

Accessible Slides in LaTeX

https://github.com/rhstanton/accessible_LaTeX

Version 1.0

Richard Stanton

richard.stanton@berkeley.edu

UC Berkeley

February 7, 2026

Introduction

- On January 8, 2026, we were notified by campus that, beginning in April 2026,
“The updated requirements of the ADA require that digital course materials provided to students, even materials inside password-protected course sites like bCourses, will need to comply with accessibility standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ([WCAG](#)) 2.1 Level AA).”
- Many of us use Beamer to create teaching slides.
- **But Beamer is not and never will be compatible with these requirements.**
- Fortunately, the \LaTeX Project team has created `ltx-talk`, a [purpose-built accessible presentation class](#) that:
 1. Generates accessible output meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards,
 2. Requires little modification to existing Beamer source (uses same `frame` syntax), and
 3. Requires no manual processing of the resulting PDF file.
 - Part of the [LaTeX Tagging Project](#)
 - Requires LaTeX kernel 2025-11-01 (update packages using TeX Live Manager or TeX Live Utility)
 - See [latest detailed instructions](#)

This template

- You can use [this template](#) for modifying your own work.
 - Contains math, text, graphics, and tables.
 - Scores a perfect 100% from the bCourses accessibility checker, Ally.
 - **It's easy!** Most of the work is just editing the preamble.
- The template is available at:
https://github.com/rhstanton/accessible_LaTeX

IMPORTANT: Overleaf does NOT currently work

- ltx-talk requires LaTeX kernel 2025-11-01
- As of February 7, 2026, Overleaf is using LaTeX kernel 2025-06-01
- So you must compile locally
- Installing TeX Live (Free)
 - Windows: Download TeX Live from <https://tug.org/texlive/>
 - * Run the installer (~4 GB download)
 - * Choose a TeX editor: TeXworks (included) or TeXstudio
 - * Update: Use TeX Live Manager GUI from Start menu
 - Mac: Download MacTeX from <https://tug.org/mactex/>
 - * Install the .pkg file (~5 GB download)
 - * Includes TeXShop editor
 - * Update: Use TeX Live Utility app (in Applications folder)
- Important: After installation, update all packages using the GUI updater shown above

Important workflow change: Use LuaLaTeX

- You'll need to change your LaTeX compiler from pdfLaTeX to LuaLaTeX.
- Why switch to LuaLaTeX?
 1. **Automatic MathML:** LuaLaTeX automatically generates MathML (Mathematical Markup Language), making math accessible to screen readers without extra work.
 2. **Easier workflow:** While pdfLaTeX has partial support, it requires manually providing MathML files for each equation—tedious and error-prone.
Also provides modern font support and full UTF-8 compatibility.
- How to switch:
 - Command line: `lualatex myfile.tex`
 - Most LaTeX editors: Select “LuaLaTeX” from the compiler menu
- TeX version requirements:
 - Minimum: TeX Live 2023 or later with all packages updated
 - Critical: Must have LaTeX kernel 2025-11-01 (update via TeX Live Manager/Utility)
 - Will NOT work: TeX Live 2022 or earlier, or Overleaf (as of Feb 2026)

The basics

- Slides are put inside a `frame` environment, just like in Beamer.
- So **existing source files don't need a lot of editing.**
- Here's some gratuitous *math* for the accessibility checker.

```
\begin{frame}{The basics}
\begin{itemize}
\item Slides are put inside a \texttt{frame} environment, just like in Beamer.
\item So \textbf{\color{blue}{existing source files don't need a lot of editing.}}
\item Here's some gratuitous \$\mathit{math}\$ for the accessibility checker.
\end{itemize}
\end{frame}
```

- **Note:** I set the fonts in this file so that numbers, percent signs, and dollar signs look the same in both math and text mode (my pet Beamer peeve...)
 - **Text:** \$1234567890%.
 - **Math:** \$1234567890%.

Figures

- Including figures is the same as in Beamer (e.g., using `\includegraphics`), but you need to provide a **text description**.

```
\includegraphics[height=.4\textheight,alt={A capybara}]{capybara.jpg}
```



Tables

- Including tables is the same as in Beamer (e.g., using the `tabular` environment).
- Also need to specify **header rows**. Use `{1}` for 1 header row, `{1,2}` for 2 rows, etc. E.g.,

```
\tagpdfsetup{table/header-rows={1,2,3}}
\begin{tabular}{ccccrcccr}
\toprule
← 3 header rows
\midrule
← data rows
\bottomrule
\end{tabular}
```

Payment date	Caplet expiry date	DF_{pay}	Forward rate	Days to expiry	Days in accrual period	T_{expiry}	Δ	Caplet
2004/12/01	—	0.99550	0.01790	0	91	0.00000	0.25278	—
2005/03/01	2004/11/29	0.99008	0.02188	89	90	0.24384	0.25000	1,178.77
2005/06/01	2005/02/25	0.98401	0.02413	177	92	0.48493	0.25556	4,844.73
2005/09/01	2005/05/27	0.97733	0.02675	268	92	0.73425	0.25556	10,016.71

Common pitfalls

- Forgetting alt text for images
 - Every `\includegraphics` needs an `alt={...}` parameter
 - Even decorative images need alt text (use `alt={decorative}`)
- Not specifying table header rows
 - Add `\tagpdfsetup{table/header-rows={...}}` before each table
 - Use `{1}` for 1 header row, `{1,2}` for 2 header rows, etc.
- Insufficient color contrast
 - WCAG 2.1 requires 4.5:1 contrast ratio for normal text
 - Avoid light colors: yellow, cyan fail contrast requirements
 - Darken red and green: use `red!80!black`, `green!40!black`
 - Standard blue is fine and meets WCAG requirements
 - Test with a contrast checker: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- Using the wrong compiler
 - Make sure your editor is set to use `LuaLaTeX`, not `pdfLaTeX`
- Old TeX distribution
 - TeX Live 2022 or earlier won't work
 - Update packages using TeX Live Manager (Windows) or TeX Live Utility (Mac)

Getting started

- Follow these steps to migrate your Beamer slides:
 1. Install TeX Live locally (Overleaf doesn't work yet)
 2. Update all packages using TeX Live Manager (Windows) or TeX Live Utility (Mac)
 3. Download this template from https://github.com/rhstanton/accessible_LaTeX
 4. Copy the preamble (everything before \begin{document}) to your Beamer files
 5. Add alt text to images and table/header-rows to tables
 6. Set your compiler to LuaLaTeX
 7. Compile and test!
- Questions or suggestions? richard.stanton@berkeley.edu