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WCAG 2.2

WCAG 2.2 is delayed again and I'm ok with that

When are they releasing it? Why so many delays?





What gives? WCAG 2.2 was supposed to come out in the summer of 2021. Then, it was the end of 2021. Then, it was the summer of 2022. Now (as of the writing of this article), it's set to come out in the fall of 2022.

Don't tease me, bro!

The Accessibility Guidelines Working Group (AGWG) has teased us quite a bit about **WCAG 2.2** — but they say it still needs some work. And that's true. It does need work. It is “mostly done. Mostly.” There is still some fine-tuning required and documentation left to complete.

I've been impatient, but I can't be too hard on AGWG. After all, what they are about to release will be their recommendation for all web content. It will also (supposedly) be the last iteration of the WCAG 2.0 series. With WCAG 3.0 being a few years away, that's a lot of pressure. They want to get it right.

Impediments to release

Having taken a look at some of the issues contributors bring up, I can understand why WCAG 2.2 keeps getting delayed. Everything is being criticized: the standards, the examples, the documentation, and even the terms.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. It means that the feedback contributors are engaged and vocal. Of course, that can also lead to long, drawn-out debates and may slow down progress.

On top of that, since AGWG essentially releases WCAG standards in a waterfall method, any needed changes may have to wait for a long time. After all, WCAG 2.1 (the current WCAG recommendation) just turned four years old.

What's worse: many corporations are legally or contractually obligated to adhere to the latest AGWG recommendation for WCAG. That means that AGWG essentially requires a zero-tolerance policy for malformed standards. It's one thing to have an incomplete set of standards; it's another to have incorrect standards, which would leave many companies vulnerable to litigation.

Wilco Fiers is a project manager for WCAG 3.0 and a facilitator for the Accessibility Conformance Testing (ACT) Task Force that's charged with promoting consistency in accessibility testing. You can listen to the audio of an interview he gave in February 2021 talking about the future of WCAG and what his role is with the ACT Task Force here:





Interview with Wilco Fiers titled “Ask the Expert — The Future of WCAG”

He recently wrote an article called [Why WCAG 2.2 is still in the oven](#) for Deque Systems. In it, he stated that there was a long refinement process for the wording for [Success Criterion 3.3.7: Accessible Authentication](#), a new Level A standard coming to WCAG 2.2:

Finding the right wording for [exceptions to this Criterion] is complicated. We don't want to make it too broad– that would defeat the purpose of having a requirement at all. Yet we needed something, since we don't want accessibility to come at the cost of security. Finding a middle ground that was acceptable to everyone involved took months to determine.

Fiers also states that [Success Criterion 2.4.11: Focus Appearance](#), one of the new standards coming to WCAG 2.2, was “easily the most complicated success criterion ever written for WCAG”.

That doesn't surprise me one bit. I started to write an article on this new standard a few months ago. I abandoned the article because AGWG was clearly still updating the criterion, and it was already a bit difficult to explain.

Regardless, this demonstrates why finalizing WCAG 2.2 has been delayed so many times. AGWG insists on accounting for all conditions, exceptions, outliers, and highly specialized use cases.

Details take time.





Photo by [Erik Mclean](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Should things change?

Considering the many delays and the high risk involved in releasing a new recommendation prematurely, is it wise to continue this way?

The pressure of legal and contractual agreements immediately triggering upon the new WCAG release incentivizes delays. Also, there's no going back once it's released.

As for the companies that are hemmed in by whatever AGWG releases, there's probably not much that can be done for them. However, if they are able to re-negotiate the contractual agreements, I would recommend that they do.

I'm an accessibility advocate, but I think it's foolish to contractually obligate yourself to adhere to these compliance standards (certainly with a trigger mechanism). Otherwise, companies will seek compliance and not accessibility.





AGWG is making changes to their process — at least, that's the plan. That will hopefully come in full bloom with WCAG 3.0.

WCAG 3.0

With WCAG 3.0, the releasing of revisions is supposed to be more iterative. That is, AGWG is planning on releasing smaller, more frequent changes to WCAG 3.0 once it's finalized.

But it'll be a few years before WCAG 3.0 comes out, and it's important to note that it won't supersede WCAG 2.2. They will be parallel standards — both valid and independent.

This **may** mean that companies that are legally or contractually obligated to adhere to the latest WCAG recommendation may have a loophole with WCAG 2.2. That is, they can conform to WCAG 2.2 while WCAG 3.0 continues its refinement, even after it's released. Again, I'm no lawyer.

So, I'm ok with delays

Here's why I'm perfectly fine with delays for WCAG 2.2:

- Standards can be better refined
- Accessibility personnel will have more time to better familiarize themselves with the new Success Criteria so that they can inform their respective teams
- (Most importantly) As accessibility advocates and testers, we don't wait on compliance standards to press needed accessibility changes on our teams' content. In the end, WCAG is a tool to communicate accessibility needs to those that aren't familiar with it.

Really, the worst thing about the delays is that each one pushes back WCAG 3.0's release, which is sorely needed.

Regardless, please give the folks at AGWG and the ACT Task Force a little grace. They have a tough job and they're trying to get it right. That takes time.

Links

Helpful WCAG Links

- [Why WCAG 2.2 is still in the oven](#) by [Wilco Fiers](#)



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- [WCAG 3.0 — Working Draft](#)

My articles on WCAG

- [WCAG 3.0: What you need to know about the future of accessibility standards](#)
- [WCAG 2.2 updates: what changes may be quickly coming](#)
- [WCAG 2.2: Visible Controls — what it means and how to meet it](#)
- [WCAG 2.2: Redundant Entry — what it means and how to meet it](#)
- [The accessibility no-win scenario: autocomplete and help text](#)

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