



Office for Disability

Access to the Web

Access to the Web refers to the way information is made available on the Internet. Primarily, it refers to format and structure, whether it is a website, a file for download from a webpage, or an attachment to an email. As with print media, information on the web can be presented in a way that is easier to access for people with a disability.

Why is it important?

People who have a vision impairment may rely on programs that read the web page to them. So it is important that information is presented logically, links are clearly labelled, and video and audio files don't start playing automatically. A person with a physical impairment may not be able to use a mouse and may rely solely on the keyboard for navigation. Making web pages and emails more accessible enables more people to access the information you are providing.

Tips for web access

- Avoid using italics.
- Only use underline to indicate a link.
- Do not convey information with colour only. If something is important, emphasise in bold.
- The background colour and text colour should have a high contrast difference.
- Images should have alternate text that fulfils the same function as the image.
- Avoid flickering content.
- Links should have meaningful text — rather than 'click here' or 'link', they should make sense out of context.
- Visitors should be able to navigate your website with only a keyboard.
- If your website uses Flash, make sure the site is also functional for users without Flash.

Accessible downloads

When linking documents to your website or an email they should be in an accessible format. Generally HTML, text and Word documents are considered accessible, whereas PDF documents and video files are not considered accessible. Portable Document Format (PDF) still has some inaccessible aspects. PDFs with accessibility features only work with the latest and most popular screen readers. Even if PDFs are created in an accessible way, the information still will not conform with web access standards. The only way to make the information within a PDF accessible is to create an alternative.

Tips for accessible downloads

- When linking to a file make sure the file format (PDF, Word, and so on) and file size is clear to the user.
- When providing a link to a PDF document, also provide an alternate, accessible format such as Word or HTML.
- Provide captions or audio descriptions for video files.
- For video and audio files, make a transcript available for download in an accessible format.
- Enable users to control embedded video and audio (for example, pause and stop).

International standards

There are international standards that guide how to make websites useable by most people. Conformance levels 'A', 'Double A', or 'Triple A' (A, AA, AAA) are used. These standards are governed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and are outlined at the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines website: www.w3.org.

What is a Web access audit?

A Web access audit involves a professional IT consultant assessing a website in order to measure the level of access and compliance with the international standards. The audit will identify a number of priority areas to improve access and may provide some examples of solutions that can be implemented.

Further information

For information on the World Wide Web Consortium's web access initiative, visit www.w3.org/WAI.

See also: Office for Disability's factsheet 'Web Accessibility Standards'
www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au.

If you would like to receive this document in an accessible format, contact the Office for Disability:

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