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Free Web accessibility resources

This fact sheet provides key resources for any VCS organisation that wants to improve the accessibility of their website to disabled visitors.

It comes out of research AbilityNet did on behalf of ICT Hub in 2006. A major finding was it is key to make voluntary and community sector organisations aware of the resources available to improve web accessibility.

This fact sheet provides information on all the main free resources on Web accessibility, including guidelines, testing tools, research, websites and books.

Specifically it covers the following topics

- Accessibility Guidelines
- Testing tools
- Rich Media and Web 2.0
- Web accessibility Research
- Key Web accessibility websites
- Other accessibility websites of interest
- Books

Accessibility Guidelines

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)

The W3C are the international body that sets standards for web technologies. They have a dedicated Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) and specific guidelines for making web content accessible. Version 1 is still current though is becoming a little outdated which is why there is a second version WCAG 2.0 out in draft. The website contains a lot of useful information including coding (HTML) techniques for the guidelines.

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

Checklist of Checkpoints for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 1.0)

<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/full-checklist.html>

Overview of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (draft)

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag20.php>

HTML Techniques for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0

<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10-HTML-TECHS/>

Flash Accessibility

Because Flash is not currently a W3C technology it has limited coverage under the W3C guidelines, the best information available is produced by Adobe and can be downloaded for free from their website

Adobe's (formerly Macromedia) guide to best practices for accessible Flash design

http://www.adobe.com/resources/accessibility/best_practices/best_practices_acc_flash.pdf

PDF Accessibility

Also as PDF accessibility does not come under the current version of WCAG 1.0, Adobe have created their own guidance on how to create accessible PDFs.

Create Accessible PDF Documents with Adobe Acrobat

http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/pdfs/acro7_pg_ue.pdf (10.3MB)

PAS 78: Guide to Good Practice in Commissioning Accessible Websites

PAS 78 has been developed by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) in collaboration with the BSI. It outlines good practice in commissioning websites that are accessible to and usable by disabled people. It can be downloaded for free from the DRC's website:

http://www.drc-gb.org/library/website_accessibility_guidance/pas_78.aspx

Testing tools

Disclaimer: Neither AbilityNet or the ICT HUB will accept liability for any loss or damage or inconvenience arising as a consequence of the downloading, installation or use of any of the software mentioned below. Nor can we provide support for any of these software packages - their use is at your own risk.

AIS Accessibility toolbar



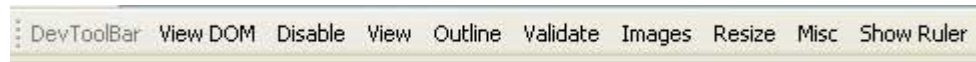
The AIS Toolbar is one of the best tools to test your web pages for accessibility. It is a plug-in for Internet Explorer and the Opera web browser. It allows you to check for the majority of accessibility issues at the click of a button without having to dig down into the page code.

Download the toolbar (file size: 771 KB):

<http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/ais/toolbar/>

There is also a useful overview article at:

<http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/info.aspx?page=619>

Internet Explorer Developer Toolbar

The Internet Explorer Developer Toolbar is another toolbar you can use it does however not have all the features of the AIS Toolbar but is a very useful alternative if you cannot use the AIS toolbar for any reason

Download the toolbar from (file size: 325 KB): [Internet Explorer Developer Toolbar \(Beta\)](#)

(<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=e59c3964-672d-4511-bb3e-2d5e1db91038&DisplayLang=en>)

Automated testing tools

These tools are quick ways to check your site against the machine-testable checkpoints in the WCAG Guidelines. Beware of taking the results of these as gospel though, out of the 65 checkpoints in the guidelines only 3 can be wholly and 10 partially tested automatically.

WebXACT (formally known as Bobby)

The WebXACT accessibility checker is a useful automated tool enabling you to check some of the accessibility issues your web pages may have. However, like all automated accessibility checking tools, it must be used in conjunction with manual testing to gain a complete picture of the accessibility of your pages. For instance the tool will be able to check that there are no missing alts for images, but it will not be able to determine whether or not the alt text assigned is meaningful and appropriate.

<http://webxact.watchfire.com/>

The WAVE

The WAVE is another automated testing tool. It reads the underlying HTML of the web page and returns a report displaying the reading order. This is an excellent way of testing the reading order of forms so that you can ensure the content is logical when being read by a screen reader or viewed in a non graphical browser such as Lynx. It can be downloaded and added as a toolbar in your browser or accessed directly from the AIS Web Accessibility Toolbar.

<http://wave.webaim.org/index.jsp>

W3C HTML Validator

Having standards-compliant HTML on your website is essential for good accessibility. Assistive technology can exhibit quirky or unpredictable behaviour if your HTML is coded incorrectly. The W3C validator will analyse your webpage and tell you whether you have written valid code, or (if not) where you have gone wrong.

<http://validator.w3.org/>

Accessify Tools

Accessify provides a step-by-step wizard which runs you through the creation of your form or table, and then provides you with code to cut 'n paste into your HTML document. These tools are an excellent way for those new to the area of accessibility to create basic accessible code.

Accessible Form Builder:

<http://www.accessify.com/tools-and-wizards/accessibility-tools/form-builder/>

Accessible Table Builder:

<http://www.accessify.com/tools-and-wizards/accessibility-tools/table-builder/>

Vischeck's colour blindness tool

Vischeck



Vischeck is a way of showing you what things look like to someone who is colour blind. You can try Vischeck online- either run Vischeck on your own image files or run Vischeck on a web page - see <http://www.vischeck.com>

Alternatively if you have either a version of Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements you can install it as a plugin

Download the Vischeck colour blindness plugin from (File size 64 KB) :

<http://www.vischeck.com/downloads/>

Colour contrast analyser by Juicy Studio

The Juicy Studio website provides a colour contrast analyser where you can type in the foreground and background colours to assess whether there is sufficient difference in colour and contrast. Not all users, for instance those with colour blindness or older users can easily distinguish between close colour combinations. Additionally, if the text colour and background colour are similar in tone, some users may find this difficult to read.

<http://www.juicystudio.com/services/colourcontrast.php>

The Windows Magnifier

It is useful to test web pages with Windows Magnifier. Set the magnification to 5x to check whether images and more specifically images of text are still legible. Windows Magnifier is a free piece of software that comes with Windows and is located in the Accessibility Options.

Screen readers

Users who are blind or have a vision impairment can use screen reading software to access the web.

JAWS

Jaws is one of the most commonly used screen readers used by people with no or limited vision, others include Window-Eyes, Hal and IBM HomePage Reader.



For web page testing purposes you can use a combination of JAWS and Internet Explorer to hear how a blind user would experience your site. It will flag up to you if there are any issues with navigation, whether your page is structured logically, and if all your links make sense out of context. A 40 minute mode version is available for testing purposes.

http://www.freedomscientific.com/fs_products/JAWS_HQ.asp

Window-Eyes demo version

Free version that is time limited to 30 minutes but can be run again after you have restarted Windows.

<http://www.gwmicro.com/Window-Eyes/Demo/>

Alternative Web Browsers

It is important to test web pages in a variety of browsers to ensure that the content is readable and understandable. It is useful to download a number of different browsers and view web pages in them. Some of the main ones include:

Opera: <http://www.opera.com/download/>

Mozilla Firefox: <http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/>

Netscape: <http://browser.netscape.com/ns8/>

Lynx Viewer (Text-Only Browser): <http://www.delorie.com/web/lynxview.html>

A great resource for previous versions of browsers is: <http://browsers.evolt.org/>

My Web My Way

AbilityNet has developed a resource in conjunction with the BBC that tells you more about the assistive technology (or AT) disabled individuals use. It also offers information on the ways people alter their browser's appearance to make things easier for them to read. It is vital that you test the performance and appearance of your pages under a variety of such conditions - and this resource will explain in detail the full range of changes disabled visitors can make to all popular browsers.

This resource is available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility>

Rich Media and Web 2.0

PDF Accessibility

PDF Accessibility training resources

<http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/training.html>

Online conversion tools for Adobe PDF documents

http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/access_onlinetools.html

Captioning/Multimedia

The National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) provides examples of accessible multimedia on their Website. <http://ncam.wgbh.org/>

Webaim.org provides tutorials on captioning multimedia.

<http://www.webaim.org/techniques/captions/>

JavaScript

Webaim.org provides more information on device independence and JavaScript at:

<http://www.webaim.org/techniques/javascript/eventhandlers>

Web 2.0/ Ajax

Web 2.0 & Accessibility for Disabled Users

<http://www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/web20andaccessibility>

Talking about Ajax and Accessibility at Abilitynet

<http://www.wait-till-i.com/index.php?p=398>

Web accessibility Research

The **BBC** in February 2003 published research into the accessibility of www.bbc.co.uk - there is also a basic accessibility checklist available.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/newmedia/websites.shtml>

Information on **The Disability Rights Commission's** (DRC) research into accessible Websites.

http://www.drc-gb.org/library/formal_investigation_report_w.aspx

The Stanford Poynter project has been researching how people read news on the web. As outlined in the main web guide it has useful information on the strategies people use to read web pages.

<http://www.poynter.org/eyetrack2000>

Key Web accessibility websites

Webaim.org is one of the best accessibility resources on the web.

<http://www.webaim.org/>

A List Apart is a resource of articles covering web standards including accessibility and usability.

<http://www.alistapart.com/>

RNIB's Web Access centre contains lots of useful information and advice on web accessibility.

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_webaccessibility.hcsp

AbilityNet's web accessibility resources section contains articles, FAQs, glossary and a weekly round up of accessibility news

<http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/webresources>

Accessify

A popular site for developers who want to build accessible websites

<http://www.accessify.com/>

Guild of Accessible Web Designers

The Guild of Accessible Web Designers (GAWDS) is a worldwide association of professional organisations, web designers and developers working together to promote the use and preservation of accessible design standards

<http://www.gawds.org/>

Other accessibility websites of interest

The **Apple website** also has information about the accessibility features of Macs including the VoiceOver screen reader built into Mac OS X(10.4).

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility/>

Linux Accessibility Resource Site

<http://larswiki.atrc.utoronto.ca/wiki>

CSS Zen Garden is the cutting edge of CSS design – moving away from table design.

<http://www.csszengarden.com/>

Information about a **Symbol browser** called Communicate: Webwide which may help some people with learning difficulties access the web can be found on the Widgit website.

<http://www.widgit.com/>

IBM Accessibility Centre

<http://www-03.ibm.com/able/>

Adobe (formally Macromedia) Accessibility centre

<http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/>

Microsoft Accessibility

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/>

Books**ICT Hub Guide to How to Commission & Design Accessible Websites**

This guide written by AbilityNet is designed for all voluntary and community organisations to explain why web accessibility is vital to support your work with beneficiaries, and how easy it is to make simple practical improvements to the accessibility of your website. It covers:

- **Part one:** An overview of Web accessibility for the VCS
- **Part two:** For commissioners
- **Part three:** For editors: Writing for the web
- **Part four:** For developers and designers
- **Part five:** Testing the accessibility of your website

You can obtain a free copy by ringing the AbilityNet Helpline on 0800 269545 or sending an email to enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

Dive Into Accessibility

"Dive Into Accessibility" is a very useful step by step guide to the process of implementing an accessible website. It includes many examples and a day by day diary for fixing your problems. Visit this website to read the book on-line.

<http://www.diveintoaccessibility.org>

Web Style Guide, 2nd edition

This on-line book by Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton gives clear no nonsense guidance of all aspects of designing websites, the 2nd addition has been updated to include sections on Web site accessibility, Cascading Style Sheets, and flexible page design.

<http://www.webstyleguide.com/>