A Basic Guide to Checking Web Accessibility

Content on websites should be accessible to all. This guide has been developed in partnership with accessibility consultants All Able to help you check that web content is easily accessible and that a site is easy to navigate.

To test accessibility, we recommend that you choose a range of pages to check. They should represent the types of pages available across the whole site, such as:

- One of each template type.
- Pages with images.
- Pages with multimedia.
- Online forms.
- Any other type of content that is different in some way (such as an image gallery).

Run a checking tool

Use an automated tool such as Microsoft Accessibility Insights to detect issues with colour contrast, image alt text, tab stops and more.

- Semi-automated accessibility testing tools. This guide is going to introduce some of the tools used throughout the accessibility industry to test pages against many WCAG violations and identify some A11y best practices.

Use the keyboard only

Try using just the keyboard to navigate your selected web pages.

- Is there a **Skip to Content** option?
- Tab through the content: does it follow a logical order?
- Is each tab location visible, can you clearly see where you are?
- Is everything reachable through tabbing? Check forms and interactive elements.

Zoom to 400 per cent

Using the default controls (CTRL and +), zoom up to 400 per cent, checking to see if anything pixelates, gets pushed out of view, or is unusable. Left to right scrolling should not be needed.

Try using menus or drop-down lists; do they work?

Check images and multimedia

All visual content should be effectively described or marked as decorative. Important content in video or audio recordings must have a text alternative, such as captions, a transcript and/or a text description of the key points.

- Creating meaningful alternative text.

Check colour issues

Add the Wave Evaluation Tool to your Chrome browser and use it to see a greyscale view of your page, simulating colour blindness. Can you clearly see everything?

Colour contrast and meaning

Check that colour contrast is adequate, and that colour is not relied on to convey meaning – for example, don't say 'see text in red'. Check that colour is not the only means of conveying information, check error highlights on forms as well as main content.

A colour contrast ratio of 4.5:1 is required for text, 3:1 for large text or graphical controls. You can check this using:

- Microsoft Accessibility Insights.
- TPGi's Colour Contrast Analyser.

Check the page structure

Check that each page has a sensible title; this is shown in the tab text in your browser if you're using a laptop/PC.

Check the hierarchy of headings; there should only be one H1 on the page, followed by subheadings for H2, H3, and so on in sequential order. These should be nested correctly. You can use a Headings Map Extension for Chrome browser to test this.

Take it further: screen readers

Use a screen reader for a more in-depth accessibility check. You will need to learn about the basics of how to use a screen reader first.

- NVDA is a free Windows screen reader: quick guide to NVDA (WebAim).
- VoiceOver is a free screen reader for Macs and iPads: VoiceOver keyboard shortcuts.
  - Screen reader testing - A look at how to test websites using a Screen Reader with the most common functions.

Further information

- UK government guide to testing with assistive technologies.
- Microsoft Accessibility Checker can also be used to make your content accessible to everyone.