



<https://www.peatworks.org/futureofwork/a11y>

Digital accessibility makes it possible for people with a wide range of functional abilities to use technology such as websites, mobile apps, and kiosks.

What is Digital Accessibility?

To understand what we mean by accessibility, it's helpful to try experiencing inaccessibility for a moment. This brief exercise does not compare to the everyday barriers that many people with disabilities face. However, it can help you grasp the importance of addressing barriers that make our technologies inaccessible. Turn off your computer monitor and start typing. Use your phone from under a table where you can't see it. Unplug your mouse and try to navigate your company website. Set the zoom level in your Internet browser to 500%, limiting the amount of content you can see at any one time. Unplug your speakers and watch a webinar without sound. Get the picture?

Accessibility means that everyone can use the exact same technology as anyone else—regardless of whether they can manipulate a mouse, how much vision they have, how many colors they can see, how much they can hear, or how they process information. Accessible technology adds layers into computer operating systems, mobile phones, and more to allow people with disabilities to access the same information as everyone else.

Accessible Technology vs. Assistive Technology

"Accessible technology" is technology that can be used successfully by people with a wide range of functional abilities. When technology is accessible, each user is able to interact with it in ways that work best for him or her. For example, when using a desktop computer, there are multiple ways to input information—via a mouse, the keyboard, or through a speech recognition system to name a few. If the operating system on the computer is accessible, it will work with any of them.

Accessible technology is either directly accessible, meaning it is usable without any additional devices, or it is accessible through and compatible with "assistive" technology ([AT](#)). For example, a smartphone with a built-in screen reader is directly accessible; an

online job application is AT-compatible when someone with a visual impairment can navigate through it effectively using a screen reader program such as JAWS.

In short, accessibility is all about the user interface; it gives job applicants and employees a built-in, cost-effective, and equitable way to control and use technology. Accessibility often falls into the same category as usability because both seek to improve the user experience and effectiveness of the technology. Usability covers the user experience broadly, while accessibility addresses the specific needs of users with functional differences or limitations.

However, in terms of actual product features, the two terms often overlap. For example, a feature like volume control benefits everyone, as does the ability to zoom the display on a small mobile device. This overlap is often referred to as [universal design](#), which means the design of products so they can be used by the widest range of people possible. Watch this PEAT video to learn more about how universal design can make all employees more productive.

Staff Training Resources

General staff training on accessibility basics goes hand in hand with training on diversity and disability awareness. It should cover the following subjects:

- Disability basics and the typical barriers people with disabilities encounter in the workplace.
- The advantages of an inclusive workplace and your organization's overall commitment to diversity.
- Typical solutions to these barriers, focusing on the fact that there are solutions available for almost every situation.
- Examples of accessibility solutions, many of which benefit all users. For example, people with *and without* disabilities know the value of text messaging, voice recognition commands, video captioning, and many other supports and technologies that were originally developed for people with disabilities.
- Your organization's commitment to *preventing* inaccessibility through accessible technology.

Naturally, all employees should have a good sense of [disability inclusion basics](#) and [how to create accessible documents, emails, and social media posts](#). But accessibility is always a team effort, and many employees will require more targeted trainings depending on their role.

PDF Accessibility Principles

Considering accessibility is important both when creating a PDF and when publishing a PDF on the internet.

<https://www.peatworks.org/content/pdf-accessibility-principles>