



DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY SHOULD I STRIVE FOR ACCESSIBILITY?

We most often think of accessibility as making digital content usable for people with disabilities, but the benefits do not stop there. Increasing accessibility can also improve the usability of your content for everyone. Following best practices can improve overall user experience, help non-native English speakers, and increase search engine optimization. Additionally, when designers and contributors consider accessibility from the start, it can be significantly faster and cheaper than waiting to address problems after users encounter accessibility barriers.

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY?

Harvard's [Online Accessibility website](#) provides instructions and resources for the creation of widely accessible online materials. The website includes guidelines for content creators and developers, helpful resources, and specific techniques for improving digital accessibility.

The website is available to anyone with a HarvardKey/PIN.

WHAT IS WCAG 2.0?

The World Wide Web Consortium's [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) version 2.0 "covers a wide range of recommendations for making Web content more accessible." WebAIM provides a simple [WCAG 2.0 Checklist](#) specifically for HTML documents. However, the guidelines are technology agnostic, so they can be broadly applied to most digital resources, not just websites.

WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

Assistive technologies, sometimes referred to as adaptive technologies or rehabilitative devices, promote greater independence for individuals with disabilities by changing how these individuals interact with technology. For example, speech recognition software allows users with hand mobility issues to interact with a computer using voice commands rather than manipulating a mouse and keyboard. Other assistive technologies include alternative input devices, screen magnifiers, and screen reading software. See the [Glossary](#) of the Online Accessibility site for more accessibility terms.

HOW DO I TEST MY CONTENT FOR ACCESSIBILITY?

Automated testing tools can identify up to half of the accessibility issues, which is a good start. Manual testing with assistive technologies (such as JAWS, NVDA, or Dragon Naturally Speaking) is still recommended to uncover additional problems not readily detected by automated tools. For example, if an [image has an alt tag](#) that does not provide a useful description of the content of that image, the problem will not be found during an automated scan, but will be found when testing with a screen reader.

HOW CAN I ENSURE THAT ACCESSIBILITY IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN CONTRACTING WITH AN OUTSIDE VENDOR?

Web products or services procured by Harvard must meet an acceptable level of accessibility; see the [Procurement Process](#) section of the Online Accessibility website. For further guidance, please contact Harvard's [Office of the General Counsel](#) for appropriate contractual language regarding accessibility.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY QUESTIONS?

Harvard's [University Disability Services](#) serves as a central resource on disability-related information, procedures and services for the University community. For assistance within your school, refer to the list of [Local Disability Coordinators/Administrators](#).

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY?

A great place to begin is HUIT's [Online Accessibility Webinars](#). The 17 webinars cover topics such as "Designing Accessible UX" and "Accessible Multimedia." Courses for the IT Academy are in the planning stage, so additional opportunities to learn are coming soon!

URLS REFERENCED IN THE FAQs:

- Harvard's Online Accessibility website – <http://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/home>
- W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines – <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>
- WebAIM's WCAG 2.0 Checklist – <http://webaim.org/standards/wcag/checklist>
- Glossary – <http://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/glossary>
- Describe the content of images – <http://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/describe-content-or-meaning-images>
- Procurement Process – <http://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/contracts-and-rfp>
- Office of the General Counsel – <http://ogc.harvard.edu/pages/contact-0>
- Harvard's University Disability Services – <http://accessibility.harvard.edu/>
- Local Disability Coordinators/Administrators – <http://accessibility.harvard.edu/pages/local-disability-coordinatorsadministrators>
- Online Accessibility Webinars – <http://hwpi.harvard.edu/webinars>