

# Websites and Accessibility

## Part 1

PUB 101

## Why Accessible Websites?

People with learning disabilities make up a greater percentage of people with print disabilities than has been previously understood; therefore, more research in this area is urgently needed

10% of Canadians have some sort of print disability; less than 5% of published works are available in accessible formats.

40% of web users use Wordpress as the CMS

Using Open Source/Access tools and apps as well as built in accessibility checkers, plugins and other software tool creating accessible content and websites has never been easier.

Don't be a dick

It's the law - pretty much.

## It's the law

- **The Marrakesh Treaty to "Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled** was adopted in 2013 and is part of the copyright treaties administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization. Canada signed in 2016. The US in 2019.
- **The EU Directive or The European Accessibility Act** The 2019 EU Directive complements the Marrakesh treaty: will ensure that persons with disabilities ... will benefit from a greater supply of accessible products and services, and will thus be able to participate more actively in society and the economy. The main aims of the Directive from the perspective of inclusive publishing for persons with disabilities, including for visually impaired and blind people. June 28, 2025.
- In Canada, the **Accessible Canada Act** came into force in 2019.
- The U.S. government requires that all digital material developed, procured or maintained by the federal government be accessible to people with print disabilities.
- Provinces and Municipalities are also putting new laws into place.

## Alternative Text - Alt Text

- Makes it possible for people using assistive technologies to access the information conveyed by an image.
- Helps search engines better understand the purpose of the image.

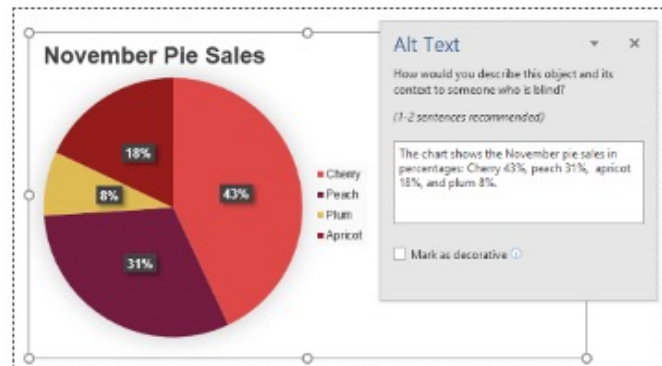
Functional images add value to the content because they provide more information than can be provided through text alone.

Examples of functional images:

- infographics
- charts
- graphs

# Functional

- Illustrate information or data to help people understand it
- Explain a complex concept
- Illustrate concrete things (such as a valid passport, species at risk, standard symbols)
- Convey branding (such as logos and graphics)



## Or Decorative

Should be used sparingly and only for non-meaningful text. The images don't require additional information to make them accessible to search engines. They should include appropriate alt text to describe them for people who are unable to view it.



## How to Use Alt Text

What is important about the image? The setting, the colours, the sizes, faces.

- Describe the image as if you were describing it to someone over the phone
- Use as few words as possible
- Limit the text to around 140 characters (including spaces)
- Use the text that is embedded in the image only if it provides enough context; otherwise, write different text that includes more information
- Use the null indicator as the alternative text (`alt=""`) if the image doesn't provide any more information than what is already provided in the text on the page
- Don't use "image of..." or "graphic of..." to describe the image; screen readers do this already

## Accessibility Resources

[Social Media Alt Text Tools](#)

[Website Accessibility Initiative](#)

[Accessibility tester for websites Chrome Extension](#)

[Social Visual Alt Text – Chrome Extension](#)

[Website Accessibility Checker](#)

[Wordpress plugins](#)



## Style Guides for Inclusive and Accessible Content

Within your existing house style guide start to expand your accessibility best practices. Consider your company text output – jacket copy, marketing, sales materials. Ensure you are

1. Writing for inclusivity, accessibility, and readability
1. Testing and reviewing your content

*Writing for accessibility*

Making content accessible means a wide range of people can use it, including people with physical and cognitive disabilities (for example, reading disorders, attention deficit disorders, memory disorders).

To make your content accessible, consider how assistive technologies work and how some writing practices may impact people's ability to read or understand text. Remember to also refer to the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#).

*Writing for inclusivity*

Make gender-inclusive writing your standard practice. Avoid references to gender whenever possible.

Gender-inclusive writing, which avoids references to gender whenever possible, is increasingly becoming standard practice in correspondence. It may be useful or even essential to apply gender-inclusive guidelines when writing to the following audiences:

- individuals whose gender is unknown;
- non-binary individuals (that is, individuals who do not identify with either the masculine or the feminine gender);
- a diverse group of people (so that no member of the group feels excluded).

*(source - Government of Canada)*

*Writing for readability*

Readability is the ease with which a person can read and understand a text.

People who have literacy challenges:

- spend a lot of time trying to understand words that contain more than two syllables
- read word by word and slowly move their eyes across each line of text
- skip over large amounts of information when it contains many multi-syllable words, uncommon terms and long sentences

## Use Plain Language

By writing plainly and simply, you:

- increase the chances that people will find, read and understand your information from any device
- make your information more accessible to people with disabilities
- allow people who are reading your information on a small screen to see essential information first
- save resources when editing and translating your text
- improve task completion and cuts costs by, for example, reducing enquiries

doesn't mean over-simplifying or leaving out critical information. Using plain language actually makes critical information accessible and readable for everyone.

## Testing and Reviewing

Start by testing and reviewing these five areas:

Test 1: captions

Test 2: content resizing

Test 3: colour customisation

Test 4: visual presentation of links

Test 5: text legibility

Test 1: captions

Captions (closed or open) are available when the audio track conveys information

Captions are accurate, for example they match the audio track

Captions are synchronised with the audio track

Test 2: content resizing

All text resizes accordingly

All content remains visible and readable, for example no text overlaps or is truncated

All content can be viewed without having to scroll horizontally (on websites)

Test 3: colour customisation

All text adapts to the selected colour scheme

All text is still visible

Test 4: visual presentation of links

Links offer people an easy way to navigate content and find the

information they want. When links are identified using colour alone, some people may struggle to notice them, for example:

People unable to perceive some or all colours

People using an app in a very sunny or bright place

People using an app in a dim environment

Test 5: text legibility

Simple and common fonts are used

Text is left-aligned

Bold, italics and capitalised text is used sparingly

Testing if content is operable

## Remember

Not everybody can or wants to use websites with a mouse or mobile apps with gestures. Many prefer, or need, to use alternative input methods. These include keyboards, mouth sticks, eye tracking, speech recognition, and much more. With so many different input devices available, checking support for everything may seem daunting.

Luckily, the way most input devices interact with digital content is relatively similar. By ensuring content works well with a keyboard, you can be reasonably confident they will offer good support for other input devices.