Setting Up an Accessible Web Page: The Title Element (A UX Accessibility Blog Post)

This UX Accessibility Blog Series, “Setting Up An Accessible Web Page,” will walk you through the basic elements of an accessible web page in hopes that you can take what you’ve learned an apply it to more complex pages. This blog series is loosely based on Heydon Pickering’s book [“Inclusive Design Patterns: Coding Accessibility Into Web Design.”](https://www.smashingmagazine.com/inclusive-design-patterns/)

**Let’s Recap**

The title element on your page is the first thing users see to know where they are. In the UX Workshop Series: Web Accessibility presentation, I made the analogy that the title of the page is much like the title of a book. The title of the book is printed on the spine (usually) so that before you even pick up the book, you know what it is. Imagine if all books had blank spines and covers, leaving you to search through the pages to see what book it was and what it was about. This is how your users feel when your title is either missing or doesn’t describe the purpose of the page.

Also, having a descriptive page title satisfies Guideline 2.4.2 of WCAG 2.0: “Web pages have titles that describe topic or purpose”. This is a Level A Guideline, meaning it’s a base guideline to follow to ensure your website is accessible.

**Making Your Title Accessible and Inclusive**

Since most assistive technologies announce the page title before doing anything else, it’s usually your user’s first impression of your website. If your page title just says “CMS.Net” on a create order page or “FNC, Inc.” on a contact page, that’s a poor first impression. Give your users a little heads up as to what they can expect from the page by changing the previous titles to “CMS.Net – Create an Order” or FNC, Inc. – Contact Us”. If your site is uses a layout and different body, make sure your title changes to reflect the purpose of that particular page.

The page title is also important for the following reasons, as outlined by the University of Washington’s Accessible Technology post “Providing an Informative Title”:

* Appears in title bar or tab in most browsers
* Appears as the bookmark name if the page is favorited
* Identifies the page in search results

Another way to make sure your title is accessible is to ensure there are no duplicate page titles in your website. This can cause confusion to anyone looking at your sitemap. Also, duplicating page titles is just bad practice (a theme you should be seeing – accessibility and inclusive design techniques are just good practice).