



Usability & Accessibility

The Web is a different medium to print and people respond to it in different ways. Content should be specially written or modified for the Web.



Make it as easy as possible for people to get an impression and find a specific piece of information **quickly** as people read differently on the Web, they scan.



Web documents should utilise :

Headings & Summaries (which help with search engine optimisation)

Short Sentences - cut out excess words c.50% of a printed document

List and bullet points for quick access.

Avoid technical jargon, organisational speak and expand acronyms/abbreviations when used for the first time

Use an informal, inter-personal style of writing if possible.



For longer documents intended for print provide a summary in Web page form to accompany a downloadable PDF – people can then scan and see if useful before opening the file. Say which pdf software and edition used (some later ones are accessible earlier ones are not)



Be consistent : People should be able to confidently predict where various page elements can be found and at the end of every piece of content there should be at least one choice of action, such as:

Contact Us - Fill out the form - Get further information - Join a list –

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) & web accessibility

The legislation introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), seems complex to a layperson but it is designed to ensure websites are accessible to visually impaired and other disabled users.

The RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) and the DRC (Disability Rights Commission), are two of the most renowned advocates for the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) both have websites with lots of information.

Website accessibility guidance

The Web is an increasingly important resource in many aspects of life: education, employment, government, commerce, health care, recreation, and more. It is essential that the Web be accessible in order to provide equal access and equal opportunity to people with disabilities. An accessible Web can also help people with disabilities more actively participate in society.

The Web offers the possibility of unprecedented access to information and interaction for many people with disabilities. That is, the accessibility barriers to print, audio, and visual media can be much more easily overcome through Web technologies.

Here is some key guidance on how to develop a website which is user-friendly for disabled people.

The '[PAS 78: A guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites](#)' (published March 2006) is for those responsible for commissioning or maintaining public-facing websites and web-based services. It was developed by the British Standards Institution (BSI) and sponsored by the DRC.

Part III of the DDA refers to the provision of goods, facilities and services. The Code of Practice⁷, which specifically mentions websites, can be downloaded in its entirety from the DRC website.

2.2 (p7): "The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for a service provider to discriminate against a disabled person by refusing to provide **any service** (e.g. its website) which it provides to members of the public."

Section III of the DDA, which refers to accessible websites, came into force on **1st October 1999** and the Code of Practice⁹ for this section of the DDA was published on **27th May 2002**.

Two large companies challenged by RNIB about accessibility issues on their websites both made the necessary changes, rather than facing the prospect of legal action (in exchange for anonymity).

How do you comply with the DDA?

The W3C accessibility guidelines will be used to assess a website's accessibility. The W3C is the Internet governing body and its web accessibility guidelines can be found on its website. <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

The World Accessibility Initiative (WAI) has three different levels of compliance. Priority 1 guidelines – A , (which **must** be satisfied according to the W3C) have to be adhered to. Priority 2 guidelines AA (which should be satisfied and are the EU recommended level of compliance) **need** to be adhered to too. The highest level is AAA and is complex to adhere to. KCC have settled for AA.

Simple accessibility guidance – key areas.

Images - alt text

Pretend to read the page out over the phone. What does each image have to say to give the image meaning ? - Use that as the alt text. Voice browsers in use by visually impaired users will mimic this process. Does the site make sense read this way ?

When images are unavailable (e.g. turned off or because of visual impairment) the equivalent information must be available to the user.

Alt text should serve the same purpose and convey the same meaning as the image: " picture of children learning at computers"

Purely decorative - alt="" (no spaces)

Image links - destination or function in alt text

Bullets - alt="*" (avoid if you can)

Avoid meaningless alt text - "photo", "image"

But don't over do it - "Image of...", "link to..." is not necessary

Complex images like charts, diagrams and graphs need more description than an alt attribute alone can reasonably display. Think about adding text explanation below such

images. Descriptions assist all potential users to extract the essential information and improve usability.

If possible always use text rather than images of text. Exceptions: Logos, Never put essential text within an image .Avoid images for important navigation (menus, etc.)

If a .gif image is animated, make sure it does not contain fast or distracting motion and avoid any screen flicker / too much movement in the design of your pages

Tables

There are two types of tables used in web pages:

- Data tables
- Layout tables

In general, data tables require more careful design and coding to ensure accessibility (long complex data tables are difficult for everyone).

Layout tables should be used sparingly, be simple, and be designed for quick access to key content on the page.

Use proportional sizing (% values) for all tables, data or layout - this allows the table to be resized relative to screen resolution (tables with absolute sizes do not transform gracefully for users with smaller screens or lower resolutions).

- **Avoid complex and nested tables (tables within tables):**

Aim for as simple a structure as possible

- **Ensure the linear reading order makes sense:**

Top left to bottom right, row by row

Test the results of modifications you make on several browsers. Scale from smallest to largest, and ensure text is visible at all scales.

Colours

If you use colour to convey information, make sure the information is also represented another way.

Check that the foreground and background colours contrast sufficiently with each other.

Use a consistent style of presentation between pages.

Scripts

If scripts create pop-up windows or change the active window, make sure that the user is aware this is happening. Can you convey the same information & functionality without the script in case your user has them turned off or cannot access them ?

Provide accessible alternatives to the information in scripts, applets, or objects.

Language

Use the simplest and most straightforward language that is possible.

Create link phrases that make sense when read out of context.

Online validator

<http://www.hermish.com/index.cfm>

<http://webxact2.watchfire.com/>