

WEBSITE GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIBILITY

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OVERVIEW

1. Why: The Case for Web Accessibility

It is essential that the Web be accessible in order to provide equal access and equal opportunity to people with diverse abilities. Indeed, the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) recognizes access to information and communications technologies, including the Web, as a **basic human right**.

Accessibility supports social inclusion for people with disabilities as well as [others](#), such as [older people](#), people in rural areas, and people in developing countries.

There is also a strong business case for accessibility. Accessibility overlaps with other best practices such as [mobile web design](#), device independence, multi-modal interaction, usability, [design for older users](#), and [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#). Case studies show that accessible websites have better search results, reduced maintenance costs, and increased audience reach, among other benefits. [Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for Your Organization](#) details the social, technical, financial, and legal benefits of web accessibility.

2. What: Examples of Web Accessibility

Properly designed websites and web tools can be [used by people with disabilities](#). However, currently many sites and tools are developed with accessibility barriers that make it difficult or impossible for some people to use them. Below are just a few examples.

Alternative Text for Images



Alt text is the classic example. Images should include [equivalent alternative text](#) in the markup/code.

If alt text isn't provided for images, the image information is inaccessible, for example, to people who cannot see and use a screen reader that reads aloud the information on a page, including the alt text for the visual image.

When equivalent alt text is provided, the information is available to everyone to people who are blind, as well as to people who turned off images on their mobile phone to lower bandwidth charges, people in a rural area with low bandwidth who turned off images to speed download, and others. It's also available to technologies that cannot see the image, such as search engines.

3. How: Make Your Website and Web Tools Accessible

Most of the basics of accessibility are even easier and less expensive than providing transcripts. However, the proper techniques are poorly integrated into some web tools, education, and development processes. If you are new to accessibility, it takes some time and effort to learn the common issues and solutions. A starting place is the Introduction to Web Accessibility.

Some accessibility barriers are more complicated to avoid and the solutions take more development time and effort. W3C WAI provides extensive resources to help, such as Understanding WCAG 2.0: A guide to understanding and implementing Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.

Using authoring tools that support accessibility makes it easier for website developers. Browsers also play a role in accessibility. Essential Components of Web Accessibility explains the relationships between the different components of web development and interaction.

Accessibility is essential for developers and organizations that want to create high quality websites and web tools, and not exclude people from using their products and services.

4. Designing for Inclusion

Inclusive design, design for all, digital inclusion, universal usability, and similar efforts address a broad range of issues in making technology available to and usable by all people whatever their abilities, age, economic situation, education, geographic location, language, etc. Accessibility focuses on people with disabilities — people with auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech, and visual impairments. The documents below explore some of the overlaps between inclusive design and web accessibility, and help managers, designers, developers, policy makers, researchers, and others optimize their efforts in these overlapping areas.

These components inter-relate and support each other. For instance, **web content** needs to include text alternatives for images. This information needs to be processed by **web browsers** and relayed to **assistive technologies**, such as screen readers. In order to create such text alternatives, authors need **authoring tools** that support them to do so.

a. Text Alternatives

Provide text alternatives for any non-text content so that it can be changed into other forms people need, such as large print, braille, speech, symbols or simpler language.

b. Time-based Media

Provide alternatives for time-based media.

- Provide audio that describes the video content

- Provide transcripts of any audio or video presentation
- Provide Captions for any video based content
- Provide Sign language interpretation of the audio content

c. Adaptable

Create content that can be presented in different ways (for example simpler layout) without losing information or structure.

d. Distinguishable

Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background.

- Use of Color - Color is not used as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.
- Audio Control - If any audio on a Web page plays automatically for more than 3 seconds, either a mechanism is available to pause or stop the audio, or a mechanism is available to control audio volume independently from the overall system volume level.
- Contrast (minimum) - The visual presentation of text and images of text has a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1
- Resize text - Except for captions and images of text, text can be resized without assistive technology up to 200 percent without loss of content or functionality.
- Images of Text - If the technologies being used can achieve the visual presentation, text is used to convey information rather than images of text

e. Keyboard accessible

Make all functionality available from a keyboard.

All functionality of the content is operable through a keyboard interface without requiring specific timings for individual keystrokes, except where the underlying function requires input that depends on the path of the user's movement and not just the endpoints.

Note 1: This exception relates to the underlying function, not the input technique. For example, if using handwriting to enter text, the input technique (handwriting) requires path-dependent input but the underlying function (text input) does not.

Note 2: This does not forbid and should not discourage providing mouse input or other input methods in addition to keyboard operation.

f. Seizures

Do not design content in a way that is known to cause seizures. Web pages do not contain anything that flashes more than three times in any one second period, or the flash is below the general flash and red flash thresholds.

g. Navigable

Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are. A mechanism is available to bypass blocks of content that are repeated on multiple Web pages. Web pages have titles that describe topic or purpose. If a Web page can be navigated sequentially and the navigation sequences affect meaning or operation, focusable components receive focus in an order that preserves meaning and operability.

h. Readable

Make text content readable and understandable. The default human language of each Web page can be programmatically determined.

Abbreviations - A mechanism for identifying the expanded form or meaning of abbreviations is available.

Reading Level - When text requires reading ability more advanced than the lower secondary education level after removal of proper names and titles, supplemental content, or a version that does not require reading ability more advanced than the lower secondary education level, is available.

i. Input Assistance

Help users avoid and correct mistakes.

Error identification - If an input error is automatically detected, the item that is in error is identified and the error is described to the user in text.

Labels or instructions - Labels or instructions are provided when content requires user input.

Error suggestion - If an input error is automatically detected and suggestions for correction are known, then the suggestions are provided to the user, unless it would jeopardize the security or purpose of the content.