

How to Fix Moodle's HTML Issues with Guidance

Blackboard Ally is the designated accessibility tool integrated into our university's Moodle. It serves as a critical resource for enhancing the accessibility of online course content. This guidance is specifically tailored to help you fix any HTML issues that Ally detects. By following the steps and recommendations outlined here, you can ensure that your course materials meet Ally's standards of accessibility, making learning more inclusive for students.

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Last Updated: 2025/10/03

1. Media Issues

1.1 The image can induce seizures (**Severe**)

What this means: Sometimes, animated images/videos contain flashing or contrasting lights or patterns that can lead to seizures for people who suffer from photosensitive epilepsy, which is a very serious and potentially life-threatening condition. Animated images with these characteristics can be generally unpleasant to look at, even for those not prone to seizures.

How to fix: delete this kind of image/video and replace them with more appropriate ones.

1.2 The image does not have a description (**Major**)

What this means:

Ally has flagged that the image is missing alternative text (alt text). Alt text is important because it allows screen readers to describe the image to students who cannot see it. Without it, the meaning of the image is lost for visually impaired users.

The screenshot displays the Ally accessibility checker interface. On the left, a list of 13 issues is shown, each with a severity icon (yellow for minor, orange for moderate, red for severe), a description, a count, and a progress bar. Issue 1 is highlighted. On the right, a detailed view of Issue 1 is shown, including an accessibility score of 24% and a description: 'This image is missing a description'. Below this, there are buttons for 'What this means' and 'How to write a good description'. At the bottom, there is a section for 'Add image description' with a text input field and an 'Add' button. Below that, there is a checkbox for 'Indicate image is decorative' and a note: 'This image is used for decoration only and a description is not needed'. A 'Help' link is at the bottom right.

Issue	Description	Count	Severity
1. Document: The document is missing a title		33,767	Severe
2. Document: The document does not have a language set		21,089	Severe
3. Document: The document's heading structure does not begin at one		8,058	Severe
4. Document: The document does not have an appropriate heading structure		2,056	Severe
5. HTML: The HTML content contains links without descriptive text		2,082	Severe
6. HTML: The HTML content has malformed lists		2,027	Severe
7. HTML: The HTML content does not have an appropriate heading structure		1,881	Severe
8. Document: The document does not have the correct language set		1,877	Severe
9. HTML: The HTML content does not have a language set		276	Severe
10. HTML: The HTML content is missing a title		219	Severe
11. HTML: The HTML content has malformed definition lists		204	Severe
12. Document: The document's heading structure goes beyond six levels		78	Severe
13. HTML: The HTML content has links or buttons with redundant text		33	Severe

How to fix:

- Add a short, clear description of the image in the alternative text field when uploading or editing the image. Or input texts in the Add image description box, then click the “**Add**” button. Please note that the description should be different with the image’s file name.
- Focus on the essential information the image conveys (e.g., “Bar chart showing an increase in student engagement from 2020 to 2024”).

- If the image is purely decorative and adds no meaning, **mark it as decorative in Ally** instead of writing a description by clicking “**Indicate image is decorative**”.
- Re-upload or save changes so the description is included.

1.3 The image has contrast issues (**Major**)

What this means: This means the colours used in the image do not have enough contrast. For example, text, shapes, or indicators (like using bright red or green) may blend into the white/light background. This makes the image hard to read for people with low vision or colour vision deficiency.

The screenshot displays the Blackboard Ally interface. On the left, a list of 13 accessibility issues is shown for a document. Each issue includes a number, a description, a severity level (e.g., 'Major'), and a count. The issues are:

Issue Number	Description	Severity	Count
1.	Document: The document is missing a title	Major	33,747
2.	Document: The document does not have a language set	Major	21,089
3.	Document: The document's heading structure does not begin at one	Major	8,068
4.	Document: The document does not have an appropriate heading structure	Major	2,266
5.	HTML: The HTML content contains links without discernible text	Major	2,082
6.	HTML: The HTML content has malformed lists	Major	2,037
7.	HTML: The HTML content does not have an appropriate heading structure	Major	1,981
8.	Document: The document does not have the correct language set	Major	1,877
9.	HTML: The HTML content does not have a language set	Major	276
10.	HTML: The HTML content is missing a title	Major	219
11.	HTML: The HTML content has malformed definition lists	Major	204
12.	Document: The document's heading structure goes beyond six levels	Major	79
13.	HTML: The HTML content has links or buttons with redundant text	Major	33

On the right, a panel shows the 'Accessibility score for: sample picture.png' as 24%. Below this, it states 'This image has contrast issues' and 'Guidance not available yet'. A message indicates 'We are updating the guidance for this issue.' and provides a 'Browse' button for uploading a new image. A 'Help' link is also present.

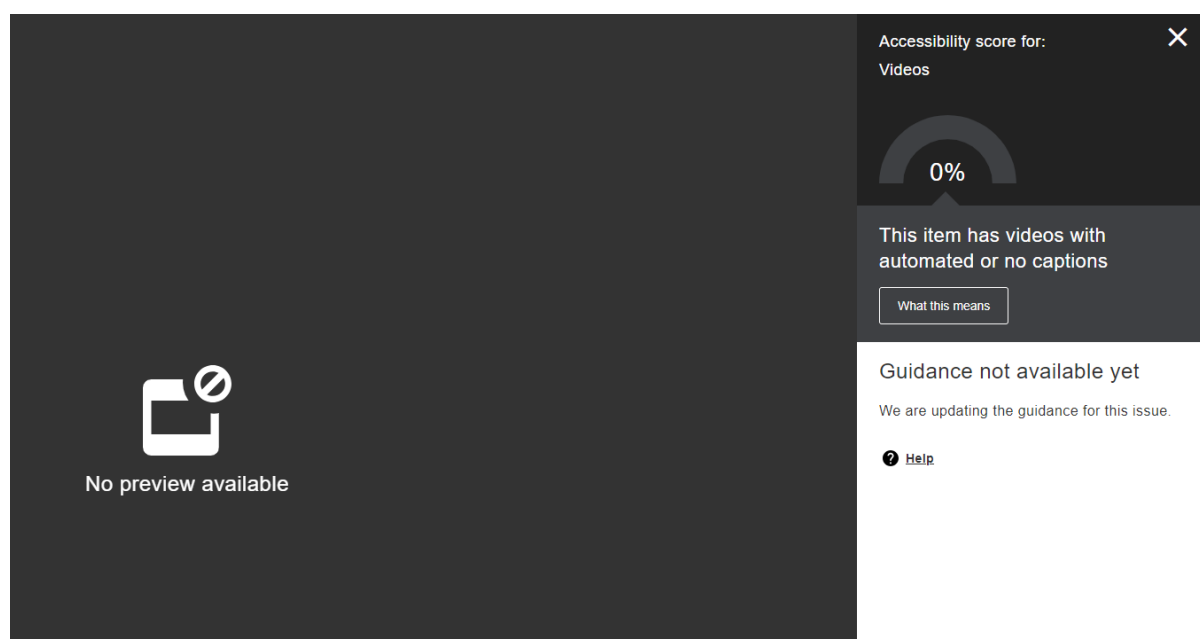
How to fix:

- Replace the image with one that uses high-contrast colours between text/objects and the background.
- Use tools (such as the free [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)) to confirm the colours meet accessibility standards.
- Re-upload the corrected image to Blackboard Ally by selecting the **Browse** button in the Ally interface.
- If the image cannot be replaced, provide a clear text description (alt text or in surrounding text) so students can still access the content.

1.4 The HTML content has videos without captions or with automated captions (**Major**)

What this means:

Ally has detected a video without accurate captions. Captions are essential for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and they also help many learners follow content more easily.



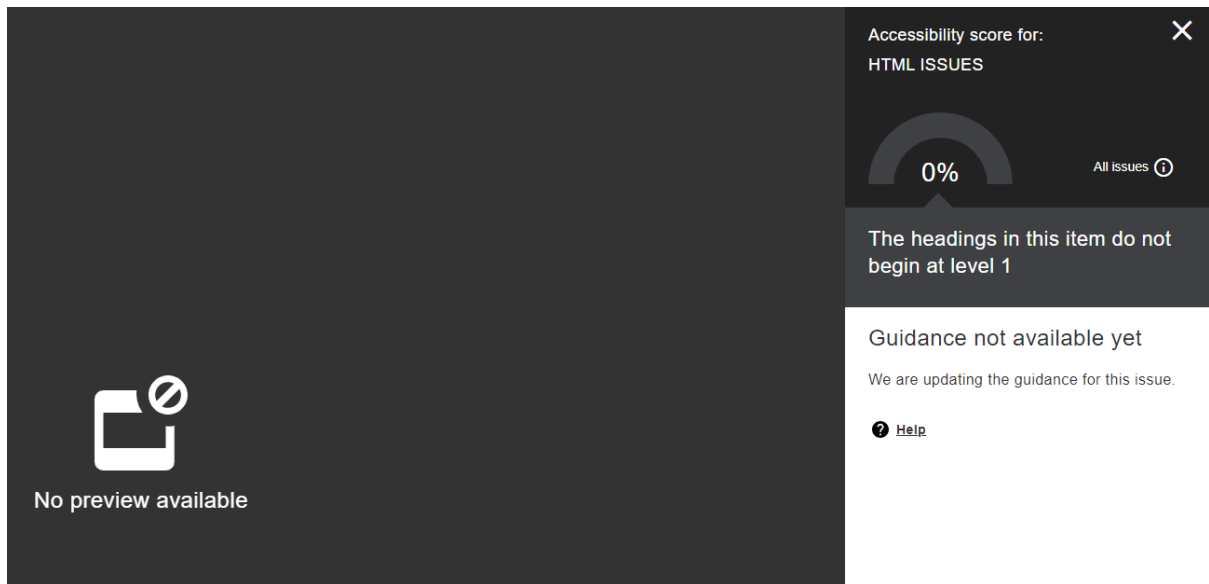
How to fix: Normally, this issue is caused by external videos, such as YouTube videos that only have automatic captions. Please always ask your students for feedback on this, and if they have specific requirements, provide them with the transcript.

2. HTML Issues

2.1 The HTML's heading structure does not start at the right level (**Major**)

What this means:

Ally has found that the page headings are not organised correctly. For example, the content may jump straight to a Heading 4 (H4) without a preceding Heading 3 (H3). This creates confusion for screen reader users, who rely on headings to navigate the page in a logical order. It can also make the layout harder to follow for all learners.

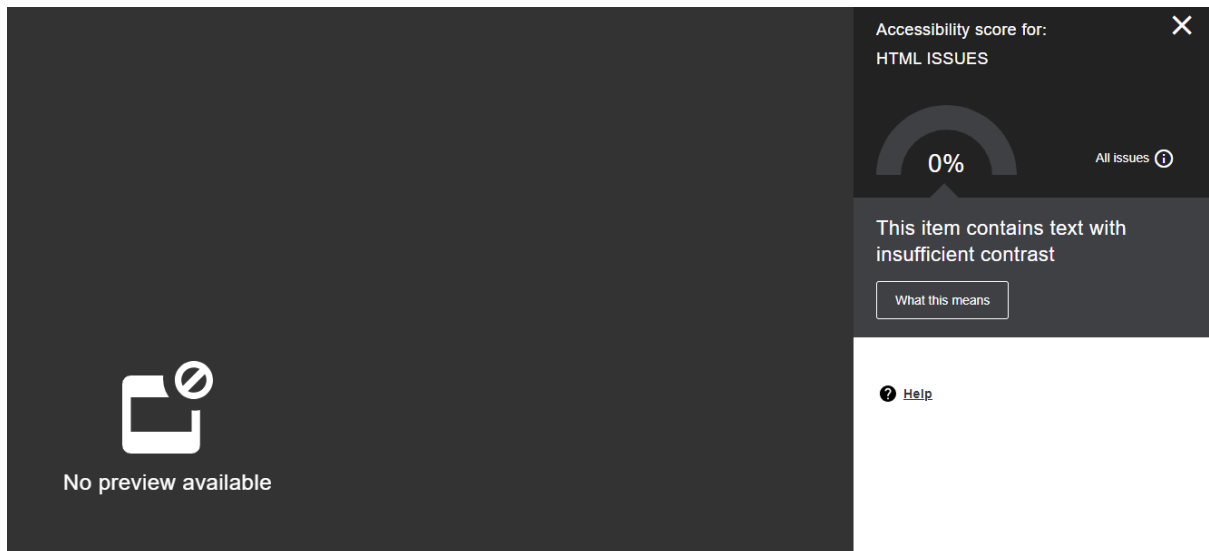


How to fix: edit the Heading tags in the Moodle editor through Format-Paragraph styles, the structure should be start from large Heading (H3), then H4, then H5, H6 and finally Paragraph. As they all represented different HTML heading tags (H3, H4, H5, p). In your Moodle editor:

- Always start with a Heading 3 (H3) for the page title.
- Avoid skipping heading levels (e.g., don't go from H3 directly to H5).
- In Moodle's tinyMCE editor, use the Format → Paragraph styles option instead of manually adjusting font size or bold.

2.2 The HTML content contains text with insufficient contrast (**Major**)

What this means: The text colour and background colour are too similar, making the content hard to read. This is a common issue when using colours like grey on white, light red on white background, or other low-contrast combinations. Students with low vision, colour vision deficiency, or those viewing on smaller/mobile screens may struggle to see the text clearly.

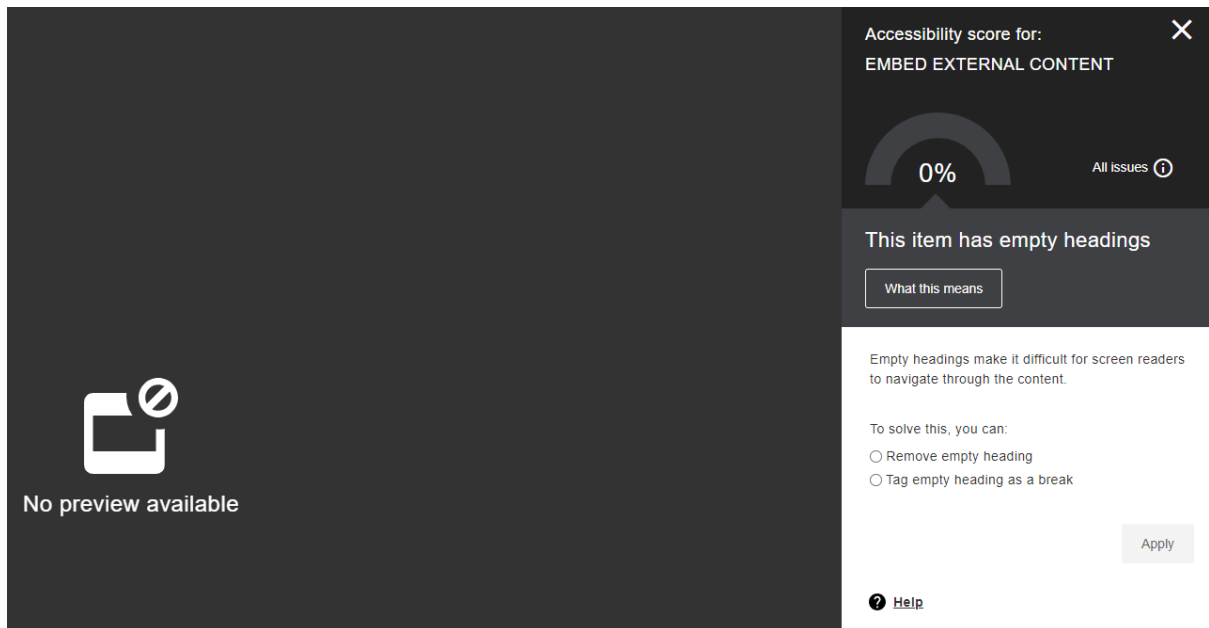


How to fix: change the colour of the text using the to ensure your colour contrast is sufficient. If your background is default white, **note that all available colours in the Moodle editor have insufficient contrast, except for black colour.**

- Change the text colour and/or background colour to ensure sufficient contrast (at least a 4.5:1 ratio for normal text).
- Use a free tool such as the [WebAIM: Contrast Checker](#) to test your colour choices.
- Avoid relying on colour alone to convey meaning: use bold, underline, or patterns alongside colour where appropriate.

2.3 The HTML content has empty headings (**Major**)

What this means: Ally has detected headings in the content that do not contain any text. Empty headings usually appear when a heading style (e.g., Heading 3) is applied but nothing is typed, or when formatting is copied and pasted from another document. These create unnecessary “**stops**” for screen readers, which can confuse students and interrupt navigation.



How to fix:

- Click the Ally option: “**Remove empty heading**”, or “**tag empty heading as a break**”, then click the “**Apply**” button.
- Sometimes, this feature may not work as expected. In such case, you’ll need to access Moodle’s HTML editor to locate and delete any Heading tags that do not contain content. For example: the tag `<h5></h5>` should be removed if it’s empty.

2.4 The HTML content has table headers that don’t have any content (**Major**)



What this means: Ally has detected **table headers (<th>)** that are empty. Table headers should contain labels that describe the data in the rows or columns beneath them. If they are blank, screen reader users cannot understand the relationship between the header and the data, making the table confusing or meaningless.

This issue usually occurs when you insert a table using Moodle’s editor but leave the first-row empty. To resolve this problem, ensure that you input your header content in the first row. Note that copying a table from Excel into Moodle does not generate this issue.

How to fix:

- Review the table structure in the HTML editor (or Moodle’s table tool).
- Ensure all header cells (<th>) contain clear, descriptive text (e.g., “Year”, “Student numbers”).
- If a cell is not intended to be a header, change it from header cell (<th>) to a regular cell (<td>).
- Save the changes and re-check in Ally.
- If you cannot fix the table quickly, provide the data in plain text (e.g., a list or paragraph) alongside the table so students can still access the information.

2.5 The HTML content has form elements without a label (Major)



What this means: Ally has found form fields (e.g., text boxes, checkboxes, drop-downs) that do not have labels. Labels tell screen readers what the form element is for (e.g., “Enter your name” or “Select your year of study”). Without labels, students using assistive technologies cannot complete the form correctly.

How to fix: This issue is not common unless you have some knowledge of HTML and mistakenly insert form or input tags. Please check your HTML editor to see if there are any input tags without a corresponding label tag.

- Check each form field in the HTML editor.
- Add a descriptive <label> tag linked to the form element.
- Ensure every form control (text box, radio button, checkbox, drop-down, etc.) has a clear label that explains its purpose.

- If a visible label is not appropriate (e.g., for search boxes), use ARIA attributes.
- Save and re-check the content in Ally.
- If you cannot add full labels right away, at least provide instructions before the form (e.g., “Enter your name in the first box, your ID in the second”) so students are not completely blocked.

2.6 The HTML content does not have an appropriate heading structure (Minor)

What this means: Ally has detected that the page headings are not organised in a logical order. For example, the content may:

- Skip heading levels (e.g., going from Heading 3 straight to Heading 5).
- Use headings only for styling, not structure.
- Have too many headings at the same level without clear hierarchy.

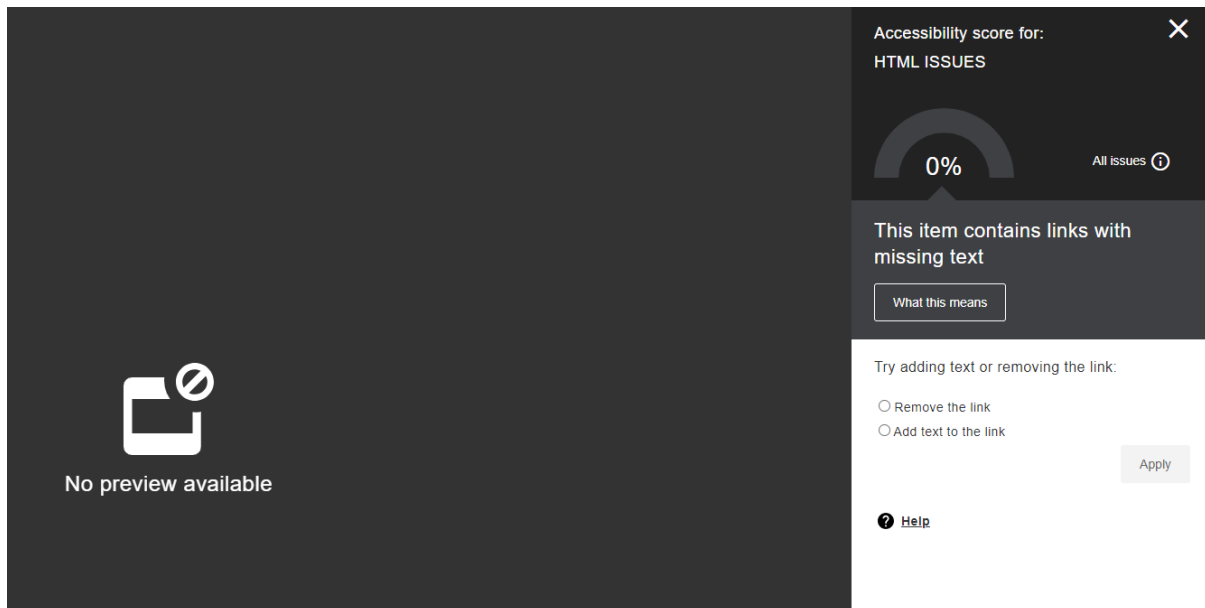
This makes it hard for screen readers to provide meaningful navigation and can confuse all students trying to scan the page.

How to fix: Instead of adjusting font size, use the “**Heading**” style for section headings, applying them from large to small according to the sequence structure. Use the “**Paragraph**” style for the main body of text.

- Always start with Heading 3 (H3) in the text editor.
- Do not skip heading levels (e.g., avoid going from H3 directly to H5).
- In Moodle/HTML editors, apply heading styles via the formatting menu rather than manually changing font size or bold.
- Review the page to ensure headings outline the logical flow of content.

Resource: [Heading Order \(blackboard.com\)](https://blackboard.com)

2.7 The HTML content contains links without discernible text (Minor)



What this means: Ally has detected links that do not contain meaningful text. For example, a link that just says “Click here”, “Read more”, or only shows a URL (e.g., <http://example.com>). Screen readers read these links out of context, so students may not know where the link goes or what it’s for.

How to fix: Choose the “Remove the link” or “**Add text to the link**” as illustrated in the image above, then input the link text if you chose the latter option, and finally click the “**Apply**” button.

Resource: [Links With Missing Discernible Text \(blackboard.com\)](https://blackboard.com)

Note:

1. **Accessibility Report Update:** Please allow at least 30 minutes for updates due to lag issues.
2. **Outdated Issues:** Some issues may appear outdated as Moodle and Ally software are updated. Most are considered minor, such as “The HTML content does not have a language set”. These will no longer appear in future Moodle builds.
3. **Heading Structure:** In Moodle, we already utilise tags H1 and H2 for the web page design, so the largest font in the Moodle editor starts from H3 tag. It is crucial to be mindful of this structure as it can affect the experience of screen reader users, whose devices navigate based on HTML heading structure.
4. **Ally Detection Limitations:** Not all issues detected by Ally will be illustrated. Even if detected, be aware that your content might still be inaccessible based on Ally’s descriptions, including issues with contrast, heading structure, etc.
5. If you need **further information or guidance**, please visit the following link: <https://moodlecurrent.gre.ac.uk/mod/book/view.php?id=2726546>