



5 Common Website Accessibility Errors

(and how you can fix them)


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About Web Accessibility

The way your website was built can enable or prevent a person with a disability from using it. Just as physical spaces need modifications to make them accessible, digital spaces (websites) need some too.

Things like ramps, audio traffic signals, and braille signs help people access and interact with public spaces. On a website, things like images, links, and navigation need adjustments in the code to make them accessible. Without these code changes, people with disabilities may be excluded from having access to your site.

We took a random sample of 20 service provider websites and ran initial accessibility tests on each of them. This download explains the five most common errors we found and how you can fix them.



1

The Language

The language attribute tells assistive technology how to translate specific content. It's possible for people from different parts of the world to visit your site. Setting the language will present the right content, accents, and pronunciations.

The error:

Document language missing.

The fix:

Set the language for your primary intended audience.

The example:

If your organization is in the US and its primary audience is English speaking, set the default language to English by adding this in the code:

```
<html lang="en">
```

TIP

The International Organization for Standards (ISO) has two-letter codes that represent the major languages. Find it here: [ISO Language code table](#)

2

Text Alternates

Every single image must include what's called an "alt attribute" so technology knows what to do with it. This attribute specifies alternative text called "alt text". This text helps assistive technologies like screen readers, braille readers, or non-visual browsers convey meaning to the user.

The error:

Missing alternative text.

The fix:

Go through your entire site and make sure every image has an "alt" attribute in the HTML code.

The example:



Often times a photo will have the filename of the image in the code, like this:

```

```

To be accessible the code needs to include alt text like this:

```

```

TIP

This is the most common error we find in provider websites. There are different ways to label an image depending on its purpose. To understand the best way to handle this look at the alt attribute decision tree.

3 | Using Images as a Link

If an image is used as a link, the alt attribute needs to tell the viewer what that link will do when they click on it.

The error:

Linked image missing alternative text.

The fix:

Let the user know where the link will take them.

The example:



Sighted users see this icon and know it's a link that will take them to Facebook. Assistive technology knows it's a link, but can't "see" that it's a Facebook icon.

The alt text for this image should be:

```

```

TIP

Most screen readers identify links to the user. Therefore, don't include the words "link to" in the alt text. People using screen readers would hear "Link link to Facebook".

4

Color Contrast

There should be contrast between the text and background color. This helps people with certain color deficiencies. It also helps with vision changes that come with aging. It's great for overall usability since it works on a variety of different devices and screens.

Accessibility guidelines have a ratio considered appropriate for the contrast in normal text. (You don't have to know how to figure out the ratio, there is a tool that will do it for you!)

The error:

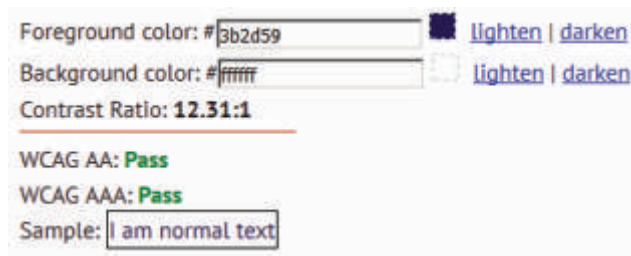
Contrast errors.

The fix:

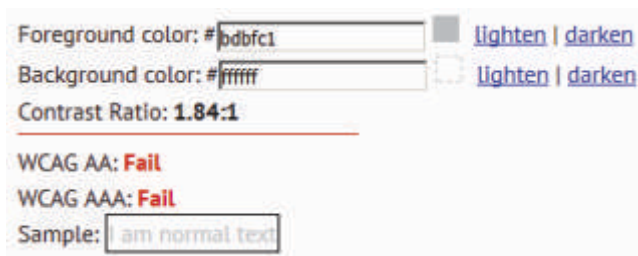
Adjust your colors until they pass.

The example:

Dark purple text on a white background.



Pale grey text on a white background.



TIP

The Color Contrast Checker from WebAIM is easy to use. It has the ability to lighten or darken colors so you can quickly find a combination that works.

TIP

The Color Zilla tool lets you click anywhere on a web page and get the numerical value for that color.

5

Redundant Links

This happens when two adjacent links go to the same place. This can be confusing and repetitive for people using assistive technology. Most of the time this occurs when an image and the text next to it both have a link to the same URL.

The error:

Redundant link

The fix:

Combine the two links into one and remove any repeated text

The example:

Often the image and adjacent text appear visually as if they are one link, but they are separate elements in the code.



Incorrect

```
<a href="http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Snowman"><img src=example5.jpg alt="snowman" /></a>  
<a href="http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Snowman">How to build a great snowman</a>
```

Correct

```
<a href="http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Snowman">How to build  
a great snowman</a>
```

TIP

This one can be tricky. Because the correct link is already telling users the content is about building a snowman, it would be repetitive to include “snowman” in the alt text. For more information read this page on combining adjacent links.

In Conclusion

This download just scratches the surface on website accessibility. But it does give you a place to start. These five changes can be put in place pretty quickly, without much time or cost. The ultimate goal is for your entire website to be accessible. It's inclusive. It treats people of all abilities with dignity and respect. It exhibits a further commitment to equal access for everyone.

TIP

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0

www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php

These are the most current internationally recognized accessibility standards. They are the benchmark for compliance and best practices.

TIP

WebAIM www.webaim.org

Fantastic introduction to understanding website accessibility. Many additional resources, articles and tools.

5 Common Errors Checklist

- The language has been set.
- Every image has proper alt text.
- Linked images tell a user where that link takes them.
- Colors pass the contrast ratio.
- There are no redundant links.

The Purpose Lab is a marketing communications firm that works exclusively with disability service providers. We help providers make websites that are accessible for people regardless of ability or technology. For more information visit www.thepurposelab.com