WebApp Accessibility Best Practices

The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect.

- Provide appropriate alternative text
  Alternative text provides a textual alternative to non-text content (such as pictures and images) 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.
- Provide appropriate document structure
  Headings, lists, and other structural elements provide meaning and structure to web pages. They can also facilitate keyboard navigation within the page.
- Provide headers for data tables
  Tables are used online for layout and to organize data. Tables that are used to organize tabular data should have appropriate table headers (the <th> element). Data cells should be associated with their appropriate headers, making it easier for screen reader users to navigate and understand the data table.
- Ensure users can complete and submit all forms
  Ensure that every form element (text field, checkbox, dropdown list, etc.) has a label and make sure that label is associated to the correct form element using the <label> element. Also make sure the user can submit the form and recover from any errors, such as the failure to fill in all required fields.
- 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.
- Caption and/or provide transcripts for media
  Videos and live audio must have captions and a transcript. With archived audio, a transcription may be sufficient.
- Ensure accessibility of non-HTML content, including PDF files, Microsoft 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, consider using HTML instead or, at the very least, provide an accessible alternative. PDF documents should also include a series of tags to make it more accessible. A tagged PDF file looks the same, but it is almost always more accessible to a person using a screen reader.
- Allow users to skip repetitive elements on the page
  You should provide a method that allows users to skip navigation or other elements that repeat on every page. This is usually accomplished by providing a “Skip to Main Content,” or “Skip Navigation” link at the top of the page which jumps to the main content of the page.
- 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 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.

- Make JavaScript accessible
  Ensure that JavaScript event handlers are device independent (e.g., they do not require the use of a mouse) and make sure that your page does not rely on JavaScript to function.
- Design to standards
  HTML compliant and accessible pages are more robust and provide better search engine optimization. Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) allow you to separate content from presentation. This provides more flexibility and accessibility of your content.

  * This list comes from WebAIM's Principles of Accessible Design. 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 at webaim.org.

Infrastructure Accessibility Best Practices

- For accessible buildings, at least one entrance per facility should be accessible to a wheelchair user. For new buildings, the accessible entrance(s) should be the main entrance(s) intended for use by the general public.
- Wherever waiting areas, coffee shops, display areas, merchandising departments, service areas, ticket counters, refreshment stands, etc. are provided for public use, these facilities should be accessible to disabled people, mainly to wheelchair users.
- All work areas in which physically disabled persons may be employed should be accessible.
- In any public rest room, at least one unisex compartment should be accessible to a wheelchair user.

Residential buildings

- Private residences may be left inaccessible to a wheelchair user. However, it is desirable to consider a minimum of accessibility requirements to accommodate disabled guests, senior citizens and children.
- In new apartment buildings constructed for rent or sale, provisions for disabled persons should be considered. The number of wheelchair housing units should be provided at a rate of one unit for a typical population of 1000.

Office buildings

- New office buildings should be as accessible as possible so as to accommodate all persons and not hinder employment of disabled persons.
- New low-rise office blocks with no elevators need not be accessible to a wheelchair user. Office space at ground level, if any, should be accessible.
- For small office buildings where the floor area limits the provision of accessible rest rooms on each floor, one accessible rest room could be provided to serve the entire building. The accessible rest room should be located adjacent to an accessible elevator.
- Where an office building is subdivided among various tenants, wheelchair rest rooms should be provided on each floor.

www.giftabled.org | www.giftabled.com