

Section 508 Standards Compliance



Section 508: Standards Compliance

Section 508 refers to accessibility of digital information for individuals with disabilities. Often we do not think about equal access to information in the online environment. In the physical world, laws are implemented to help those with physical limitations such as ramps located at an entrance of all business establishments. But in the online world, laws also exist to assist those with disabilities. [Section 508](#), an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requires Federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public. For the purpose of the DoDEA Virtual High School, it is our intension to simply make online instructors aware of specific requirements as set forth in Section 508.



When online instructors add instructional content to supplement a lesson by uploading Microsoft Word documents, PowerPoint Presentations, PDF documents, etc. in our DVHS courses, they may present challenges for students with disabilities. For example, a visually impaired student who uses a screen reader would not be able to understand the meaning of an image or diagram without a description being added to the image. Or, if online instructors add text by means of the text editor in Blackboard, using multiple colors for text to make emphasis on important terms or use highlights for phrases to signify importance, a student who is color blind may not be able to decipher this information.

There are many categories covered in Section 508. But the biggest areas of concern in the DVHS in regard to ensuring that Section 508 compliance is met include the following:

- Videos with audio must be closed captioned;
- Audio files must include a text script;
- Images must include alternative text or descriptions; and
- Tables must include row and column headers.

In the DVHS, a general rule to follow when online instructors want to add supplemental lessons or assignments is to contact their assigned instructional designer who will ensure that additional content is compliant with the standards outlined in Section 508.

Photo Attribution

Description: Blocks with a variety of digital media scenes; Source: ThinkStock.com