# Section 508 Compliance Checklist for the Product Lifecycle

Use this checklist to determine where Section 508 should be considered in the product lifecycle and determine what steps to take to integrate Section 508 from the beginning of each project.

## 1. Plan

* Map Enterprise Architecture activities to the project.
* Include Section 508 language and relevant standards in project charters, acquisition plans, and contracts.
* Ensure Section 508 SMEs are integrated in the planning process.
* Assign ICT accessibility roles such as a developer, tester, content creator, and Section 508 subject matter expert. In addition, assign responsibility for Section 508 conformance for the ICT product.
* Consult the Business Analyst (BA) task list that cross-references responsibilities with Section 508 activities.
* Consider procuring tools that can test for ICT accessibility and authoring tools that facilitate developing accessible content by default.
* Require Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs) for any third-party libraries, platforms, or other components.
* Plan for Section 508 testing resources and timelines in the project schedule and budget.
* Understand your agency’s Change Control process and document requirements in the project schedule.

## 2. Gather Requirements

* Identify relevant standards such as Section 508 Standards or agency-specific policies.
* Identify or define accessibility requirements as part of business needs, scope, and project plan.
* Incorporate Section 508 Standards into functional requirements.
* Draft user stories or requirements and document related acceptance criteria.
* Document accessibility acceptance criteria for user stories or requirements.
* Engage ICT Section 508 SMEs or testers to review requirements for comprehensiveness.
* Define supported assistive technologies and environments.

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## 3. Design

* Design with Section 508 conformance in mind. Some key elements include:
  + Use color palettes with sufficient color contrast.
  + Avoid using color alone to convey meaning.
  + Provide visible focus indicators for interactive elements.
  + Ensure logical heading structure.
  + Design keyboard-accessible navigation for interactive elements.
  + Plan for Section 508-conformant error handling and form validation messages.
  + Include alternative text for all images and mark decorative ones appropriately.
  + Mockup captions or audio descriptions for any media content.
* Apply universal design principles.
* Review wireframes and design prototypes for Section 508 conformance.
* Use accessible design patterns such as the U.S. Web Design System.
* Ensure design documentation includes accessibility considerations.
* Create designs that allow for personalization or customization, such as font size adjustments or color schemes, so users can modify content based on their needs.
* Conduct early design reviews with Section 508 SMEs, users with disabilities or personas.
* Include users with disabilities in user testing, feedback, and review stages to ensure the products meet real-world accessibility needs.

## 4. Develop

* Use user stories or requirements and associated acceptance criteria.
* Incorporate accessibility conformance validation within development processes.
* Use accessible coding practices including HTML semantic structure and ARIA attributes. Consider creating a library of reusable Section 508 conformant components and templates.
* Use accessible design patterns such as the U.S. Web Design System.
* Ensure keyboard navigability and logical, visible focus.
* Label all form fields and UI elements correctly.
* Avoid inaccessible components or provide a conforming alternate version.
* Document code-level ICT accessibility features and decisions.
* Integrate automated accessibility checks into the Continuous Integration/Continuous Delivery pipeline.

## 5. Test

* Create ICT accessibility test cases and integrate into product test plans. Include both functional and non-functional requirements in test cases.
* Conduct automated scans using agency approved tools.
* Perform manual testing using agency approved tools.
* Evaluate against Section 508 Standards using an agency approved testing methodology.
* Test with multiple assistive technologies for usability.
* Create and review a Section 508 Test Report.
* Log and track accessibility issues like any other bug.
* Prioritize remediation based on risk or criticality of defect.
* Run automated scans on all templates and key pages.
* Conduct user acceptance testing (UAT) with real users to provide feedback on the product’s accessibility.
* Ensure product documentation, including user manuals, training materials, and online content, are Section 508 conformant.
* Follow Change Control requirements for product deployment.

## 6. Deploy

* Conduct comprehensive Section 508 testing prior to deployment.
* Produce an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR), if required.
* Publish accessibility documentation or statements, if applicable.
* Confirm alternate formats are available or alternative means are documented, if applicable.
* Verify all third-party integrations meet Section 508 Standards or have alternative means of access.
* Create feedback channels, such as public feedback or Section 508-related complaints for users to report accessibility issues.

## 7. Operate and Maintain

* Monitor accessibility regressions with each release or update.
* Monitor ICT accessibility defects or feedback from users and adjudicate in a timely manner.
* Maintain accessibility as part of ongoing Quality Assurance.
* Retest when major updates occur to user interface, user experience, or core functionality.
* Train support teams on handling accessibility-related queries, including any customer support services provided.
* Maintain up-to-date ACRs and accessibility statements.