

10 Tips

for an Accessible Website

Are your websites and digital tools usable by everyone?

Consider that nearly 1 in 5 Americans has a disability, and that 1 in 8 Americans is 65+. If your website isn't accessible to them, you could be losing out on potential job candidates or new customers, and exposing yourself to legal risk.

People with various permanent, temporary, situational, or changing disabilities access the web in different ways. Check out the following tips to ensure that everyone can use your website—regardless of whether they can manipulate a mouse, their level of vision, how many colors they can see, how much they can hear, or how they process information.



Screen reader compatibility

People with low vision, people who are blind, and people with dyslexia typically navigate the web using a screen reader that converts text to speech and provides non-visual navigation commands. For this assistive technology to work, it's important that you include detailed and consistent navigational elements in the page structure, such as headers, titles, and lists. Most operating systems today include a built-in screen reader that you can use to test your website, including Narrator on Windows and Voiceover on Mac OSX.



Alternative text for images

People who can't see images rely on well-written descriptive text (called an "ALT attribute"), visible to screen readers, to understand the information they convey.



Keyboard accessibility

One of the easiest initial tests for accessibility is whether you can use a website without a mouse. Can you Tab through your website content from start to finish, or are there "keyboard traps"?



Controls for moving content

Some websites include moving content to engage users, such as animations, slideshows, videos, and popups. Best practices for accessibility include avoiding excessive blinking (which can induce seizures) and including a stop/pause button for users with visual processing or cognitive disabilities, or who may be using an assistive technology that requires sound-based navigation, such as a screen reader.



Controls for timed content

Many people using assistive technology require extra time to navigate a website and complete tasks. For web pages with time limits, the user should have options to turn off, adjust, or extend that time limit.



Labeled forms

Be sure to explicitly label form fields such as checkboxes, data fields, and radio or option buttons so that people using certain types of assistive technology, such as screen readers, can understand them. Labels should tell the user that they have encountered a field, explain what type of field it is, and in some cases, provide additional cues to let the user know what type of information is needed.



Color contrast

Did you know that red-green color blindness affects up to 8% of males? Ensure that everyone can use your website by testing your design elements for proper color contrast.



Accessible downloadable files

Any downloads you have on your website also need to be accessible. Many savvy companies today avoid this issue by adding all content directly to their website in HTML, which also simplifies navigation for mobile users. But if you have to include downloadable files, be sure to check them for accessibility before posting.



Plain language

Simple, concise language will help all users navigate your site, including individuals with intellectual and learning disabilities, cognitive issues, traumatic brain injuries, and other disabilities.



Captions

Include captions and transcripts for all media, such as online videos. As a bonus, adding captions has been proven to increase your SEO online and boost user engagement.

Additional Resources:

Why Accessible Technology Matters

A quick introduction to what accessible technology is, and how people with disabilities navigate the web.

PEATworks.org/get-started

Staff Training Resources for Accessible Technology

Find training tutorials, free accessibility tools, professional development resources, and more.

w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility

