

General

What happens when a course is copied? Does Ally go with the course copy?

Yes. When you copy a course, all alternative formats and instructor feedback will also be available in the new course.

When you archive a course, only references to file accessibility are available. Ally is a cloud service and will store the alternative formats on the Ally servers, which means that these are not pushed back to the LMS. The alternative formats will not be stored inside of the course archive, but the reference from the course archive will continue to be available.

What are some examples of how accessibility can benefit all students?

In many cases, improving the accessibility of course content benefits all students, including those without a disability. Accessibility is often closely connected to the quality and usability of the course materials.

Example 1: Having a proper digital copy of a document instead of a scan makes the document more usable for all students. It might make the document easier to read, especially for low-quality scans, and it also allows students to search through the document and find specific content, copy and paste sections of the document, and so on.

Example 2: Having a video with proper captioning or transcript makes the video more usable for all students. It allows the student to search through the video and find specific parts, the video can still be watched in high-noise situations (e.g., commuting), and so on.

Example 3: Having an image with a quality description can make the image more usable for all students. It can help clarify the content of the image and how it connects to the surrounding context, it makes the image searchable, and so on.

Example 4: Providing a good heading structure for a long document makes the document more usable for all students. It provides additional structure, which makes it easier to work through and process the content. It also allows for a Table of Contents to be generated, which can improve the navigability of the document.

Will Ally change my course appearance?

The only difference you'll see within your course is that Ally provides an accessibility score for your files. The score is shown by a gauge icon next to your course files. Select the gauge to view and improve your file accessibility.

What do students see?

Students see a menu to the left or right of each document. From this menu, they can select Alternative formats to access available versions they can download. Although they can download alternative formats of your files, it is best to improve the documents through the instructor feedback.

What happens to my original files?

Blackboard does not discard the original version of the document. Your original file is retained within the Blackboard system and can be retrieved if necessary.

Accessibility Checklist

What content does Ally check?

Ally currently checks these file formats:

- Images
- PDF files
- Microsoft® Word files
- Microsoft® Powerpoint® files
- OpenOffice/LibreOffice files
- Uploaded HTML files
- WYSIWYG/VTBE content (in Instructure Canvas only)

What accessibility issues does Ally check for?

Ally's accessibility checklist is based on [WCAG 2.1 AA](#) (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). This is an international accessibility standard, and most of the new legislation and legal requirements worldwide aligns with this standard.

Additionally, Ally also adds a number of additional checks on top of this that start to target the usability and quality of the course materials a bit more.

What is a contrast check?

Contrast checks verify whether there is sufficient contrast between the text color and its background color. Text with poor contrast can be difficult to read for everyone, but especially for students with visual impairments such as color blindness.

Ally uses the contrast requirements specified as part of the [WCAG 2.1 AA guidelines](#).

Use the [Colour Contrast Analyser from The Paciello Group](#) any time to check your content.

Alternative formats

What alternative formats does Ally generate?

Ally can provide alternative formats for these file types:

- PDF files
- Microsoft® Word files
- Microsoft® Powerpoint® files
- OpenOffice/LibreOffice files
- Uploaded HTML files

These alternative formats can be generated:

- OCR'd version (for scanned documents)
- Tagged PDF (currently for Word, Powerpoint and OpenOffice/LibreOffice files)
- Semantic HTML
- Audio
- ePub
- Electronic Braille

Are alternate versions generated when a request to download is made?

When a particular alternative format for a particular content item is requested for the first time, Ally generates this on demand. In most cases, this completes within 1-2 minutes.

As soon as it has been generated, the alternative format is downloaded. Ally then also caches the result, so any additional requests for the same alternative format can be served and downloaded from cache immediately.

Does Ally generate alternative accessible versions for student content?

Ally currently only processes instructional content. For example, content added by someone with edit permissions in the course, such as the instructor or instructional designer. Ally currently does not process student content or student submissions.

What format is the OCR'd alternative format?

The OCR'd version is made available as a tagged PDF.

What format is the Audio alternative format?

The audio alternative format is made available as a downloadable MP3 file. Ally also add some of the extracted semantic information into the speech, which adds additional structure to the audio and makes it easier to listen to.

Which Braille code does Ally use for the Electronic Braille Format?

Ally uses Braille Ready File (.brf) as the electronic Braille format. The braille code used depends on the language the document is in. For English documents, Ally uses Grade 2 Unified English Braille (contracted).

Can the Ally Electronic Braille Format be printed using a Braille printer?

The Braille Ready File (.brf) format can be used for both electronic braille displays and braille embossers (printers).

You still need to check whether a specific Braille embosser/printer supports the .brf format.

Browser support

Ally is supported on the same browser as the LMS it is accessed from.

- Google Chrome™
- Mozilla Firefox®
- Microsoft Edge®
- Internet Explorer®
- Safari®

What does the instructor need to do to generate alternative accessible formats for a content item?

Nothing. Ally automatically picks up on any existing or new course materials, runs it through the accessibility checklist, and makes the alternative accessible versions available to both the student and the instructor.

Is there a file size limit?

No, there is no file size limit. There may be cases where the algorithm fails to generate alternative accessible formats for certain large files, but Ally doesn't enforce a maximum file size.

Where are the alternative accessible versions stored? Will it contribute to my storage?

The alternative accessible formats are stored on the Ally side and are not pushed back into the Learning Management System (LMS). Therefore, the alternative accessible versions do not contribute to any local storage or storage quota.

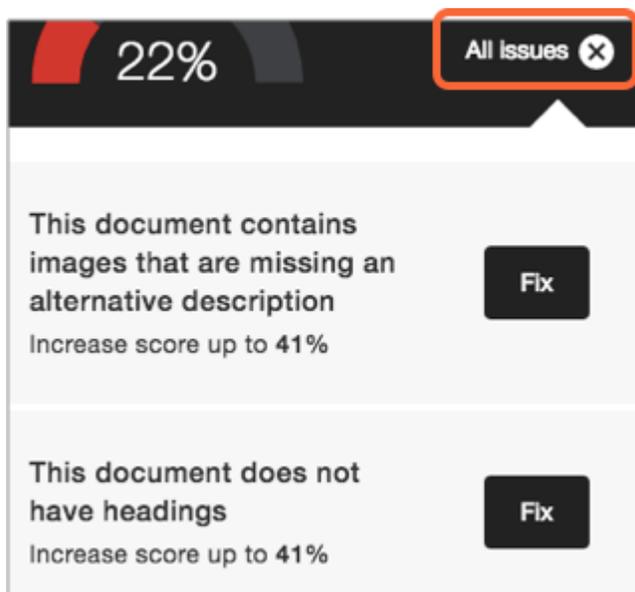
How does Ally handle password protected content?

Ally detects password-protected content, gives them a 0% accessibility score and provides guidance to help remove the password through the instructor feedback. Ally does not generate any alternative formats for password protected content, as it can't get access to the actual content.

Instructor feedback

How do I see all issues?

Select All issues to see every issue in the file. This view shows you by how much the score can improve by fixing each issue. Find the issue you want to start fixing and select Fix.



What threshold is used for the color of the accessibility indicator?

Every document is provided with an accessibility score, which is a percentage score that is supposed to reflect how accessible an item is, how many students it can affect, how severely it affects them, etc. To calculate the accessibility score for a document, Ally takes a weighted average of the different accessibility rules/checks, as some rules are more important/impactful than others.

Within the User Interface, the following threshold is used for determining the color of the indicator:

- 0% - 33%: Red = The file is not accessible and needs immediate attention.
- 34% - 66%: Orange = The file is somewhat accessible, but needs further attention.
- 67% - 99%: Green = The file is accessible, but further improvements are possible.
- 100%: Perfect = The file has a perfect accessibility score. There is no action needed to further improve.

Accessibility is very much a spectrum where further improvements are always possible, so it's hard to provide a point at which the item becomes "accessible". However, as a rule of thumb, once an item is in the green zone it should be doing reasonably well.