



# CREATING ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC CONTENT



The following handout provides general recommendations for *creating accessible content*. For *program-specific* instructions (e.g., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat) see our other cheatsheets ([ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/](http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/)).

## Write clearly

- Use the **simplest** language appropriate for your content.
- Use illustrations, icons, etc. to **supplement** text.
- Check spelling, grammar, and readability.
- Be careful with abbreviations, jargon, complex language, or anything that might **confuse the reader**.
- AVOID THE USE OF ALL CAPS. IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO READ.

## Use good semantic structure

- Organize your content using **true headings** (sometimes labeled as “H1” “Heading 1”, etc.). The document title should be a first-level heading, the next level should be second-level, etc. **Avoid skipping levels** (e.g., jumping from first-level to third-level headings).

### Introduction to Web Accessibility

#### Implementing Web Accessibility

Before anyone can make their web site accessible, they must understand accessibility, be committed to accessibility, learn how to implement accessibility, and understand their legal obligations.

**Commitment and accountability**

**Awareness.** The foundation of any kind of commitment to web accessibility is awareness of the need for accessibility. Most web developers are not opposed to the concept of making the internet accessible to people with disabilities. Most accessibility errors on web sites are the result of lack of awareness, rather than apathy.

**Leadership.** Understanding the issues is an important first step, but it does not solve the problem. Leadership is essential, especially in large organizations. If the leadership of an organization does not express commitment to accessibility, it is difficult to achieve.

- Use **true bulleted and numbered lists** rather than creating it by using the tab key and an asterisk or number.
- Provide a **table of contents** for long documents.
- Provide a **descriptive** document or **page title**.
- Use **true columns** instead of other methods (e.g., using the “Tab” key to create columns one line at a time).

## Remember users with visual disabilities

- The use of color can enhance comprehension, but **do not use color alone** to convey information (e.g., “Items in red are due this week”). Using color is fine (e.g., “The items due this week have the red word ‘due’ next to them”), it just can’t be the only way information is provided.
- Make sure that **color contrast is strong**, especially between text and background. This is true for images that include text as well.

Resources NCDAE has created a plan to increase awareness and the need to do so.	Resources NCDAE has created a plan to increase awareness and the need to do so.	Resources NCDAE has created a plan to increase awareness and the need to do so.
Insufficient	Borderline	Sufficient

- **Do not** use descriptions that **rely only on sight** (e.g., “click on the square”, “the box on the left side of the page”, “The big blue text”).
- Use **adequate text size**, usually no smaller than 10 point.

## Be careful with data tables

- If the tools allow **provide headers** for data tables.

Plan Element	Yes/No	Supporting Documentation	Additional Information
An executive summary	Yes	Summary is attached	
A comprehensive timeline	Yes	3-year timeline in place	
Assignment of specific responsibilities	Yes	List of employee responsibilities	Our next step is to a tr
Metrics, milestones and measurable steps	Yes	Attendance lists for the last 4 workshops attached	

- Use the **simplest table structure** possible. Be careful with spanned rows or columns and avoid multiple levels of table headers.
- **Avoid** using tables for visual layout when possible.

## Provide appropriate alternative text

- Many tools allow you to provide **alternative text** for images. These boxes are sometimes labeled with phrases like “alt text,” “alternative,” or even “description.” If present, **use this field** to provide alternative text.
- Alternative text should present the **content** and **function**, not necessarily a description, of an image. If you had to remove the image, what text would you put in its place?
- If an image has no **relevant content** or **function**, is **decorative**, or the alternative text is **provided in nearby text**, then the image should have **empty alternative text** if possible (some tools have an option for “blank” or “empty”). If this is not an option, leave the field blank. You should **not** put empty spaces, empty quotes (except in HTML alt=""), or any other nonsense information in these fields.
- **Avoid words** like “picture of,” “image of,” or “link to.”
- Use the **fewest number of words** necessary.

## Ensure links are descriptive

- **Avoid phrases** like “Click here”, “Here”, “More”, “More information”, “Read more”, and “Continue.”

CLICK HERE	Sign in with WordPress
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Not descriptive      Descriptive

- URLs as link text should usually **be avoided**, unless the document is intended to be printed or if the URL is relevant content.

## Caption and/or provide transcripts for media

- Videos and live audio **must have captions and a transcript**. A transcript is sufficient for archived audio.
- Captions should be **accurately** reflecting the text in the video. The text should be equivalent.