

Web Accessibility Checklist



Web accessibility ensures all users have access to and can interact with your digital products. When sites and apps are thoughtfully designed, developed and managed, all users have equal access to the information and functionality. Cognitive, visual, auditory, and physical impairment are the four core areas of disability. This checklist will help all stakeholders know what to keep in mind, talk about, and check for when designing and developing a web accessible product.

Kick-off

Project kick-off is when accessibility starts.

ASK YOUR TEAM AND PARTNERS WHAT THEY KNOW AND WHAT THEY DON'T

Creating accessible products isn't difficult, but it is complex. Determine what your team knows and doesn't know. Then prepare for how to fill the gaps by bringing in outside experts or requiring team education.

OUTLINE EXPECTATIONS

There several standards to which you can build your product. ADA, Section 508, and WCAG 2.0 are the most common. Determine what standard you're adhering to. We recommend WCAG 2.0 AA. This is a great, high standard to aim for.

LEARN & DOCUMENT THE LANGUAGE

It's important to have a shared language among the team. Familiarize yourselves with what accessibility means, what assistive devices are, and the different types of guidelines.

ADD A USER PERSONA WITH A DISABILITY YOUR PROJECT

You may use personas to represent your target market. If you include a person with one or more disabilities within your personas, it will be easier to design, write, and develop for them.

SIMULATE SEVERAL EXPERIENCES FROM A DISABLED PERSPECTIVE

Simulation is one of the most effective ways for non-disabled people to understand disabled user experiences. Low-vision goggles, navigating a computer using either speech recognition software or keyboards, or surfing the web with a screen reader will shed light on different user experiences.

★ **TIP:** Hold an all-team training session. Roles on digital projects are very interdependent, so a front-end developer and a content manager can help each other – and the process – by tackling the education part together.

Planning

In the planning phase. User Experience Architects play a huge role in laying the groundwork for an accessible website or app.

RECOGNIZE THE USER'S EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING

Drive home to all team members that the user experience must drive planning, feature development, and implementation.

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

When it comes to digital accessibility, there are a lot of details related to interaction, control, and content requirements that should be documented.

★ **TIP:** The best way to communicate many interactive details is through UX annotations.

GIVE USERS CONTROL OVER THE CONTENT

As you're planning content, make sure that controls are being integrated into the experience. Make sure users are able to scale type size, turn any motion or moving graphics off, and adjust timing on any timed forms or sessions.

CREATE A CONTENT PLAN AND STRATEGY

Content is a major component to creating and maintaining web accessible products. Make sure the substance and structure of your content is being considered early on.

★ **TIP:** Make sure that the testers decide on and document what assistive devices will be used in testing. Knowing this in advance will give the team time to get access to them all and learn how to use them.

Implementation

During implementation, accessibility is an all-hands-on-deck affair. There is a close dance between UX, design, and FED to execute a product that works well and looks good for all users.

HOLD AN ALL-TEAM UX HANDOFF

Make sure the entire team is present for the UX hand-off of wireframes and documentation. The designers and front-end developers will be responsible for executing much of the UX, but every person should be aware of the vision and plan.

ENSURE CONTENT ENTRY IS DONE ACCORDING TO PLAN

Headings, alt text, image captions, vocabulary complexity, and link descriptions are all vital components to seeing the accessibility plan through. Review all content (visible and not) to make sure it follows the WCAG guidelines.

CONDUCT CONTENT TRAINING

As your website, app, or product evolves over the course of its life, content will be routinely edited. It's critical that all people who touch content – on both the interface and backend – are aware of best practices.

★ **TIP:** Check in regularly with your front-end developers. In this phase, front-end developers are playing a huge role in ensuring the planning details are being effectively realized in the product interface. They will be your all-stars in implementation, so check in, support them, and make sure they have what they need to create a great experience.

Testing

Testing is a critical part of effective digital accessibility. Don't rush or omit this step – it's where you confirm that everything is set up correctly. There is a lot to digital accessibility that you can't see, which means a thorough test plan is necessary.

USE A VARIETY OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Don't limit your testing to just screen readers. Make sure you review the final product from the perspective of each of the four major areas of disabilities: cognitive, visual, auditory, and physical.

FIND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO ACTUALLY USE YOUR PRODUCT

There are services for accessing and hiring people with disabilities to use digital products. Commit part of the budget to that – it will give you immeasurable insight.

★ **TIP:** Try using the voice-over functionality on your own browser! This will give you a sense of what that experience is like.

Ongoing

Launching a website, app, or product is not the end, it's the beginning. There will be edits and tweaks to content and code every week, so what was accessible on the day of launch, may become slightly less so over the course of the edits.

CONDUCT AN ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

Every year, dedicate some time to an audit. Review the documentation from the original plan and make sure the product adheres to it.

★ **TIP:** Run your URL through webaim.org to see if anything is out of line with digital accessibility standards.

REVIEW BEST PRACTICES

Not only does technology change, the industry does, too. The whats and hows of digital accessibility may evolve and you want to be sure that you're keeping up.