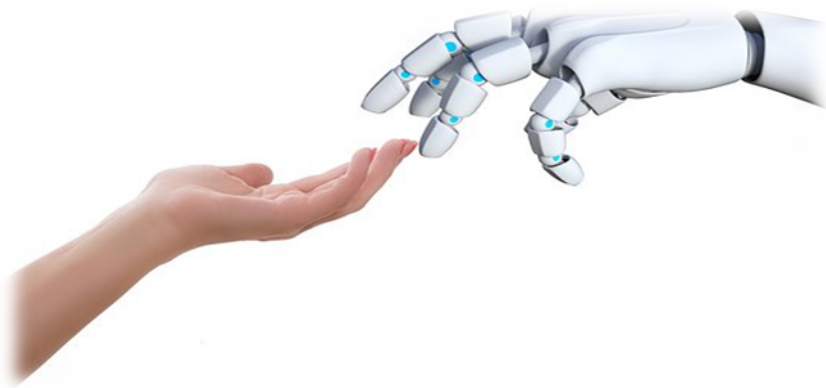# 10 Great Tips for Accessibility

Technology is accessible when designed to understand the *needs* of individuals with impaired abilities, and developed to create universal compatibility between users and computer systems. Assistive Technology is often the merger between people seeking to operate software, and programmers, who are developing the services being offered to the public. If done successfully, people with different kinds of disabilities should be able to *easily navigate* and *access* all components of the intended product regardless of what platform it is used on.

Background

1. **Gather Resources on Accessibility**

   In order for a project to serve individuals with disabilities, every person involved must learn what web accessibility is, how it is used, and who it impacts. Think of Accessibility as a working factory. Ultimately, a machine will produce more efficient tools, but the goal is to make sure that everyone can enjoy the usability of the repair regardless of which tool is used.

   Helpful Resources

   [Accessibility](#)
   [What & Why of Usability](#)
   [Test for Accessibility](#)

Internal Prioritization

2. **Classify Your Technology Project**

   Create a foundation for accessibility testing by classifying your technology project. For example: a Data base management system requires different coding than an electronic spreadsheet would, in order to create an accessible program. This step will help to set in place identifiable components for future testing.

3. **Create a Platform for Accessibility for your Organization**

   Craft a summary of goals the organization aims to achieve, address the communities you intend to serve, and summarize the ideal output that you would like the user to take away. Use this as a guide when communicating to the public what you do and how your program will be accessed.

4. **Understand Legal Guidelines for Accessibility, Comply with Federal and State Standards**

[What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)](#)
[What is Web Accessibility](#)
[W3C Accessibility Standards Overview](#)

5. **Create in House Rules**

   You need uniformity in the management, storage, and maintenance of the accessibility system to which you are seeking to put in place. Set in-house rules and make sure everyone involved in the project knows them.

6. **Develop an Inventory for Data Collection, Gathering, and Analysis**

   It is important to keep all information organized and maintained while a system undergoes maintenance, updates, and development changes. Without this step data might be misinterpreted, and it may be difficult to spot system failures or malfunctions.

Outside Resources

7. **Use Your Network**

   Reach out to organizations that specialize in, or have previous experience with, Web Accessibility. Technology is constantly expanding, creating room for experts in the fields of Assistive Technology, Usability, and Equal Rights for the Disabled. Contact those experts to gain a full perspective of the moving parts needed to create an accessible system. Establish alliances with similar organizations for collaborating ideas, management tips and sharing key developments within the field of accessible technology.

8. **Find a Credible Organization to Run An Accessibility Audit**

   You MUST run an Accessibility Audit of your project to know whether it meets the accessibility standards required by law. An Accessibility Audit is an evaluation made by accessibility consultants and people with disabilities to check how well your product supports the needs of impaired users. When searching for an auditor, make sure to use credible organizations that

specialize in assessing a webpage and the content within a webpage for compliance with [W3C Accessibility Standards](#), [Americans with Disabilities Standards](#), and [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#).

9. **Run An Accessibility Audit for the Targeted Impairments**

   [The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)](#) recognizes 13 Categories associated with physical and learning impairments. W3C requires compliance with the [following discrepancies](#):

[Auditory](#)	**Create an alternative for Audio descriptions:** • Add Captions, Pre-recorded Sign Language, and enhanced focus indicators for visual highlighting when a user hovers over an item.
[Visual](#)	**Make website fully accessible through the use of a Keyboard** • Add basic [ARIA](#) landmarks for access to interactive controls; Use [headings](#) for content structure, page titles, and table headers; add closed captions to pre-recorded videos, and improve the programs compatibility with screen readers and other assistive technology by eliminating complex buttons like "click here", change the link text to be more descriptive.

[Neurological]	**Create content that can be presented in different ways, without losing information or structure** • Improve sensory characteristics: shape, color, size, orientation, visual location, or sound. Eliminate hard time limits on content, if absolutely necessary allow user to adjust or extend the length of time. Add suggested spelling for common search terms.
[Physical]	**Provide adequate resources that may be combined with assistive technology** • Create an ability switch that is programmed to perform different functions (assistive page scrolling, typing, or moving a mouse), or have PDF options which are compatible with a screen reader.
[Speech]	**Improve communication aids for users** • Create an LED display and printer option, voice synthesizing compatibility for specialized keyboards and mouse's, add an extra verification process with plain language phrases such as yes and no, in order for user to verify the selected option.
[Cognitive]	**Simplify complex content** • Make sure to label all elements (including form fields) properly, with instructions that can be accessed via keyboard and mouse; and implement instructional prerecorded audio-only and video-only media that is clearly labeled as such.

10. **Analyze Findings From Accessibility Testing**

The final phase of accessibility testing is analyzing your findings, and deciding whether to make crucial business and legal decisions regarding how much time, effort, and money that your organization is willing to invest in making the product accessible. Accessibility is complex because it requires embedding

elements of accessibility in the code of a program as it is being created.   In short, accessibility cannot simply be added onto a program after it has already been fully developed. Similar to a fully baked cake, you cannot add a foundational layer to the cake after it is completed, without restructuring the entire structure of the cake itself.

If you chose to work with an accessibility auditor, the organization will likely offer services for interpreting the accessibility testing results. Results are generally delivered in code indicating various types of non-conformity with accessibility standards. You may need help and require special knowledge about understanding the error codes and how they can be resolved. Some errors exist because your software is incompatible with Assistive Technological devices, while others errors may not comport with W3C standards. Some accessibility problems may require long term planning and commitment to resolve. Therefore, organize your analysis in a way that best fits your practice, and platform for accessibility.

Conclusion

Accessibility is a broad subject, that requires a limited scope for completing the project. Be patient with the process and understand that accessibility is an ongoing feature. The difficulty is making all functions compatible, therefore once established, maintenance becomes less troublesome. Remember, you are creating a product for individuals who are seeking *simple* accommodating services. Do not forget to user test. Ask members from the community which you intend to serve for feedback of your product and its functionality.

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