

10 Things you can do to improve accessibility without being an expert!

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We hear it all the time. Accessibility is too hard! You have to be an expert! The truth is there are lots of things you can do to improve the accessibility of your document and digital content. Accessibility starts with small steps. Use these 10 simple actions to improve your content. You might be surprised at how easy it can be.

1 Title your Documents

Choose a meaningful title that identifies the document or its content.

2 Describe your images

It is pretty easy to right click on an image and enter a descriptive sentence or two. Answer the questions "What is important in this image? What do they need to know?"

3 Use Headings

Headings are anchors or outline levels for content that people using assistive technology use to navigate by. Keep your headings logical and in order. Heading Level 1, Heading Level 2, etc. Headings make your document more readable for everyone.

4 Avoid excessive bullet levels

Every list level change is announced by a screen reader. Imagine having to keep track of where you are when you hear "List Level 1, List Level 2, List Level 3, List Level 2, List Level 3, List Level 4, List Level 3."

5 Use descriptive links

Use meaningful link text instead of "[Click Here](#)" or long URLs. "[Download the Checklist](#)" is far more accessible than download http://www.accessibilityunraveled.com/content/PDFs/Checklists/MSWord_071222.PDF

6 Avoid images of text

Images may make our text look fancy with drop shadows and bevels or highlights but screen readers cannot detect the text inside a jpg or png. If you forget to add descriptive text sometimes title.jpg is all the user gets for a description.

7 Keep tables simple

This is a much deeper subject but at its core, keep your tables simple. Heading rows at the top or in the first column instead of using them to visually separate rows of content will make your table much more accessible without any heavy accessibility work in the PDF.

8 Avoid faded color schemes

People with low vision are a substantial portion of those with disabilities. Use darker colors for headings and meaningful content. Avoid pastels, faded colors, oranges or yellows for headings as they can be hard to see.

9 Avoid red and green indicators

As many as 1 in 8 males are Colorblind. Avoid using red or green as differentiators. Example: "Items in red are required." If you have to use them consider adding a symbol or other method to help differentiate them.

10 Use simple language

Use plain language when possible. It will improve the reading rate for everyone. In item 9 we used "differentiate." We could have used "tell them apart" to be more accessible!



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