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Accessibility Basics [1]

Understanding Accessibility

Digital content can be built in ways that tend to make it more or less usable for people with disabilities. The goal of digital accessibility is to make content fully available to and usable by as many people as possible, including those with disabilities. Websites, apps, kiosks, electronic documents, and anything people read or do in digital form should be created in a way that allows independent use by people with disabilities. If digital content has already been built without considering accessibility, it can be tested and updated to be made more accessible.

Accessibility Guidelines

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are the most popular digital accessibility standards, as well as the most-commonly referenced guidelines in digital accessibility lawsuits. It is also specified as the official requirement under certain laws, like Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The original version of WCAG was published in 1999 and the most current version, WCAG 2.1, was published in 2018. WCAG is structured according to four principles, which state that content must be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. Each principle is further broken into individual success criteria that provide specific information and techniques for designing and developing accessible content. WCAG has three conformance levels: A, AA, and AAA.

View full list of WCAG 2.1 guidelines [2]

Common Accessibility Barriers

Content

- Alternative Text
- Color Contrast
- Headings
- Images of Text
- Link Text
- Lists
- Tables
- Transcripts and Captions
- Visual Style

Documents

- Understanding PDF Accessibility
- Understanding Word Accessibility
- Understanding PowerPoint Accessibility
- Creating Accessible Videos
- Automated Captioning Tools
- Creating Accessible Emails

Accessible Design Principles

In today's digital age, ensuring that everyone can access and interact with your website is paramount. Accessibility isn't just about compliance; it's about inclusivity and making sure that everyone, regardless of ability, can fully participate in the online experience. Below, we've outlined some key principles to keep in mind when designing for accessibility:

- **Perceivable:** Information and user interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive. This means providing alternatives for non-text content such as images, videos, and audio. Use descriptive alt text for images, captions for videos, and transcripts for audio content.
- **Operable:** Users should be able to operate the interface effectively. Ensure all functionality is available from a keyboard and provide sufficient time for users to read and use content. Avoid content that flashes more than three times per second to prevent triggering seizures.
- **Understandable:** Make sure the content and operation of your website are understandable. Use clear and simple language, organize content in a logical manner, and provide instructions and feedback that are easy to comprehend. Avoid jargon and overly complex language.
- **Robust:** Content must be robust enough to be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies. Use semantic HTML markup, ensure compatibility with different browsers and devices, and follow established web standards and guidelines such as WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).
- **Consistency:** Maintain consistency in design and navigation throughout your website. Consistent layout, styling, and navigation help users understand and predict how to interact with your site, improving usability for everyone.
- **Flexibility:** Provide options for users to customize their experience based on their preferences and needs. This includes features such as adjustable text size, high contrast modes, and the ability to navigate using different input methods.

- **Testing and Iteration:** Regularly test your website with real users, including those with disabilities, and gather feedback to identify areas for improvement. Accessibility is an ongoing process, so be prepared to iterate and make adjustments based on user feedback and evolving best practices.

By adhering to these principles, you can create a website that is not only accessible to all users but also provides a better user experience for everyone. Remember, accessibility benefits everyone, regardless of whether they have a disability or not. Let's work together to build a more inclusive web for all!

Tools and Resources

Access a curated list of tools, resources, campus assests and assistive technologies to aid you in evaluating and improving the accessibility of your digital content and platforms. Learn more [3]

Best Practices

- **Learn Accessibility Basics:** Familiarize yourself with fundamental accessibility principles, such as providing alternative text for images and ensuring keyboard accessibility, to lay a strong foundation for creating inclusive digital content.
- **Utilize Accessibility Tools:** Make use of accessibility checking tools and browser extensions to identify and address common accessibility issues, such as contrast errors and missing headings.
- **Follow Accessibility Guidelines:** Adhere to established accessibility guidelines, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), to ensure that your content is perceivable, operable, and understandable by all users.
- **Prioritize Keyboard Navigation:** Design your content to be navigable using only the keyboard, ensuring that users who cannot use a mouse can still access all interactive elements and features.
- **Provide Descriptive Headings:** Structure your content with clear and descriptive headings, using proper HTML heading tags (e.g., <h1>, <h2>, <h3>) to create a logical hierarchy and improve navigation for screen reader users.
- **Add Alternative Text:** Always include descriptive alternative text for images, graphs, and other non-text content to provide context and ensure that visually impaired users can understand the content.
- T**est with Assistive Technologies:** Test your content using screen reader software and other assistive technologies to identify any accessibility barriers and make necessary adjustments for improved usability.
- **Collaborate with Accessibility Experts:** Seek guidance and feedback from accessibility experts within your organization or online communities to learn from their expertise and ensure that your content meets the needs of all users.
- **Stay Updated:** Stay informed about the latest developments and best practices in digital accessibility, attending training sessions and staying engaged with online resources to continuously improve your skills and knowledge.
- **Iterate and Improve:** Embrace a mindset of continuous improvement, iteratively refining your content based on user feedback and evolving accessibility standards to create more inclusive digital experiences.

Groups audience:

Digital Accessibility

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/accessibility/basics

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/accessibility/basics [2] https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/
[3] https://www.cu.edu/accessibility/tools-resources