

Distance Learning Systems

Teaching Tips #18 — Web Materials That Work

In a [recent Teaching Tip](#)¹ we talked about digitizing documents. This week we discuss some of the issues that can arise when making documents available to your students and how to deal with them.

The Right Format

The right format for any document will be that which can be read by all of your students while still presenting the information accurately. Plain text is perhaps the most widely accessible, but you often lose important formatting and layout. Following are points discussing the most useful document types for web education.

HTML/Web Documents

HTML documents will naturally be accessible to all students. You don't have to be a web developer or know HTML to create HTML documents! Just use the *Save As* or *Save for the Web* functions in your software.

PDF Documents

The Adobe PDF format is a widely used and accessible format. As members of the UAF community, you have [access to the full Adobe Acrobat program](#)², which lets you create PDF files from applications, web pages, or by scanning existing print documents. PDF documents can be single-page, [multi-page](#)³, or even an [aggregate of various files](#)⁴ already in PDF format. The important points are to try to [keep the file sizes reasonable](#)⁵ and make sure you provide students with a link to [the free Acrobat Viewer](#)⁶ in case they don't yet have it.

Office Documents

Distributing Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel files can be a useful means of exchange as long as your students can view them! Students are not part of the UAF site license for Office. They must understand they will need to own the software, use a lab, or install the [appropriate viewer](#)⁷, using links you can provide.

Standard Graphics Files

If you use Photoshop, Corel Draw, or other graphics programs to create materials, be sure to provide the material in an accessible file format. By far, the most accessible will be GIF or JPEG images. If you are targeting other graphics software users, TIFF or PNG are the standards. Try to avoid the less standard BMP, WMF, and PICT platform-specific types. Windows XP and Mac OS X have built-in viewers that can handle most file types, otherwise the free [IrfanView](#)⁸ for Windows or [MGIV](#)⁹ for Mac OS 9 can open almost any graphic file.

More Resources

Find more information, including a variety of links and resources, file size information, etc., check this Tip's resource page on the Distance Learning Systems website: <http://distance.uaf.edu/dls/resources/tt/webmaterials/>

For more Teaching Tips and other Distance Education information, please visit the new and enhanced Center for Distance Education Distance Learning Systems website at:
<http://distance.uaf.edu/dls/>

¹ <http://distance.uaf.edu/dls/resources/tt/teaching-tips-15.pdf>

² <http://www.uaf.edu/dcc/keys/>

³ <http://studio.adobe.com/learn/tips/acr5tagpdf/main.html>

⁴ <http://studio.adobe.com/learn/tips/acr6mergedpdf/main.html>

⁵ <http://studio.adobe.com/learn/tips/acr5smallpdf/main.html>

⁶ <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

⁷ <http://www.microsoft.com/office/000/viewers.asp>

⁸ <http://www.irfanview.com/>

⁹ <http://www.mgiv.freehomepage.com/about.html>