

[**https://www.peatworks.org/content/10-tips-accessible-website**](https://www.peatworks.org/content/10-tips-accessible-website)

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](http://www.peatworks.org/resources/policy/DOJsettlements).

People with various permanent, temporary, situational, or changing disabilities [access the web in different ways](http://www.peatworks.org/content/get-started). 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(link is external)](https://webaim.org/techniques/semanticstructure/). 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.

* Curious about how a screen reader works? [Watch Sina Barham use a computer at 1,000 WPM(link is external)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1r55efei5c)!
* [WebAim: Designing for Screen Reader Compatibility(link is external)](https://webaim.org/techniques/screenreader/)
* [Paciello Group: Basic Screen Reader Commands for Accessibility Testing(link is external)](https://developer.paciellogroup.com/blog/2015/01/basic-screen-reader-commands-for-accessibility-testing/)

Alternative text for images

People who can’t see images rely on well-written descriptive text (called an “[ALT attribute](https://www.peatworks.org/glossary#ALT_attribute)”), visible to screen readers, to understand the information they convey.

* [Making Sure Alternative Text Isn’t an Afterthought](http://www.peatworks.org/blog/2016/nov/implementing-accessible-workplace-tech-making-sure-alternative-text-isn%E2%80%99t-afterthought)

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”?

* [Accessibility Oz: Keyboard Accessibility Principles(link is external)](https://www.accessibilityoz.com/factsheets/keyboard/keyboard-accessibility-principles/)

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.

* [CSUN Universal Design Center Web Accessibility Criteria - Screen Movement(link is external)](https://www.csun.edu/universal-design-center/web-accessibility-criteria-screen-movement)

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.

* [CSUN Universal Design Center Web Accessibility Criteria - Timed Response(link is external)](https://www.csun.edu/universal-design-center/web-accessibility-criteria-timed-response)

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.

* [WebAim: Creating Accessible Forms(link is external)](https://webaim.org/techniques/forms/)

Color contrast

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

* [Smashing Magazine: Color Contrast Tips and Tools for Accessibility(link is external)](https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/10/color-contrast-tips-and-tools-for-accessibility/)

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.

* [Microsoft Office: Accessibility Training(link is external)](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Accessibility-video-training-71572a1d-5656-4e01-8fce-53e35c3caaf4?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)
* [Is PDF an Accessible Format?](http://www.peatworks.org/blog/2017/jun/pdf-accessible-format)

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.

* [Using Plain Language to Enhance eRecruiting](http://www.peatworks.org/talentworks/resources/plain-language)

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.

* [Accessible Videos Are Your Friend](http://www.peatworks.org/blog/2017/feb/accessible-videos-are-your-friend)

Additional Resources:

Get Started

* [Why Accessible Technology Matters](http://www.peatworks.org/content/get-started) - A quick introduction to what accessible technology is, and how people with disabilities navigate the web.
* [How is the Department of Justice Addressing Website and ICT Accessibility?](http://www.peatworks.org/resources/policy/DOJsettlements) - In many cases, digital access to websites is required by law.
* [WebAim: Introduction to Web Accessibility(link is external)](https://webaim.org/intro/) - A great overview of how to get started with digital accessibility and [universal design](https://www.peatworks.org/glossary#Universal_design).
* [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines(link is external)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/) (WCAG) - WCAG is the global standard for accessibility. The U.S. federal [Section 508(link is external)](http://www.section508.gov/) standards and the European standard [EN 301 549(link is external)](http://mandate376.standards.eu/standard) are both aligned with WCAG.

Test with Automated Accessibility Tools

Many free automated tools can help you get started with identifying accessibility issues, though please note they are only a starting point! A knowledgeable person will always need to test the site manually, followed by user testing by people with disabilities.

* [aXe Accessibility Checker(link is external)](https://www.deque.com/products/axe/)
* [Tenon(link is external)](https://tenon.io/)
* [Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE(link is external)](http://wave.webaim.org/))

Train and Hire Staff

* [Knowledge is Power: Training Your Staff on Accessible Technology Issues](http://www.peatworks.org/content/knowledge-power-training-your-staff-accessible-technology-issues) - Find training tutorials, free accessibility tools, professional development resources, and more.
* [SNAP Tool(link is external)](https://askjan.org/media/webpages.html) - The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides this 15-step self-assessment tool to guide staff through the process of making a website accessible.
* [A11Y Project: Professional Help(link is external)](http://a11yproject.com/resources.html#professional-help) - The Accessibility Project maintains a list of accessibility consultants available to test and fix websites.

Buy and Implement Accessible IT

* [TechCheck](http://www.peatworks.org/techcheck) - This quick assessment tool provides a benchmarking "snapshot" of the current state of your technology, the accessibility goals you want to reach, and what steps you might take to achieve them.
* [Buy IT!](http://www.peatworks.org/Buy-IT) - Learn best practices for ensuring that the technology you purchase is accessible.

*This tipsheet was created in partnership with the*[*Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN).(link is external)*](http://www.askearn.org/earns-primer-on-disability-inclusion/)