

Introduction

With the increased use of technology in education, some guidelines and protocols have been set by the federal government to ensure that everyone can access educational content. The IMIC has compiled a condensed list of these guidelines below. For further information please consult the SUU policies and procedures.

Internet/HTML pages

1. Provide text equivalents to visual content and vice versa. The power of text equivalents lies in their capacity to be rendered in ways that are accessible to people using a variety of technologies. Text can be converted to speech and Braille displays, and can be presented visually (in a variety of sizes) on computer displays and paper. Synthesized speech is critical for individuals who are blind and helpful for many people with the reading difficulties (such as international students, individuals who have cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and deafness). Braille is essential for individuals who are both deaf and blind, as well as many individuals whose only sensory disability is blindness. Text displayed visually benefits users who are deaf as well as the majority of Web users.

Providing non-text equivalents (e.g., pictures, videos, and pre-recorded audio) of text is also beneficial to some users, especially nonreaders or people who have difficulty reading. In movies or visual presentations, visual action such as body language or other visual cues may not be accompanied by enough audio information to convey the same information. Unless verbal descriptions of this visual information are provided, people who cannot see (or look at) the visual content will not be able to perceive it.

2. Ensure that text and graphics are understandable when viewed without color. If color alone is used to convey information, people who cannot differentiate between certain colors and users with devices that have non-color or non-visual displays will not receive the information. Also when foreground and background colors are too close to the same hue, they may not provide sufficient contrast when viewed using monochrome displays or by people with different types of color deficits.
3. Ensure that tables have necessary markup to be transformed by accessible browsers and other user agents. Tables should be used to mark up truly tabular information ("data tables"). Content developers should avoid using them to lay out pages ("layout tables").
Tables for any use can present special problems to users of screen readers. Some technologies do allow users to navigate among table cells and access header and other table cell information. However, unless marked-up properly, these tables will not provide such technologies with the appropriate information.

This guideline will directly benefit people who access a table through auditory means (e.g., a screen reader or an automobile PC that operates by speech input and output) or who view only a portion of the page at a time (e.g., users with blindness or low vision using speech output or a Braille display, or other users of devices with small displays, etc.).

4. Ensure that moving, blinking, scrolling, or auto-updating objects or pages may be paused or stopped. Some people with cognitive or visual disabilities are unable to read moving text quickly enough or at

all. Screen readers are unable to read moving text. People with physical disabilities might not be able to move quickly or accurately enough to interact with moving objects. Certain intervals of blinking can also trigger seizures. For some of the rest of us, continual movement can cause such a distraction that the rest of the page becomes unreadable.

Note: The BLINK and MARQUEE elements should not be used.

5. Use features that enable activation of page elements via a variety of input devices. Device-independent access means that the user may interact with the document with a preferred input (or output) device -- mouse, keyboard, voice, head wand, or other. If, for example, a form control can only be activated with a mouse or other pointing device, someone who is using the page without sight, with voice input, or with a keyboard or who is using some other non-pointing input device will not be able to use the form.

Note: Providing text equivalents for image maps or images used as links makes it possible for users to interact with them without a pointing device. Generally, pages that allow keyboard interaction are also accessible through speech input or a command line interface.

6. Provide context and orientation information to help users understand complex pages or elements. Grouping elements and providing contextual information about the relationships between elements can be useful for all users. Complex relationships between parts of a page may be difficult for people with cognitive disabilities and people with visual disabilities to interpret.
7. Ensure that documents are clear and simple so they may be more easily understood. Consistent page layout, recognizable graphics, and easy to understand language will benefit all users. In particular, they help people with cognitive disabilities or who have difficulty reading. (However, ensure that images have text equivalents for people who are blind, have low vision, or for any user who cannot or has chosen not to view graphics.)

Using clear and simple language promotes effective communication. Access to written information can be difficult to impossible for people who have cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, or who are deaf. This consideration also applies to the many people for whom English is a second language.

Provide clear and consistent navigation mechanisms - orientation information, navigation bars, a site map, etc. - to increase the likelihood that a person will find what they are looking for at a site. Clear and consistent navigation mechanisms are important to people with cognitive disabilities or blindness, and benefit all users.

8. Mark up documents with the proper structural elements. For those of you who work directly in the html code, using markup improperly -- not according to specification -- hinders accessibility. Misusing markup for a presentation effect (e.g., using a table for layout or a header to change the font size) makes it difficult for users with specialized software to understand the organization of the page or to navigate through it. Furthermore, using presentation markup rather than structural markup to convey structure (e.g., constructing what looks like a table of data with an HTML PRE element) makes it difficult to render a page intelligibly to other devices.

Content developers may be tempted to use (or misuse) constructs that achieve a desired formatting effect on older browsers. They must be aware that these practices cause accessibility problems and must consider whether the formatting effect is so critical as to warrant making the document inaccessible to some users.

9. Validate accessibility with automatic tools and human review. Automated methods are generally rapid and convenient but cannot identify all accessibility issues. Human review can help ensure clarity of language and ease of navigation. Begin using validation methods at the earliest stages of development. Accessibility issues identified early are easier to correct and avoid.

URL Links:

The following are links associated with ADA Compliance-section 508:

<http://www.csuohio.edu/uclt/508/overview.html>

<http://www.webaim.org/standards/508/checklist>

http://www.evc.edu/ada/modules/guidelines/ada_compliance.htm *

<http://www.isinet.com/isi/about/508comp.html>



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