Basic Accessibility for a New Website

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Simple tips to improve your website accessibility

Making your website accessible is not just about compliance—it's about creating an online space that everyone can use, regardless of their abilities or the tools they use to browse the web.

Digital accessibility ensures that people with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with your website. When you prioritise accessibility, you're improving the user experience for everyone, and demonstrating your commitment to inclusion.

This checklist is designed for beginners who want to ensure their websites meet basic accessibility standards. You don't need to be a developer or accessibility expert to make meaningful improvements. By following these guidelines, you'll be able to identify and address the most common barriers that might prevent users with disabilities from fully engaging with your content.

Remember that accessibility is an ongoing process rather than a one-time fix. Start with the fundamentals outlined in this checklist and gradually build your knowledge and practices as you go.

For more information watch the Digital Culture Network's webinar: **'What is Digital Accessibility and why is it important?'**

Accessible Templates
Web-builders have lots of built-in templates that you can use to make site-building quick and easy so make sure you start with a template that has a clean layout and simple navigation.

Text and Typography

- Use simple, sans-serif fonts like Arial, Helvetica or Open Sans.
- Use a minimum base-size of 16px.
- Avoid using all caps, and use bold and italic sparingly and when it makes sense (e.g. italics for show names)
- Keep language simple and clear. Avoid jargon unless it's essential and provide explanations for technical terms and acronyms.

Colour Contrast

When choosing background and font colours, you should first check that the colour combinations are accessible for users with low vision.

You can use this [Contrast Checker from WebAIM](#) to check your colour combinations to test whether your contrast will pass accessibility checks.

Top tip: use the Colour Picker 'eye dropper' tool to pick colours if you don't know the hex code.

Images and Media

- Add alt-text to describe all images. Be concise but descriptive e.g. "Woman in a red coat walking a dog in the snow". Scope have provided an excellent [guide to writing alt-text](#).
- Add captions to all video content
- Avoid content or videos that flashes more than three times per second.

Consider adding transcriptions where you have videos – not everyone is in the right setting to watch a video!

Page structure

Content should be structured with proper heading levels (Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3)

Heading 1 should only be used once per page, as your page title.

The next heading should then be Heading 2, with Heading 3 following in that section. Start a new section with Heading 2.

Don't skip level headings, by adding a Heading 3 under Heading 1 for example.

For example:

Heading 1 as the main page title

Heading 2 introducing the first sub-topic on the page

Heading 3 is a sub-subheading relating to the first topic

Heading 3 another sub-subheading relating to the first topic

Heading 2 introducing the second sub-topic

Links and navigation
- Use meaningful text for links. Instead of "click here" or "read more" use "click here to book a ticket for X" or "Read more about X"
- Keep your menu structure simple and consistent across pages

Forms and Buttons
- Label all your form fields with a descriptive label.
- Make sure all error messages are clear and specific
- Use descriptive messages on buttons e.g. "Submit Registration" instead of "Submit"

Mobile Responsiveness
Most web-builders will let you see how your site looks on mobile devices, so make sure you test how it looks at a smaller size.

Make sure your buttons and links are easy enough to tap on a mobile device.

Testing Your Site
Engage with various people to test your digital platforms. Their feedback can provide invaluable insights that automated tools might miss.

Conclusion

Improving accessibility is an ongoing process, not a one-time fix. By implementing these beginner-friendly changes to your site, you're making a significant step toward creating an inclusive web presence.

Remember that perfect accessibility isn't the goal when you're just starting, progress is. Each improvement you make helps more people access your content, which is a win for everyone.

The Digital Culture Network is here to support you. Please get in touch if you'd like to arrange a 1-2-1 with a Tech Champion. Sign up for our newsletter below and follow us on X and LinkedIn for the latest updates

Got questions?

Get free advice from our Digital Accessibility Tech Champion by completing this form: https://digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/ask-a-tech-champion/