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## Accessibility in Digital Content

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### Accessible Design

Digital content should be accessible to everyone in your audience, no matter how they access it. When designing your web content, think about users with [visual, auditory, physical, and neurological impairments](#). Keeping these users in mind, you can then consider how your audience will interact with your content and identify any features that may serve as barriers to accessibility. This handout will discuss best practices for creating accessible digital content.

### Choosing Color and Formatting Content

- When choosing a color palette, a higher color contrast between the foreground and background will make the text more accessible for vision-impaired readers.
- To reduce barriers for colorblind readers, avoid using images with low color contrast, or using red and green as colors for differentiation.
  - Check how your visualizations look in grayscale to see if you are relying on hue rather than color contrast for differentiation. This can be tested using the Monochromacy option in the Colorblindly Chrome extension linked below.
- Limit the number of visual categorizations, such as map icons, to no more than three or four.

### Images and Embedded Media

- Rather than using images of text to convey information, try to use regular text content whenever possible. Images of text cannot be picked up by screen readers, may not scale well for readers who magnify the page, and may be difficult to view depending on the reader's bandwidth.
- You can provide a description of an image's content and main takeaways through captions or alt text. Alt text will be read aloud by a screen reader, and should briefly indicate the key contents of the image. More detailed image descriptions should be provided through captions.
  - If you are using graphs or diagrams, your captions and alt text should include complete text equivalents to the information being shown in the graphs/diagrams.
- For sighted users viewing graphs and diagrams, directly labeling information can be useful so the delivery of information is not completely reliant on color or pattern differences.



- When embedding videos, try to select videos that have audio captions and descriptions, or transcripts available. Audio descriptions narrate the important background imagery and contexts of videos, while captions and transcripts may only describe what is being said aloud or background noises in videos.
  - If no audio captions are available, include a description of the information presented in the video.
  - When available, you can link to a transcript or include it in the description.
- When linking media, use descriptive link names that convey what information or media is being linked. Screen readers will read aloud all the link names as a list, so using descriptive link names will help people navigate and access the appropriate resources.

### Written Text

- Font choice, size, and color, as well as text length, can impact readability.
- Sans serif fonts are typically easier to read than serif or *decorative* fonts. Serif fonts have tapers and edges on the ends of letters. Certain serif fonts like `Courier` have been shown to help readers distinguish individual letters and words.
- Remember: choose high contrast font colors that stand out against the background color of your digital content.
- Larger font sizes are typically easier to read and can be used to help readers navigate your digital content with titles and section headings. Larger font sizes can also be used to help readers identify and remember key takeaways in your written digital content, for example in blog posts or infographics.
- While there is no ideal length for how long a paragraph should be, try to avoid using either very lengthy paragraphs or multiple, single lines of text in your descriptions, as they can create a choppy visual effect and be disorienting to readers.
- Read over your written content from multiple perspectives to see how understandable your content is to different members of your audience. It is good practice to use concise, easy-to-understand language.

### Website Accessibility

- Different platforms for building websites offer different levels of design control for ensuring the accessibility of your website.
- The [WordPress Accessibility Handbook](#) provides best practices for accessible design, content, as well as [Tools and Plugins for testing the accessibility](#) of your website. WordPress uses basic HTML coding, so if you know or are willing to learn coding, you will have more control over the accessibility of your website. They also offer [pre-designed accessible website Themes](#).



- [Wix Accessibility guides, templates](#), and the [Accessibility Wizard tool](#) help test the accessibility of your website. Wix is designed for non-technical users and gives you some control over the accessibility of your website.
- Ensure the page structure (i.e., headings, menus, and other structural features) of your website are tagged with appropriate HTML tags to help screen reader users navigate your site. The [Web Accessibility Initiative's Page Structure Tutorial](#) can help you structure your website for effective site navigation.
- Ensure your website allows for keyboard navigation and is compatible with voice recognition software, for people with different physical disabilities that impact dexterity and mobility. WordPress offers a free Voice Search plugin that allows users to search websites by voice.
- Use checklists or resources such as the [WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#) to make sure your website meets the requirements of the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG). Northeastern University requires that digital content meet or exceed [level AA of WCAG version 2.0](#). For business websites, this is a good baseline to meet.

### Resources

These tools are useful to check accessibility features and make accessible design choices when creating digital projects.

- [Colorblindly](#) allows you to check if your color palette is accessible for colorblind readers.
- [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#) allows you to input a foreground and background color value and check for sufficient color contrast.
- [WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#) reviews websites and identifies and suggests fixes for any inaccessible website features or design.
- [Northeastern University's Digital Accessibility Resources](#) page includes checklists and guidance for crafting digital content to meet Northeastern's [Policy on Digital Accessibility](#).
- [Northeastern Library's Resources on Accessible Design](#) provides an overview of different disabilities and relevant assistive technologies that assist users accessing digital content.
- U.S. [Federal Guidance on Web Accessibility and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) is aimed at state and business websites and offers guidance on how to make your website accessible and in line with the American Disabilities Act.
- The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) is an international standard for web accessibility, defining three levels of compliance that websites may strive to

## Digital Integration Teaching Initiative

[Link to schedule a meeting with the DITI Team](#)



Northeastern University  
*NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks*

reach. The WCAG site offers tutorials and website development best practices which will help websites to meet its requirements.

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Questions? [Link to contact the DITI Team](#)