

Principles of Accessible Web Design

The Web offers so many opportunities to your learners. However, if a Web site is not created with Web accessibility in mind, it may exclude a segment of your class that stands to gain the most from the internet. It is our job as educators to become aware of and implement accessibility in order to ensure that our content can be accessed by all of our learners. Below you will find a list of some key principles of accessible design.

[Provide appropriate alternative text](#)

Alternative text provides a textual alternative to non-text content in web pages. It is especially helpful for people who are blind and rely on a screen reader to have the content of the website read to them. Most programs allow you to create an “alt tag” while creating your material—you just need to remember to do so!

[Ensure links make sense out of context](#)

Every link should make sense if the link text is read by itself. Screen reader users may choose to read only the links on a web page. Certain phrases like "click here" and "more" must be avoided as they don't describe their destination. Instead make the link a phrase that describe the content or destination, such as [March 15 notes](#) or [Answer key](#).

[Caption and/or provide transcripts for media](#)

Videos and live audio must have captions and/or a transcript.

Ensure accessibility of non-HTML content, including [PDF files](#), [Microsoft Word](#) documents, [PowerPoint](#) presentations and [Adobe Flash](#) content.

In addition to all of the other principles listed here, PDF documents and other non-HTML content must be as accessible as possible. If you cannot make it accessible, at the very least provide an accessible alternative. For PowerPoint presentations, that may mean providing the “outline” file (with descriptions of images) as well as the presentation file. Scan documents as Microsoft Word rather than PDF.

[Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning](#)

The use of color can enhance comprehension, but do not use color alone to convey information. That information may not be available to a person who is colorblind, and it will be unavailable to screen reader users.

[Make sure content is clearly written and easy to read](#)

There are many ways to make your content easier to understand. Write clearly, [use clear fonts](#), and [use headings and lists appropriately](#).

This list does not present all accessibility issues, but by addressing these basic principles, you will ensure greater accessibility of your web content to everyone. You can learn more about accessibility by browsing our [articles](#) and [resources](#).

*Excerpted and condensed from WebAIM: <http://www.webaim.org/intro/> on 4/9/2009.
Copyright © 1999-2009 WebAIM (Web Accessibility in Mind). All rights reserved.*