility best practices' instead of 'Learn more').
- **Avoid using full URLs:** Screen readers will read URLs letter by letter, which can be confusing. Instead, hyperlink descriptive text.

This makes it easier for all users to understand and navigate your content.

Figure 9 INACCESSIBLE

Non-descriptive link

Click here to generate lorem ipsum text.

Figure 10 ACCESSIBLE

Descriptive link

Generate lorem ipsum text.

Final Thoughts

By applying these accessibility best practices, you are creating a more inclusive learning environment where every learner can thrive. Accessible content isn't just a requirement – it's an opportunity to engage a wider audience and provide equitable learning experiences.

Ready to build content that welcomes all learners? Get started with PebblePad.

Useful resources

- Designing Accessible Learning Content: A Practical Guide to Applying Best-Practice Accessibility Standards to L&D Resources (2nd Edition) – Susi Miller
- Understanding disabilities and impairments: user profiles – GOV.UK
- Stories of Web Users – WebAim
- Neurodiversity Design System – Will Soward

Still have questions about accessibility?

Contact PebblePad's accessibility champion Fabienne Loveder.

EMAIL OUR CHAMPION