Acquia Optimize

Web Accessibility Handbook

JAKALA

Hello!

The power of digital experiences is profound. For many, the digital world has simplified everyday tasks, expanded access to goods and services, helped strengthen social ties, and much more. But there is more to be done. If you're reading this handbook, it means you share our commitment to making digital experiences open and accessible to everyone, regardless of their specific abilities.

We know that web accessibility can seem overwhelming and confusing at times, which is why we made this handbook. Designed for senior executives as well as digital marketing and content leaders, it outlines why web accessibility is important for your business or organization and explains the major issues preventing people with disabilities from accessing the internet. It also includes sections for individual team members based on their roles, such as developers, designers, and content editors, and gives you an action plan for implementing accessibility as part of your website strategy.

We hope that you will find this guide a helpful resource to be used alongside a web governance and accessibility tool (like Acquia Optimize). Remember, there is no better time to get started with accessibility than now. If you need any assistance to improve your website's accessibility, our team is here for you.

Now let's begin!

Table of Contents

Introduction

When you first start reading about web accessibility, it can seem like a lot of very confusing rules for coding, design, content, and publishing. However, web accessibility is actually very simple.

What Is Web Accessibility?

Web accessibility simply means that your website – and everything on it – can be used by anyone regardless of how they access the internet. Some people may need to use assistive technology, such as a screen reader. Others may not be able to use a mouse and rely on their keyboard to navigate and use your website. Yet others may need transcripts or subtitles for audio content.

If your website is accessible, then all of these people will be able to access and use your website in a meaningful way. Of course, people with disabilities may not always be able to access your website as easily as someone without a disability. For example, it will probably take a person who has a vision impairment longer to find content on your website using a screen reader than it would for someone without a visual impairment to find the same content. However, it is important that they have equal access.

It's important to not underestimate the number of people who are affected by accessibility challenges. Around 16% of the world's population live with disabilities and they are the world's largest minority. But they aren't the only ones that web accessibility applies to. Web accessibility is for everyone.

Accessible and well-structured web content also improves your SEO as it makes websites easier to read for people, as well as for search engines. An accessible website brings about a great user experience for everyone and helps open up your website to even more users.

Also, consider that even those of us without permanent disabilities may face temporary or situational access challenges. For example, statistics from Disabled World show that, in countries where the life expectancy is over 70 years, people spend, on average about 8 years, or 11.5% of their life, living with disabilities. Aging and injuries can bring about issues in accessing the web, and even web users without disabilities have become accustomed to using digital accessibility features. Features like video captions, text magnification, and voice assistant technology are now commonplace in our everyday lives, helping users with and without disabilities.

Misconceptions About Web Accessibility

Even though web accessibility isn't a new concept, it is something that is often overlooked as part of website development and strategy — despite growing awareness and legislative progress in recent years. Because of this, there are still a lot of pervasive misconceptions about web accessibility. Some of these misconceptions hold businesses and organizations back from implementing accessibility policies.

It is important to realize that some web accessibility misconceptions do have a basis in truth — often relying on old data or historical technical limitations. But the web is always evolving. So let's address each of the main accessibility misconceptions one by one to make sure none of them are holding you back from implementing effective accessibility policies.

1. People With Disabilities Aren't Using the Internet or My Website

Contrary to common belief, people with disabilities do access the internet. In fact, they often rely on the internet much more than the general population. For example, people with mobility issues often rely on online shopping to meet many of their basic needs because it is easier to order online than to go shopping at malls, supermarkets, or other stores.

Another misconception is, "People with disabilities don't use *my* website." In some cases, this may seem like a logical assumption. If your website sells skateboards, for example, then you probably aren't targeting customers with visual disabilities. However, you don't want to discount the woman with visual impairments who is shopping for a skateboard for her niece. And one quick YouTube search will show you how many people with mobility challenges are participating in sports like skateboarding.

Never assume that someone isn't going to be interested in your website because of a disability.

2. Accessibility Means a Dull Website

In the past, it was very difficult to create an engaging web design that was also accessible. For example, screen readers of the past only read across the page. So, a multicolumn page would result in accessibility issues.

As a result, many websites that focused on accessibility (such as the websites of major disability organizations) had a basic website design. This led to the belief that all accessible websites had to be boring.

Luckily, this is no longer the case. Assistive technologies like screen readers have improved. Web technologies like CSS, browsers, and XHTML have also improved.

Accessibility now depends on having good code and simple design. And simple design does not mean boring design!

In fact, it is nearly impossible to differentiate between accessibility and good user experience. The same design components that make your website usable to users without disabilities – such as clear navigation and consistent design – will also make it accessible to users with disabilities.

3. A Text-Only Version of the Website Is a Suitable Solution

Text-only websites not only omit images and graphics, but also typically have a single-column layout with little use of color and very simple navigation. Because many of the common accessibility issues have to do with images or complex design, it may seem like having a text-only version of the site is a good solution for all your accessibility issues. This couldn't be further from the truth, though.

The first issue with the text-only approach is that it assumes people with disabilities are using text-only browsers. In actuality, people with disabilities are using the same browsers as people without disabilities. If you build a separate version of the website with just text, you are probably going to lose some of the non-text functionality and features that are found on the main version of the website. The text-only version of the website may be accessible, but it is not comparable to the main website. People with disabilities shouldn't be deprived of anything your website has to offer because of how they access the website.

Even if your text-only version of the website is comparable to the main version, you are still segregating users. Think back to the "Separate but Equal" laws that once existed in the United States — we know that separate does not mean equal. If you have two versions of your website, chances are that the text-only version isn't going to get updated as frequently as the main version.

Another issue with text-only versions of websites is that they only address issues for people with sight-related disabilities. Having a text-only website does not mean that it will be accessible to people with other disabilities. Considering how diverse internet users are, you want to make sure your website complies with standards that make it accessible to everyone.

Those are just some of the issues with having separate text-only versions of websites. Other issues include:

- **How will you handle search engine indexing?**
- **Who will be in charge of keeping the text-only version up to date?**
- **How will people with disabilities navigate through your main website to the text-only version?**

As you can see, it is better to make your main website accessible rather than trying to make a separate alternative for users with disabilities.

4. Accessibility Is Expensive and Difficult

Getting started with accessibility can seem like a big task, but it is by no means difficult. The bulk of the work is going to be in educating yourself and your team about accessibility and taking the time to create clear policies and procedures. Investing in a tool like Acquia Optimize can help reduce the workload and take the guesswork out of accessibility. While the tool does mean another expense, it is more affordable than doing nothing and suffering the hidden costs of compliance failures, lost customers, and reputation damage.

Moreover, the benefits gained by improving accessibility – both in terms of legal compliance and website experience improvement – are well worth this investment. In fact, improving accessibility can pay off financially by increasing your audience and reducing future need for website maintenance because of good coding and website policies.

5. Accessibility Is the Responsibility of Web Developers

A lot of web accessibility has to do with good coding, so the bulk of the task does depend on developers. However, there is a lot more to accessibility than just code. Content editors, designers, and managers also all need to be thinking about accessibility.

Note that accessibility is not a bunch of separate issues or tasks, with each team worrying only about their own tasks. There are many interdependent aspects of web accessibility. For example, developers are responsible for making sure all data tables have the proper tag, but it is up to web editors to offer a description of the data in the <caption>.
By creating clear policies, you help ensure that your teams work in sync — and reduce the burden on all of them.

6. Web Accessibility Is Just for People with Vision Impairments

When talking about web accessibility, many people immediately think about sight impairments and screen readers. Yes, this is a major focus of web accessibility and will likely become more important as the population ages and faces vision problems. However, improving your website for blindness and vision impairments is only one part of accessibility.

The disabilities that need to be addressed in web accessibility can be divided into five major groups:

Hearing
(also known as auditory)

Sight
(also known as visual or vision)

Cognitive or neurological
(also referred to as neurodivergent)

Physical

Speech
(also known as language impairment)

As we will talk about later in this handbook, people with these types of disabilities can face very different problems when accessing the web. Simply making your website accessible to screen readers is not a solution that ensures accessibility to all. Remember, web accessibility is about creating ONE web experience for everyone — regardless of ability or disability.

Why Should You Worry About Web Accessibility?

Many businesses and institutions only get started on web accessibility because of laws that require them to do so. In the United States, there have also been many lawsuits filed because of web accessibility issues. Meanwhile, in other countries, legislation and regulation have fast-tracked web accessibility improvements.

Legal requirements and threat of repercussion are certainly strong motivators to start working on web accessibility, but they are by no means the only reason to ensure your website is accessible.

Aside from being the moral thing to do, there are many fringe benefits that your business or organization can enjoy by building an accessible website, including:

- **Increased audience:**

Users with disabilities represent a large portion of internet users. By building an accessible website, you open yourself up to a much larger audience. Word-of-mouth marketing is often very strong in communities with disabilities and they also are often loyal to brands that practice good web accessibility.

- **SEO:**

Many web accessibility standards overlap with good SEO practices. For example, Google Search Essentials (formerly Webmaster Guidelines) describe practices like ensuring descriptive alt and title attributes, checking for correct HTML, and offering a site map to users.

All of these (and many more) are also important for good web accessibility.

- **Improved user experience and content quality assurance:**

Accessibility means creating a website that provides a good experience for everyone, regardless of how they must access the internet. When you ensure a good experience for users with disabilities, your overall website experience and content quality will improve as well.

- **Strengthened brand image and reputation:**

Would you rather build your image as a brand that believes in equality and accessibility for everyone, or as a brand that excludes people with disabilities? Get your PR team involved in your web accessibility plans so the public can know what good you are doing.

- **Technical benefits:**

Much of web accessibility has to do with good coding. This can result in a slew of technical benefits for your website, such as reduced server load, better interoperability between browsers and devices, and ensuring your website is ready for new web technologies.

Overview of Web Accessibility Issues by Disability

Before you start looking at the individual web accessibility guidelines, we recommend educating yourself and your staff on how people with disabilities access the internet and the hurdles they often face. This will help you understand why the guidelines are written as they are and can also be very useful in helping you establish your web accessibility processes.

Web Accessibility Issues for Visual Impairments

People with vision impairments often use screen readers and refreshable braille displays controlled by screen readers to access the internet. A screen reader is software that works with the operating system to provide information about the elements on screen, such as icons, menus, files, folders, and dialogue boxes. Because screen reader users don't rely on a mouse, they generally leverage various keyboard commands to complete tasks. For example, a keyboard command may allow a reader to navigate a webpage, read part of a document, or make a selection. All operating systems now come with screen readers.

There are also some commercial screen readers, such as the popular JAWS software.

Screen readers can read all or part of the visible text on a page, read some text that is not visible to users (such as alt attributes), list headers, list links, and detect text formatting within a document. To do all of these things though, the website must be coded for accessibility.

Having well-structured code is extremely important for screen readers to work properly because the presence of certain code will trigger a command. For example, if a screen reader detects the code for a table of information on a page, it will trigger commands such as ones that allow the table to be navigated horizontally or vertically.

Common Web Accessibility Problems for Visual Impairments

- **Layout:**

Screen readers render content based on semantics rather than styles from the Document Object Model (DOM), which is an API for HTML and XML documents that represents the structure of the page and the content of a document as objects. Websites should have their HTML written in a semantically correct manner so that screen readers can output text to speech based on the outline and structure of the content. Software like JAWS and NVDA also rely on semantic information from websites' HTML to provide alternative navigation controls on the page, list out content headings, etc. Examples of non-semantic elements are and .

- **Headings:**

Most people rarely read an entire webpage. Instead, they scan the page looking for the parts that interest them most. People with visual disabilities are also able to scan webpages for pertinent information by using their screen reader to list headings. If the headings aren't used properly (or at all), then a user with visual impairments will not be able to find what they are looking for on the page. Never use headings decoratively. They should also be used in a logical manner descending on the page (H1, H2, H3, etc.)

- **Meaningful link text:**

When adding links to a webpage, ensure that the link text is unique and clearly identifies the purpose of the link so that individuals using assistive technology understand what it is for and can decide if they want to follow it. Assistive technology can inform users of the list of links on a webpage, but the text of the link needs to be as descriptive as possible and should be able to be deciphered by users without additional context. Link text like "More," "Open," or "Click here" are vague and do not provide users with information on the link's destination. But while link text should offer users information about the link, it is also best practice to keep them short. For example, use "Read the blog post" instead of "Click to read more about it in this blog."

- **Navigation:**

For people with visual disabilities, website navigation must be coded so that they are readable by assistive technology. Adding ARIA landmark roles to the navigation code helps assistive technology identify that a specific webpage element has the role of a menu. ARIA landmark roles classify and label sections of the page, which enables the visual information of the page to be represented programmatically for assistive technology. Navigation landmarks also allow users to skip through the navigation if they don't need it as they are browsing. Without it, users will have to listen to the list elements in the navigation every time they load a new page.

A "Skip navigation" or "Skip to content" link should be provided to allow users of assistive technology to bypass the navigation and go straight to the content of the webpage.

Navigation must also be in a consistent and predictable location on the layout of the website so that users with visual impairments can easily locate them with a screen reader or screen magnification. This applies to both the menus and the "Skip navigation" links.

- **JavaScript:**

JavaScript used to be completely inaccessible to screen readers. Now, most screen readers can access JavaScript. However, it is important to note that some people may be in an environment (such as a corporate workplace) where JavaScript is turned off. Users may also be using older versions of screen readers that can't handle JavaScript. For this reason, it is important to make sure your website still works without JavaScript.

- **Images with no or inaccurate alt text:**

Web editors need to be careful about how they assign alt attributes, also known as alt text, to images. The alt text should clearly describe what information the image conveys.

Example of good and bad alt text

Bad:
A photograph of puppies

Good:
Three Labrador puppies sitting in a basket

Your content editors also need to know that screen readers will first read the alt text and then the captions (if any) under the image. If editors make the caption and alt text the same, then the user will hear the same information twice, which makes for a bad user experience.

Alt text also applies to complex images made to convey a significant amount of information. Images like graphs, charts, diagrams, maps, infographics, or illustrations require alt text. But since these images are more detailed, they require a two-part text alternative with the first part being a short description to describe the image and the second part describing the essential information that the image is trying to convey. We recommend checking out the W3C Alt Text Decision Tree for more on how to write good alt text descriptions.

Also, note that decorative images should also have an alt attribute. The value must be null so that it is ignored but it must still possess an alt attribute at all times (alt=””). If a logo appears multiple times on a page, then only the first appearance should have an alt attribute and the others should be null.

- **Keyboard accessibility:**

People with visual impairments navigate sites using keyboard shortcuts. These keys move between focusable elements on the page, such as links and buttons but sometimes, these elements may not match the visual order of the page. To test if your site is keyboard accessible, try to navigate your site without using a mouse.

Most websites have form fields for users to fill out (a search box being one example) and these form fields often present visual accessibility issues. One of the biggest issues with forms is that they aren’t labeled correctly. Each field needs a label for the screen reader to read so the user knows what to fill in there.

The buttons also need clear text so the user knows what to select after completing the form. If you are using CAPTCHAs, then there needs to be an audio alternative for users with visual impairments.

Also, think about what happens when the form is filled out incorrectly. Commonly, websites will return the form with the incorrect fields in red. This presents an accessibility issue for the people with disabilities who won’t be able to see the red field. Instead, there should be text that explains which part of the form returned the error.

Another element that needs to be keyboard-friendly is pop-up elements, such as cookie consent or announcement banners.

Otherwise, these elements may create what is called a “keyboard trap,” where keyboard users are unable to use and close out these elements and thereby not able to further navigate your website.

Videos:

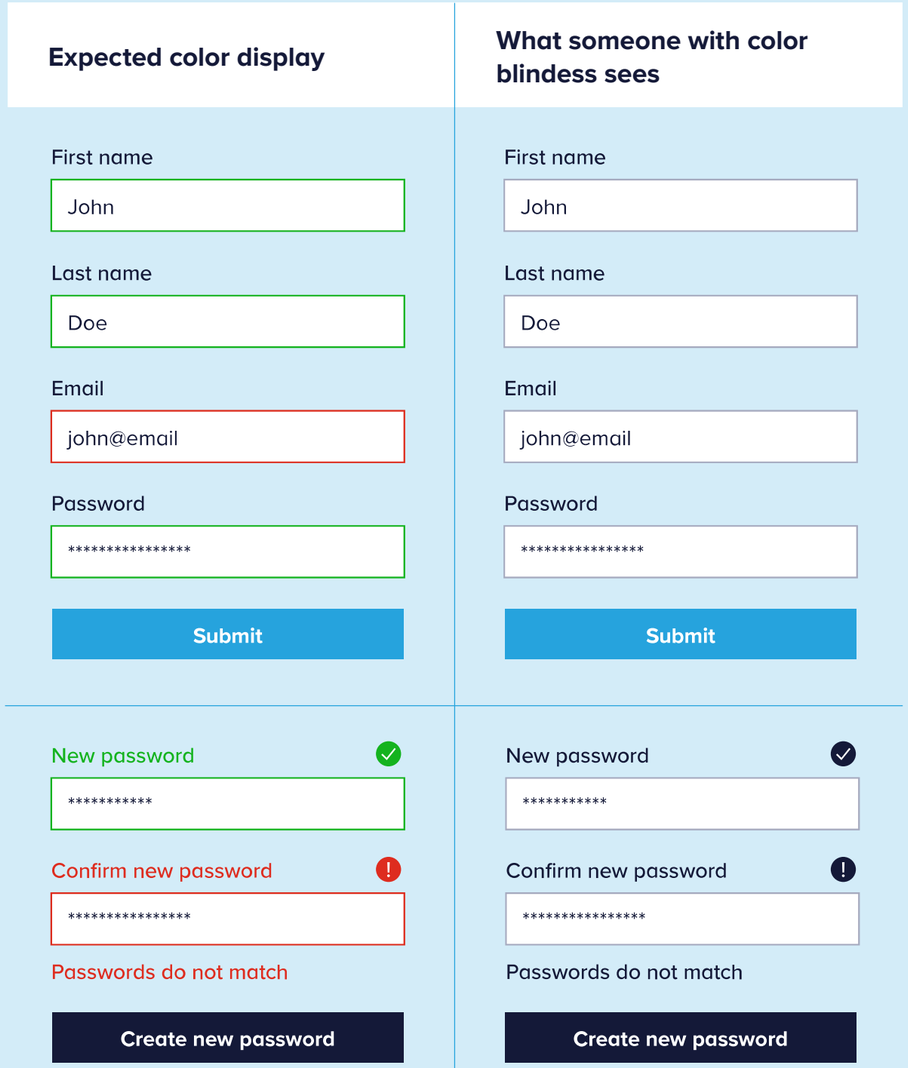
Videos on your website can also pose a challenge for users with visual impairments. Videos of people talking or presenting are normally accessible at a basic level, but purely visual elements in the video, such as animations and other visual elements that provide meaning, require audio descriptions. Audio descriptions are an extra form of narration that explain these visual cues based on the context of the full video.

Web Accessibility Issues for Other Visual Impairments

It isn’t just blindness that needs to be considered when making websites accessible for those with visual impairments. Many people suffer from low vision and its prevalence is only going to increase as the population ages. People with low vision often use screen magnification tools to use the internet. Unfortunately, a lot of websites don’t work very well with screen magnifiers. For example, when the text is resized, it may break the layout of the site so the user annoyingly has to scroll to track text. Sometimes navigation doesn’t work at all with screen magnifiers when the site isn’t designed for accessibility.

This is also the case when mobile and tablet versions of websites are not designed with screen magnification or enlarged text in mind.

Many visual conditions (including cataracts, glaucoma, and retinitis pigmentosa) make it difficult to view color contrast. Designers need to consider this when coming up with the color scheme for a website, especially in regard to website forms. Color blindness is another common visual impairment and designers need to be aware that many people won't be able to see certain colors (green and red being the colors that cause the most problems). For example, only using red to mark an input error on a form will not be visible to a person who is color blind. Therefore, the best practice is to use both color and a secondary element, such as a symbol and error message text to indicate any input issues or errors on forms.



Web Accessibility Issues for Hearing Impairments

For individuals who are deaf or have hearing impairments, the main issue when accessing the web is video and audio content. This accessibility issue can easily be addressed by providing captions for all audio content. However, attention should be paid to how the captioning is done. For example, does the captioning cover important parts of the screen? Do you only provide subtitles? Or are you adding closed captions that are designed specifically for users with hearing impairments and include sound effects, speaker IDs, and other non-speech elements?

If you make an interactive tool, then you may also need features for users who are deaf. For example, many online tools use sounds to notify users of messages. An accessible tool would offer an alternative, such as a visual cue that appears on the screen instead of the audio cue. This is a good example of how user experience and accessibility overlap. For instance, many users without hearing impairments may prefer the visual cue, especially when they are working in a public space and must have their sound turned off.

Web Accessibility Issues for Physical Disabilities

In terms of accessibility, users with a physical disability can see and hear everything on a website. However, they may not be able to control the mouse very well — or at all. To operate a keyboard, the user may rely on adaptive technologies like mouth sticks, “sip ‘n’ puff” (SNP) systems, voice controls, or eye-tracking software.

Of these, mouth sticks are one of the most popular options because they are low-cost and easy to use. As the name implies, a mouth stick is a stick that is held in the mouth. The individual can then use the mouth stick to select commands or even manipulate a trackball mouse, depending on how much control the individual has. You can easily test how accessible your current website is for users with physical disabilities by trying to access it using a mouth stick. You’ll quickly realize that issues can make your website very difficult and exhausting to use for people with physical disabilities.

Common Accessibility Problems for Physical Disabilities

- **Actions that require precision:**

For example, a person with arthritis may have difficulty clicking on navigation links that are very close together. Drop-down menus are particularly problematic.

- **Difficult or inconsistent navigation:**

Bear in mind that people with motor disabilities often rely on keystrokes to navigate around the internet. If your navigation requires multiple clicks to get to pertinent information, it will be very annoying and possibly even tiring for people using adaptive technologies like mouth sticks.

- **Actions that require a mouse:**

Some people with disabilities are not able to use a mouse and rely on keyboard commands to use the internet.

- **Time-limited actions:**

Even with the help of adaptive technologies, it can still take people with disabilities longer to fill in forms on websites. If these are time-limited, then there should be an override.

- **Pop-ups that are difficult or impossible to close:**

You can still use pop-ups on your website. However, be sure that they can easily be closed with keyboard commands and that the close button is easy to hit with a mouse.

Web Accessibility Issues for Cognitive and Neurological Impairments

There is a huge range of cognitive and neurological disabilities, and they can vary significantly in their severity. Rather than trying to list all of these disabilities, it can be more useful to list the types of challenges they present when using the web.

Common Accessibility Problems for Individuals with Cognitive or Neurological Disabilities

- **Certain fonts and color choices:**

Even if your styling can be overridden, it doesn't mean all users with disabilities will do so.

Designers should be aware that certain fonts (such as those in the sans serif family) are considered universally easier to read by people with dyslexia. Also, too much color contrast can cause text to blur and cause issues for people with dyslexia.

- **Flickering content:**

Flickering content can be very distracting for people with cognitive disorders. And, for some types of neurological disorders, it can even induce seizures.

- **Complex navigation:**

This is confusing for people with cognitive disorders. For a good user experience for everyone, navigation should be simple and consistent.

- **Custom styling that can't be overridden:**

People with dyslexia and other cognitive disabilities may find certain fonts particularly difficult to read. They may override your website's styling so they can use their preferred font.

- **Layout issues:**

Text should be broken up into smaller sections with significant amounts of white space between them to improve readability. Two-column layouts can be very problematic for certain cognitive disorders. For people with dyslexia, justified text can make it even harder to read words on the page.

- **CAPTCHA tests:**

People with cognitive and neurological disabilities (as well as those with visual impairments) may find CAPTCHAs difficult as they require an on-screen interactive task to be solved. CAPTCHAs may both be inaccessible from an assistive technology perspective, but also difficult for people with some cognitive and neurological disabilities to solve. Therefore, other non-interactive and tokenized security approaches may be more effective, such as multi-factor authentication (MFA) or the Honeypot method, which uses a hidden form field that isn't visible to human users but will be scanned and completed by bots, allowing you to filter real submissions from spam.

Web Accessibility Standards and Legislation Across the Globe

As you get started with web accessibility, you need to consider the legal requirements your website may need to meet, your goal, and your budget. One of the first steps in starting this journey would be to learn about the accessibility regulations of the countries in which your website operates. Different countries will have different sets of rules for what they deem as important in regard to the web use of people with disabilities. However, most accessibility regulations will refer back to the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards, which we'll introduce first.

WCAG

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the leading group that sets international standards for the web. In 1997, they launched a project called the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). Two years later, they released the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The guidelines apply not just to websites but also to mobile applications, PDFs, and other digital platforms. WCAG became the de facto standard and is used by many countries.

In 2008, the WAI updated the standards by publishing the WCAG 2.0. Then, in 2018, WCAG 2.1 was published, extending 2.0 to include mobile technology, cognitive disabilities, and low vision. Published in October 2023, WCAG 2.2 is the latest version and builds upon 2.1, extending success criteria to better support how users interact with content on tablets and mobile devices.

The Four Principles of Accessibility

The WCAG standards are based on four core principles which state that websites must be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (POUR).

- **Perceivable:**

Perceivability means the information and elements of the user interface must be presented in a manner that can be perceived by the senses and that nothing is left undetectable or invisible. To most web users, perceivability is based primarily on visuals, but for those who are unable to, sound and touch are used instead.

- **Operable:**

Interactive interface elements such as controls, buttons, navigation, and more should be operable. This means that a user must be able to operate interface elements by first identifying them, and, for most, by physically clicking, tapping, swiping, or rolling. For those who can't interact in these ways, voice commands or other assistive devices, like head wands and eye trackers, might be employed.

- **Understandable:**

This means that technology should be clear and consistent in the presentation and format, with predictable patterns of usage and design. End users should have no issue comprehending the meaning and purpose of the information presented in the content while discerning the user flow and operation of the interface.

- **Robust:**

Robustness is the ability for content to function reliably by a wide variety of technologies, including assistive devices.

There are guidelines under each of these principles. To make sure a website is meeting these guidelines, there are a total of 86 testable "success criteria."

When checking to see if your website is meeting WCAG 2.2 guidelines, it is these tests that will be run. Note that some of the tests aren't as simple as pass/fail. Some tests require a human check to make sure the website meets the guidelines.

For example, one of the guidelines under the "perceivable" principle is that websites should, "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."

If you do not have alt attributes for images, then the test will report an error. Remember that all images, including purely decorative ones, will need an alt attribute. A manual human check should be done to determine the nature of the images and to decide what should be perceivable and what can be ignored.

The Levels of Web Accessibility

There are three levels of web accessibility for WCAG versions 2.0, 2.1, and 2.2. Level A is the least strict. Level AAA is very strict. For example, to comply with AAA standards, your website would need to have a prerecorded sign language interpretation for all prerecorded audio in media. You have probably seen this on TV broadcasts of important government announcements; the interpreter is shown in a small box in the corner of the screen.

If you meet Level AA, it means that you meet all of the criteria of Level A and Level AA. If you meet Level AAA, it means meeting the criteria of Levels A, AA, and AAA.

It is very difficult to always comply with level AAA. Most companies and organizations worrying about accessibility should strive for level AA. At this level, they will be legally compliant in most countries, reduce the likelihood of facing accessibility lawsuits, and provide a good experience for all users.

WCAG 2.0 Level A and AA guidelines are almost universally adopted as the minimum conformance to make websites somewhat accessible to people with disabilities. However, if possible, it is encouraged for organizations to comply with the latest standards for broader accessibility and a better website user experience.

WCAG 2.2

On October 5, 2023, WCAG 2.2, the latest web accessibility standard by W3C, was introduced, marking a significant milestone in global efforts for inclusive digital experiences.

WCAG 2.2 introduced nine new success criteria, addressing issues like focus visibility, dragging movements, target size, consistent help, redundant entry, and accessible authentication, promoting a more inclusive user experience.

WCAG 2.2 is built upon WCAG 2.1 and 2.0, making it backward-compatible with both versions. Websites that are required to conform with either WCAG 2.1 or 2.0 will be able to update their content to WCAG 2.2 standards without affecting their conformance.

Why embrace WCAG 2.2?

Adopting WCAG 2.2 is crucial, regardless of legal obligations. The new standards address common web accessibility issues and benefit all users. For example, guideline 2.5.8 establishes a minimum target size for clickable on-screen elements. This benefits users with physical impairments, such as tremors, but also all users as we more commonly use smaller devices like tablets and smartphones to navigate the web. Organizations subject to web accessibility laws should assess compliance and incorporate updated criteria to champion accessibility for website visitors.

WCAG 3.0

The W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) also released the initial working draft of WCAG 3.0 Accessibility Guidelines, representing another significant advancement in digital accessibility standards. While not expected to become a W3C recommendation for a few years, WCAG 3.0 is designed to be more understandable and flexible than WCAG 2.2, meaning it will seek to address many different types of content, apps, and tools — as well as organizations and disabilities.

WCAG 3.0 will be a major overhaul and it is expected to introduce new methods of scoring and testing, as well as conformance levels. It is important to note that WCAG 3.0 will not supersede WCAG 2.2 or previous versions, but rather it is an entirely new and alternative set of guidelines. It will be a long wait for the new guidelines to be reflected in international law, and it will be very interesting to see how the WAI positions them in order to make their purpose clear and encourage their adoption.

The United States

In the United States, there are different regulations that you will need to meet depending on the nature of your website and your organization. The two main regulations are Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Section 508

In 1998, President Clinton signed the Workforce Investment Act into law. The law made some amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, including Section 508, which relates to information technology.

Under Section 508, all federal agencies must make their electronic documents and information accessible to individuals with disabilities. Section 508 compliance is only required of federal agencies in the United States, so it doesn't affect private entities or other countries. However, the U.S. government has huge purchasing power, so many companies and organizations around the globe strive to be Section 508 compliant. Section 508 does not explicitly refer to organizations that receive federal funding, but it extends through other laws like Section 504 and the Assistive Technology Act that clarify the need for web accessibility for federally funded programs.

Section 508 currently requires compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. Given the lack of overall compliance with the law, in late 2023, the Biden Administration announced a new focus on pressing federal agencies to swiftly become compliant.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in areas of public accommodation. Businesses, state and local governments, and non-profit service providers are legally required to remove any barriers that would limit a person‘s access to that organization's goods or services.

The ADA was introduced in 1990, way before the internet boom, so the original premise of the act was based on actual physical barriers, such as needing wheelchair ramps to shops. In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) published a final rule under Title II of the ADA that requires websites and mobile applications provided by state and local governments to meet WCAG 2.1 AA. The DOJ is already investigating whether to update to WCAG 2.2 standards.

While the DOJ's final rule under Title II applies only to state and local governments, it's important to note that the DOJ has previously weighed in with guidance on how the ADA applies to ‘‘public accommodations'' – or businesses open to the public – in terms of ensuring their websites are accessible for all visitors, including meeting WCAG 2.1 standards.

While it does not set any regulations for these organizations, it does serve to reinforce the DOJ's position that the ADA's requirements apply to all online services, programs, and activities of business that are open to the public, not just state and local governments.

Meanwhile, claims and suits against private website owners continue to be filed in increasingly record numbers each year, primarily in Florida, New York, and California. The circuits remain split as to whether the ADA applies to private websites, although most jurisdictions widely accept that it does.

Section 508 or the ADA: Which Should I Adhere To?

The ADA is a civil rights law that encompasses the broader reach of society to protect individuals with disabilities against discrimination in all areas of "public accommodation" in regard to commerce. Section 508 is a federal law that requires information and communication technology (ICT) developed, procured, maintained, or used by federal agencies to be accessible to people with disabilities. It is important to note that in early 2018, the Section 508 standards underwent a refresh whereby the standard for judging accessibility moved to reflect the more principle-based criteria from the WCAG 2.0 AA standard. Due to this update, your website should at minimum adhere to WCAG 2.0 Level AA to be compliant under Section 508. In addition, the Section 508 standards include functional performance criteria. These cover the functional operation of the website, and information or support documentation requirements related to user guides, installation guides, etc.

- **Which of these standards should you use?**

It depends. If you are in the United States and working with a government entity, then ensure that you comply with Section 508. However, given the DOJ's rulemaking for state and local agencies to amend ADA Title II to WCAG 2.1 standards, the best practice would be to meet WCAG 2.1.

As compared to Section 508, the ADA is a broader requirement for the civil rights protection of people with disabilities and their participation in commerce. While the regulation of guidelines for specific entities like websites is still being debated in the courts, the general rule of thumb is to refer to WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards to remain compliant until Congress amends the ADA or the Supreme Court makes an official determination.

State-Led Efforts and Legislation

U.S. States are actively contributing to digital accessibility regulation, each with its own approach. In California, Assembly Bill 1757 proposes stringent regulations, making it unlawful for resource providers to maintain websites failing to conform to the WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standard. This could potentially lead to increased accessibility litigation in the state. In Kansas, the Act Against Abusive Website Access Litigation empowers businesses to counter “abusive” ADA litigation. In July 2021, Colorado passed House Bill (HB) 21-1110, which requires state and local public entities to meet established website accessibility standards. Other states like Rhode Island, Minnesota, Hawaii, and Massachusetts are moving toward more precise standards for digital accessibility on public websites, each introducing bills or executive orders to enhance accessibility and inclusivity.

Judicial Landscape and the Supreme Court

Recent court decisions in New York and California signal a growing frustration with serial filers of ADA-based website accessibility lawsuits, indicating a possible shift in the judicial landscape. The intersection of federal initiatives, state-led efforts, and evolving court decisions underscores the dynamic nature of digital accessibility legislation in the United States that likely will not be settled until taken up by the Supreme Court.

Canada

Canada has a long history of human rights laws against the discrimination of people with disabilities and many Canadian provinces have their own laws in place governing accessibility, including web accessibility.

The Accessible Canada Act

The Accessible Canada Act (Bill C-81), also known as the Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada, is Canada’s first federal accessibility legislation and is built on the Canadian Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on disability. The act came into force on July 11, 2019, and its purpose is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. The act is meant to create national disability standards, identify and remove accessibility barriers, as well as prevent new barriers in areas under federal jurisdiction. The Canadian government, parliamentary entities, and federally regulated private sector organizations are obligated to comply.

Under this act, information and communication technologies, including digital content and technologies used to access it, are covered.

Ontario

One of the main accessibility laws that apply in Canada is the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The goal of the AODA is to develop, implement, and enforce accessibility standards in the province before 2025.

The standards are compulsory for government, businesses, nonprofits, and public sector organizations, and they can be categorized into five areas of daily life: customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment, and design of public spaces. Web accessibility is categorized under information and communications and follows the WCAG 2.0 Level AA as the standard of conformance. By January 1, 2021, all websites and web content had to conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, excluding live captioning and prerecorded audio descriptions.

Europe

Also known as the European Union (EU) Directive on the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications, the directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies was created as part of the EU Commission's work on developing societal and digital inclusivity within the European Union. The directive aims for the standardization of accessibility laws across the EU and came into effect in October 2016. The directive covers the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies for persons with disabilities.

The directive is based on the four principles of WCAG 2.1, which requires public sector websites to ensure that they are perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. The expected standards that member states have to implement into national law are, at a minimum, WCAG 2.1 Level AA, although a stricter or "current-version" requirement can be adopted at a member state level.

European Accessibility Act

The European Accessibility Act (EEA) is a directive that sets new minimum accessibility requirements across the EU and stems from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Passed in 2019, the Act will come into full enforcement by June 28, 2025 in every European nation with the aim of improving the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services by removing barriers created by divergent rules in member states.

The lengthy waiting period before the act fully takes effect reflects the scale and significance of the changes being introduced. This allowed each member state to prepare its own legislation to implement the EU directive (known as "transposition") by June 28, 2022, three years prior to enforcement, so organizations have sufficient lead time to prepare for compliance.

Although some member states missed this deadline, many have now created their own versions of the act, including more restrictive measures, to outline the size of organizations to which it applies, sectors, fines, and compliance levels.

The effects of the act will be wide-reaching, and organizations operating within the EU would be well-advised to start preparing now to ensure they have a plan in place for achieving compliance in alignment with their own country's implementing regulations. Where a member state does not implement the directive, the directive itself will apply as the default regulation.

Asia-Pacific

The regulations for web accessibility differ between the countries in this region, but there is increasing awareness on the subject. In fact, around 88% of Asia-Pacific countries have committed to creating more inclusive societal practices by empowering individuals with disabilities. Below are a few examples of the rules and regulations that some countries in the APAC region have begun to enforce.

Australia

The main Australian website accessibility law is the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), which requires equal access to goods, services, facilities, and access to public premises for people with disabilities. This act applies to all individuals and organizations that develop websites or web resources in Australia, or that maintain a web resource on a server located in Australia. Under these requirements, the DDA is relevant to websites that pertain in any way to employment, education, provision of services, banking, insurance or financial services, entertainment or recreation, telecommunication services, public transport services, government services, and administration of federal laws or programs. In regards to the provision of information, goods, services, and facilities, the internet can be seen as a service in itself, therefore the fair use of it is also covered by the DDA. In 2010, the Disability Discrimination Act, Advisory Notes on World Wide Web Access - Version 4.0 was released as an update that contained guidelines for web accessibility. This document requires web content to adhere to WCAG 2.0 Levels A and AA as a minimum.

New Zealand

In July 2019, New Zealand enforced updated versions of its web standards, including the Web Accessibility Standard 1.1 and the Web Usability Standard 1.3. These standards define how government websites should be made accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities. These updates were made to incorporate WCAG 2.1 as the latest version of the international standard for accessibility.

Singapore

Singapore's Enabling Masterplan 2030 (EMP2030) is a national initiative with 29 recommendations across three themes, focusing on creating an inclusive society by 2030. Prioritizing digital accessibility, it aims for all key government websites to be fully accessible by 2030. Recommendations include alt text for images, video captions, improved readability, keyboard navigability, and support for disability-inclusive employers. EMP2030 aligns with broader accessibility goals, leveraging Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). For businesses, complying with EMP2030 not only expands market reach but also supports Singapore's commitment to a fair and just society, both online and offline.

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea adheres to the Korean Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1, which standardizes the technical specifications on how to create websites that are accessible to people with disabilities. The guidelines have been developed in accordance with WCAG 2.0 Level A.

Japan

Japan adheres to the Japanese Industrial Standard (JIS) X 8341, which specifies the information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility guidelines and recommendations for older persons and persons with disabilities. It was developed in 2004 and in 2010, the JIS X 8341-3 was refreshed in accordance with WCAG 2.0. These guidelines are mandatory for national and local government agencies, but voluntary for private companies.

China

China has its own Voluntary Web Accessibility Standard, which is derived from early versions of WCAG 2.0. It is a voluntary standard applicable to public website owners, website managers, and web developers.

Web Accessibility Roles

To ensure the success of your web accessibility project, there must be clearly defined roles.
This ensures that team members know what is expected of them and can be held accountable.

It is important to note that there is a lot of overlap in web accessibility. For example, almost all team members will need to work together to ensure that WCAG success criterion 2.4.6 AA is met. This criterion is about headings and labels. Web architects need to make sure that the headings make sense (such as in a table of contents). Designers need to make sure that the headings are styled in a way that is easily readable by people with disorders like dyslexia or low vision. Developers need to code the headings properly so they can be perceived by assistive technology, and editors are in charge of making sure that the headers are used properly when creating new content.

Manager

As a manager, you will need to have a thorough understanding of all of the web accessibility criteria that your website must meet. Note that this does not mean you need to understand every bit of code and how it is written. Rather, it means that you understand what tasks are involved so you can make sure they are covered by the appropriate team members.

Some of the key responsibilities managers have in web accessibility include:

- **Setting milestones and ensuring that they are being met**
- **Educating team members about web and digital accessibility**
- **Getting tools and resources**
- **Assigning roles and tasks**
- **Setting budgets**
- **Planning and providing accessibility training to the other roles in the team (either via in-house resources, courses, or by hiring an accessibility consultant), so that they are familiar with web accessibility best practices**

Website Architect/ Manager

One of the biggest issues that people with disabilities face is bad navigation. This is an issue across multiple types of disabilities. For people with visual impairments, bad navigation makes it difficult to find the content they are looking for. For people who use assistive technologies like mouth sticks, bad navigation can mean they get tired from having to excessively click to get to their desired page. And, for people with cognitive disabilities, bad navigation can make a website confusing. For these reasons, website architects and managers play a vital role in ensuring an accessible website.

Website architects and managers also act as a bridge between the design teams and the technical teams. They make sure the designers are organizing content in a usable way, and ensure that the technical team is coding designs so they're accessible to people using assistive technologies.

The main thing that website architects and managers will need to ensure is that there are multiple ways of finding information on the website. For example, some users may rely on the search function to find information, while others may want to browse through a list of articles or use categories or tags to find information. Again, this is good practice to facilitate a good user experience for everyone — not just for people with disabilities.

Some of the key responsibilities website architects and managers have in web accessibility include:

- **Ensuring that information can be found in multiple ways on the website**
- **Ensuring that all information is conveyed with text and/ or programmatically and not just with styling**
- **Ensuring that webpages have titles that describe the topic or purpose**
- **Establishing a system of headings or labels that make it easy to find information on a page**

Web Designers

When talking about a designer's role in web accessibility, it is usually issues related to visuals that come up. However, it isn't just people with visual impairments who suffer from inaccessible design. For example, people with jerking disorders like Parkinson's or people using assistive technology like mouth sticks can have trouble selecting buttons that are placed too closely together. Another example would be people with dyslexia who can have issues with certain styling, such as justified text. Even users who are deaf or have hearing impairments can suffer from poor design choices.

For example, if your website has a chime to notify users of a certain function, these users wouldn't be able to hear it. As you can see, website design is something that affects more than just users with visual impairments.

Some of the key responsibilities designers have in web accessibility include:

- **Consistent design:**

When navigation changes throughout the website, it can be very confusing for users with visual disabilities and users with cognitive disabilities. Other design elements, such as icons, forms, and error notifications, should also be consistent to avoid confusion.

- **Navigation:**

There should be multiple ways of finding information on the website, such as search, a site map, tags, and the page hierarchy.

- **Text resizing:**

Text should be able to be resized up to 200% without losing functionality (WCAG 2.1 Level AA standard).

- **Blinking content:**

Content should not blink more than three times per second. Otherwise, it could cause an epileptic episode for people with epilepsy.

- **Fonts:**

Certain fonts are more readable by people with dyslexia.

- **Headings and labels:**

Designers should organize content into sections and identify these sections with headings and labels. The headings and labels should have meaningful names and be organized in a hierarchy.

- **Images of text:**

Text should always be used to convey information. If an image contains pertinent information (such as a "Buy" button), then the information must also be conveyed with text.

- **Links:**

Link text should make sense out of context so users understand where the link will take them.

Interactive elements:

These should always have text that describes their purpose.

Skip links:

Keyboard users should be allowed to skip over repetitive blocks of content, such as headings or menus.

Visual orientation cues:

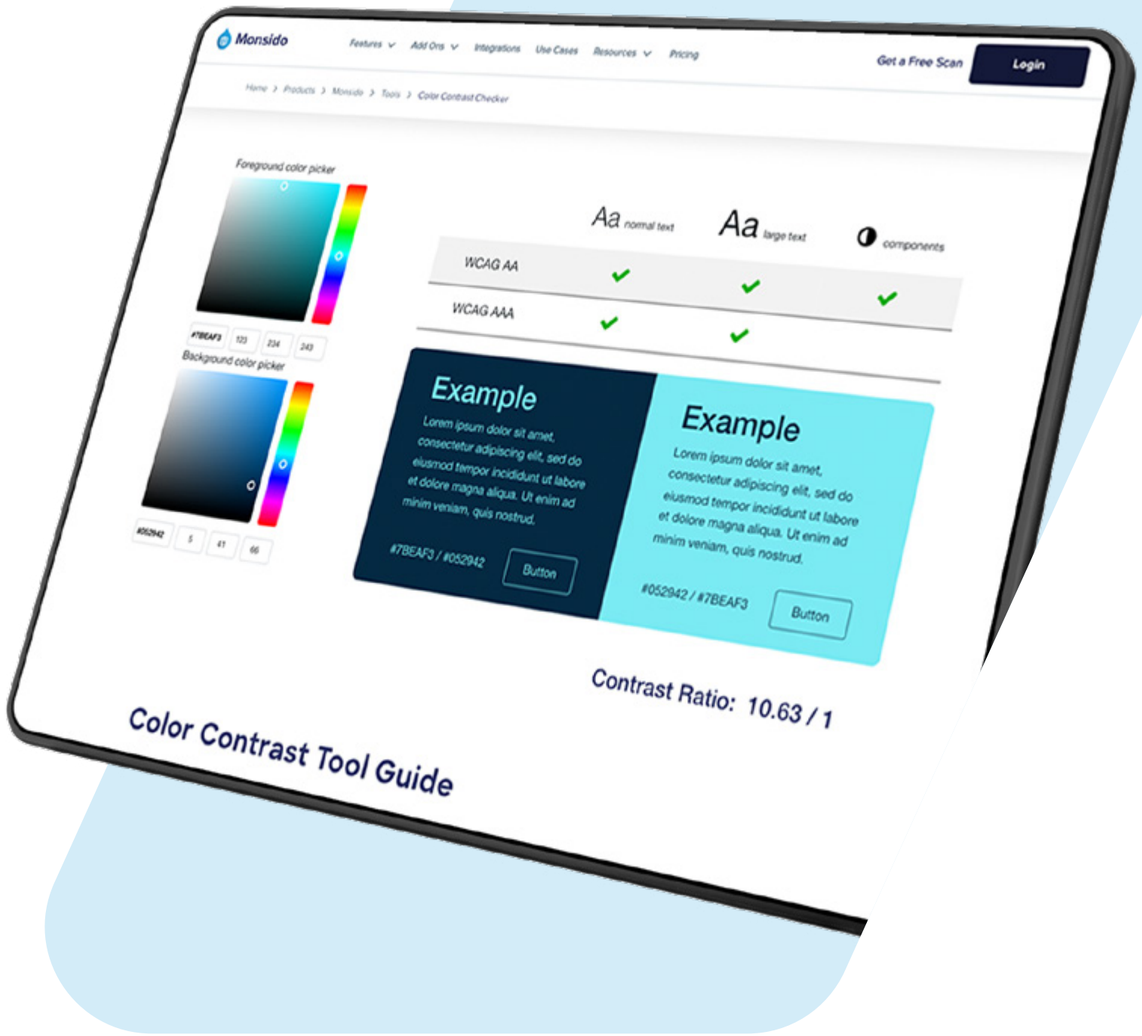
This is already part of good website design practices. Designers should use visual cues to indicate different types of content, such as using styling to indicate a header and background color to indicate menus. The most important information should be in prominent areas of the page.

Color and contrast:

The choice of color and contrast needs to be made with individuals with visual impairments or certain cognitive disorders, like dyslexia, in mind. Level AA standard states that text and images of text should have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5 to 1.

Try our color contrast checker!

Scan my site



Web Developers

Much of web accessibility is technical, so a bulk of the responsibility is on developers. Even the responsibilities that fall on other team members – such as design elements – must be coded into the website. Developers will need to work closely with other team members to make sure that accessibility is being implemented effectively.

Some of the key responsibilities developers have in web accessibility include:

- **Coding consistencies and compliance:**

To make sure that assistive technologies can understand the website, the code must consistently follow the standards of that format. All elements need to be marked appropriately, such as the code for headings, tables, etc.

- **Name, role, and value:**

All user interface components, including forms, links, and components generated by scripts must be able to be programmatically determined.

- **Code sequence:**

Pages should be coded so the code can be read as a print document would be read. This is because some assistive technologies and users navigate code in this order.

- **Keyboard navigation:**

It should be possible to easily navigate the website using only keyboard commands.

- **Focus indicator:**

When using keyboard navigation, there should be an indicator (such as a visible border) to show users where they are on the page.

- **Text resizing:**

Under WCAG 2.1 AA standards, text must be able to be resized up to 200% without losing functionality.

- **Language:**

The language for each page should be set and editors should have the ability to code certain words or parts in another language, if necessary.

- **Forms:**

Forms should be properly marked up and have an accessible method of notifying users if they make a mistake when filling out the form.

- **Time limits:**

For users that require a long time to use a page or input information, there should not be time limits or there should be a method of overriding the time limits in place.

- **User control:**

Allow users to override styling and use their own custom CSS.

- **Building templates:**

Build website templates and modules that meet the accessibility guidelines, while being user-friendly for editors and content creators. For example, code templates with appropriate heading structures, semantic HTML, and skip links, and ensure modules provide proper roles to elements. Creating templates with accessibility in mind makes it easier to further maintain and scale accessibility across the website.

- **Content management system (CMS):**

If your organization uses a CMS, choose one that provides accessibility features and offers the ability to add accessibility fixes where necessary.

Web Editors and Content Creators

When websites have multiple web editors and content creators, it is common to have many accessibility issues (as well as quality assurance, SEO, and performance issues). The most important thing we need to emphasize here is creating a clear set of website content guidelines about how content will be published. These website content guidelines do not mean that your content creators lose their creative freedom. Rather, it ensures that certain aspects are handled consistently for a uniform user experience — regardless of ability or disability.

Again, establishing web content guidelines that incorporate accessibility from the start will not only help you ensure access for individuals with disabilities, but will improve the user experience for everyone.

Some of the key responsibilities editors and content creators have in web accessibility include:

- **Adding page titles:**

All pages need to have a title that describes what it is about. The page title is what is shown at the top of the web browser and is also what screen readers will read first on the page.

- **Defining language:**

The developer should have coded the language of a page. If words in a different language are added to the page, they need to have their language defined in the code.

- **Text for audio content:**

All audio content should have a suitable alternative, such as subtitles, transcripts, or prerecorded sign language translations, for users with hearing impairments.

- **Using headers properly:**

Heading tags (H1, H2, H3, etc.) should be used in a logical, descending order. They should never be used decoratively.

- **Assigning categories and tags:**

To ensure better navigation, categories and tags should be assigned in a consistent, logical way.

- **Adding meaningful link text:**

Ensure that each link has meaningful text that describes the context and purpose of the link, without having to rely on the text that surrounds it. Vague links like “Click here” give the user very little context as to what the content is about, even if it precedes text that actually explains the purpose of the link. Users of screen readers explore webpages by tabbing through elements like links and bypassing other content, so on its own, “Click here” offers no context as to what it is about. But if made more explicit, like “Learn about our webinar,” users can understand the purpose of the link and its destination better.

- **Alt attributes for images:**

For users who cannot view images, an alt attribute should be added. The alt attribute should be carefully chosen so it provides the same information to users as the actual image does. For images like graphs, charts, maps, etc., they need both a short and a long description to describe the information that they are trying to convey. Images that are there purely for decoration will still require an alt attribute, but as a null attribute (alt=””).

Creating a Web Accessibility Strategy

Remember that web accessibility requires clear content guidelines and a long-term strategy. Even if you can't implement the full strategy immediately, it is something that you should be thinking about. Whether you want to improve your website accessibility due to legal reasons, to expand reach, or simply because it is the moral thing to do, you must have a plan for how you will proceed. It is generally best to think about accessibility when you first build your website or during a major redesign. However, it is possible to get an existing website up to compliance. Here, we will talk about the two approaches you can take for your website accessibility strategy.

The Short-Term Approach

Web accessibility isn't something that you can fix once on your site and then forget about. To make sure your website is compliant and stays compliant, you will have to incorporate new guidelines into your overall website strategy. However, not all companies and organizations have the resources to initiate large web accessibility projects. These initiatives can be left until a website redesign. Right now, you can focus on fixing what you can. A website that is 50% accessible is better than a website that isn't accessible at all!

With the short-term approach to web accessibility, you will follow these three basic steps:

- **Scan the website to find issues:**

Start by finding out what issues are currently affecting your website so you have an idea of where problems lay.

- **Prioritize issues:**

If you can't fix all of the errors right now, then focus on the high-priority issues. There are a few ways that web accessibility issues can be prioritized.
One is to fix issues with key processes on your website, such as checkout or registration.
Another option is to fix issues on important pages, such as your homepage or most popular content. Yet another option is to see what issues can be most easily fixed and return the greatest benefits. For example, you may decide to make transcripts for all of your audio content because it improves accessibility for users with hearing impairments as well as improves SEO.

- **Fix issues:**

Make sure the staff members in charge of fixing any accessibility issues have the right training and resources to do the job.

The Long-Term Approach

With this approach, the goal is to build a website that is accessible from the start and will remain accessible in the future. The strategy can be broken down into three parts with multiple steps under each.

1. Initiate

By reading this and learning about accessibility, you have already started this part of your accessibility strategy. Build on this momentum.

Here are some steps to take to ensure your strategy gets off on the right foot:

- **Learn the basics of accessibility:**

Hold a meeting to raise awareness about accessibility and gather support.

- **Make your case about how this will benefit the company or organization:**

You want all the major stakeholders to be on board.

- **Use a tool, such as Acquia Optimize to scan your website:**

Note what the current issues are and where your strengths are.

- **Further your knowledge:**

Once you know what accessibility issues your website currently has, you can seek out training and other forms of knowledge related specifically to those issues.

2. Plan

Before you set out to fix the errors you found on your website, you need to make a plan.

Here is a list of steps you can take to build your accessibility plan:

- **Determine your resources:**

Start with establishing a budget for web accessibility. This budget can then be used for tools (such as Acquia Optimize) that reduce the burden on your staff as well as for training resources and time for implementing changes and testing.

- **Set clear goals and milestones:**

One good strategy is to set goals for each role, such as setting a goal for content creators to use alt attributes on all future images and developers to fix high-impact issues in code. You can also set sitewide goals, such as a goal to have your website be Level A accessible within one year and Level AA accessible within 18 months.

- **Set guidelines:**

This is one of the most important parts of the planning phase, so make sure that you are dedicating ample time to setting guidelines. You will need an overall website guideline for your website (such as, “meet Level AA”) as well as for each role (including content creators, developers, and designers). For example, you may amend your content policies to include a rule that all content creators must use heading tags according to WCAG 2.1 recommendations, or that designers must design buttons with target sizes according to WCAG 2.2 recommendations.

- **Train your team:**

Train your team on the basics of web accessibility to ensure that they have some knowledge of the processes that this plan will involve. Don’t be afraid to get a consultant involved to help educate them; it’s always important that they understand the scope of the project they are involved in as well as how their efforts will impact the greater public.

- **Assign roles and responsibilities:**

As talked about in the “Roles” section of this handbook, there are many different team members who are affected by accessibility. Define these roles as they apply to your organization and assign responsibilities.

- **Prioritize issues:**

Determine which issues should be dealt with first. It is advisable to prioritize tasks that are easy to implement but have a high impact on accessibility. You may also choose to prioritize certain pages on your website.

- **Set up a monitoring system:**

To make sure you are meeting your goals, you will need to monitor your progress. Determine when and how monitoring will take place. With Acquia Optimize, you will have a weekly scan and report, as well as the option for on-demand scans.

3. Implement

Remember that web accessibility isn't something that you do once. After implementing your accessibility plan, you will need to regularly review it for success.

Here are some steps you can take during implementation:

- **Put new guidelines into practice:**

You've already assigned roles. Now assign specific tasks to each role, such as the task of providing transcripts for all audio content or the task of redesigning headers.

- **Use a hybrid approach:**

There are three ways to approach the implementation of web accessibility on a website: through manual testing, automated tools, or a combination of both. Manual testing is time-consuming and can only be done by those with significant technical accessibility expertise. Automated tools, on the other hand, are easier to use. They can scan your site for accessibility errors, and some even claim to fix them using artificial intelligence, but they cannot guarantee compliance as there are a lot of issues that require human review. A hybrid approach is a combination of automated and manual testing, where an automated tool, like Acquia Optimize, scans websites for accessibility issues and triggers notifications for manual remediation with recommendations for how to fix them.

- **Evaluate progress and analyze results:**

The W3C recommends accessibility evaluations be done at the same time as other evaluations, such as regular quality assurance evaluations. Acquia Optimize reports can be valuable in analyzing your results.

- **Reprioritize:**

As you implement your accessibility strategy and have success, your priorities are bound to change. Make sure these new priorities are reflected with milestones. You may also come across unforeseen issues and will need to prioritize and resolve them.

- **Communicate success:**

Make sure that stakeholders know how you are progressing and what achievements you've made. This is vital for getting the support and resources you need to sustain accessibility.

- **Sustain progress:**

Web accessibility is an ongoing process. You will need to monitor your website for errors (another way that Acquia Optimize helps). Legislation could change, so make sure you know what standards apply to your website.

- **Update, adapt, and improve:**

Your web accessibility strategy should not be set in stone. Web accessibility guidelines are constantly being updated to support new criteria and technology. Your website also will need to be robust enough to anticipate and adapt to new assistive technologies that might emerge in the future. So as part of your web accessibility strategy, remember to keep on evaluating your progress and refreshing your plan to accommodate any updates.

Contact Us

See how Acquia Optimize can help make your website more inclusive and accessible.

Watch a demo of Acquia Optimize

Further Resources

The main resource for web accessibility is the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). There you can find detailed information about accessibility and many useful tutorials and guides. You may find these pages particularly valuable:

Accessibility Responsibility Breakdown

How to Meet WCAG 2.2

Section 508 Checklist

Complete WCAG 2.2 Criteria List

Web Accessibility Tutorials

What Is Acquia Optimize?

Acquia Optimize is a web optimization platform designed to enable organizations to deliver superior and inclusive digital experiences. The platform includes various solutions for website accessibility, content quality assurance, brand compliance, technical SEO, and more. To see how the solution can help improve your website's accessibility, get a complimentary website scan to assess your level of accessibility compliance.

ACQUIA.COM

About Acquia

Acquia empowers ambitious digital innovators to craft the most productive, frictionless digital experiences that make a difference to their customers, employees, and communities. We provide the world's leading open digital experience platform (DXP), built on open source Drupal, as part of our commitment to shaping a digital future that is safe, accessible, and available to all. With Acquia DXP, you can unlock the potential of your customer data and content, accelerating time to market and increasing engagement, conversion, and revenue. Learn more at acquia.com.

JAKALA

jakala.com

About JAKALA

We are a data, AI, and experiences company that creates meaningful and lasting impact, globally.

Working closely with our clients, we design growth trajectories grounded in data and impact-driven insights to ensure we deliver concrete, measurable results. Our profound technological and architectural knowledge further allows us to consistently implement meaningful, integrated, and long-term solutions. Learn more at **jakala.com**