

IT Accessibility Guidelines for Content Providers

Anyone developing content (text, images, video, etc.) for inclusion in online publications or systems must ensure that all the necessary elements are provided to make the content accessible to individuals with disabilities, including visually and hearing impaired people.

It's helpful to keep in mind how people may access content.

- Blind individuals often use screen readers, which is software that uses audio output to interpret and "read" the content out loud to the user.
- Hearing impaired individuals may depend on captions and transcripts to access audio.
- Individuals with motor control impairments may prefer to listen to content rather than use a mouse or keyboard.

Guidelines

The following guidelines help content providers prepare accessible content.

1. Provide meaningful descriptions of any images:

- Develop alternative text for all meaningful images. "Alternative text" is not a caption. [Appropriate alternate text](#) is a short description of an image that a screen reader can access and "read" to the user. Without alt text, the visually disabled user will miss the image and its meaning.
- Describe complex images in the page content. For complex images, alt text isn't sufficient information. Describe in the text why the image is significant and what it demonstrates.
- Summarize graphs and charts. Be sure the caption explains the purpose, and provide a description of why the graph or chart is important and what it conveys.
- Identify embedded multimedia with accessible text. Include a descriptive label for any audio, video, or Flash on a page. Include text for any non-text content of the multimedia. [Guidelines for providing descriptions of non-text content](#) are available.

2. Organize and structure the content to help users navigate the page, determine where they are, and find the content they want:

- Break content into sections with understandable headings
 - Use "Heading 1/2/3" paragraph styles, instead of different font sizes, to indicate structure and hierarchy.

3. Carefully select the language to be used for links.

- Clearly identify the language to be used for links. Accessing links and making sense of them is critical to disabled users. The content provider needs to control the language used for links and not leave it up to the technical implementation team.

- Use language that describes where the link goes. For example, rather than "click here," [use descriptive text for links](#), such as "explore our social programs." This allows the purpose of each link to be determined from the link text alone. For more examples, note the links in this document.
- Avoid using the same text for links that go to different locations.
- Keep link text short and precise. Lengthy descriptions make it difficult to understand where your link goes. For example, don't turn whole paragraphs into links – select a few words that, even when taken out of context, best describe your link.

4. Provide transcripts for all audio.

- The transcript must be available for hearing impaired individuals.

5. Caption all video.

- At a minimum provide the text to be used for captioning, or better, provide an already captioned video. Captioning ensures that deaf or hearing impaired individuals can use the video.

6. Don't use color as the only way to indicate meaning.

- The classic example is a green button for "go" and a red button for "stop." However, a colorblind individual may not be able to distinguish the buttons, and a screen reader can't interpret the colors. To remedy this situation, use shapes or text to distinguish buttons, and provide alt text that can be read by the screen reader.

7. Create tables that can be understood when read line-by-line.

- Screen readers read tables row by row. Provide table headers that will allow designers to [correctly mark up tables](#).

8. Pre-plan for accommodation needs with timed content.

- Some disabled users may need more time to navigate and access the material. Ensure there will be an option to extend time limits.

9. Write concise and logical text.

- Screen reader users can save time and frustration if the text is short and to the point. Follow [Web writing tips](#) to keep text concise.

Sources

- University of Michigan Web Accessibility Office – [Accessibility Quick Guide](#)
- W3Communications – [Web Accessibility QuickLinks](#)
- University of California – [Resources for Developing Accessible Web Sites](#)