It’s 👏 not 👏 about 👏 you 👏

Embracing digital accessibility for inclusive user experiences

What is digital accessibility?

Digital accessibility is the inclusive practice of making content, products, or other experiences useable for persons with varying abilities (disabilities).

What are some varying abilities (disabilities)?

👂 Auditory

Deafness and hard of hearing

🧠 Cognitive

Learning difficulty, easily distracted, an inability to focus on large quantities of information

🖐 Motor

Reduced ability to use a mouse, slow response time, limited fine motor control

👁 Vision

Blindness, low vision and color-blindness

Why should I care about digital accessibility?

1 in 4 adults in the U.S. live with some kind of disability

Source: CDC

- User experience isn’t usable until it is accessible
- No users should be ostracized because of their disability
- Social and corporate responsibility
- Lower bounce rate and increased conversions
- Brand and public perception
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Lawsuits (Did you know Beyoncé was sued for her website being inaccessible in 2019?!)
- Karma

OK, so how do bring digital accessibility into my design practice?

Is it perceivable?

Users must be able to perceive the user interface in some way, using one or more of their senses.

Design & tech solutions	Audiences served
Colors with contrast	👁️
Layout, hierarchy, and feedback	🧠 🖐️
Captions and transcripts	👂 👁️
Semantic HTML	👂 👁️
ARIA Labels	👂 👁️

Is it operable?

User interface components and navigation must be operable.

Design & tech solutions	Audiences served
Keyboard and speech navigation	👁️ 🖐️
Enough time to read content	🧠
No flashing animations	🧠
Tap and click sizes and placement	🖐️
Avoiding jumpiness (pointer paths)	🧠 🖐️

Is it understandable?

States that information and the operation of user interface must be understandable

Design & tech solutions	Audiences served
Readability	🧠
Pattern based UI and user flow	👁️ 🧠 🖐️
Input assistance	🧠

Is it robust?

Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

Design & tech solutions	Audiences served
Keyboard and speech navigation	👁️ 🖐️
ALT text for screen readers	👁️ 🖐️
ARIA labels or screen readers	👁️ 🖐️

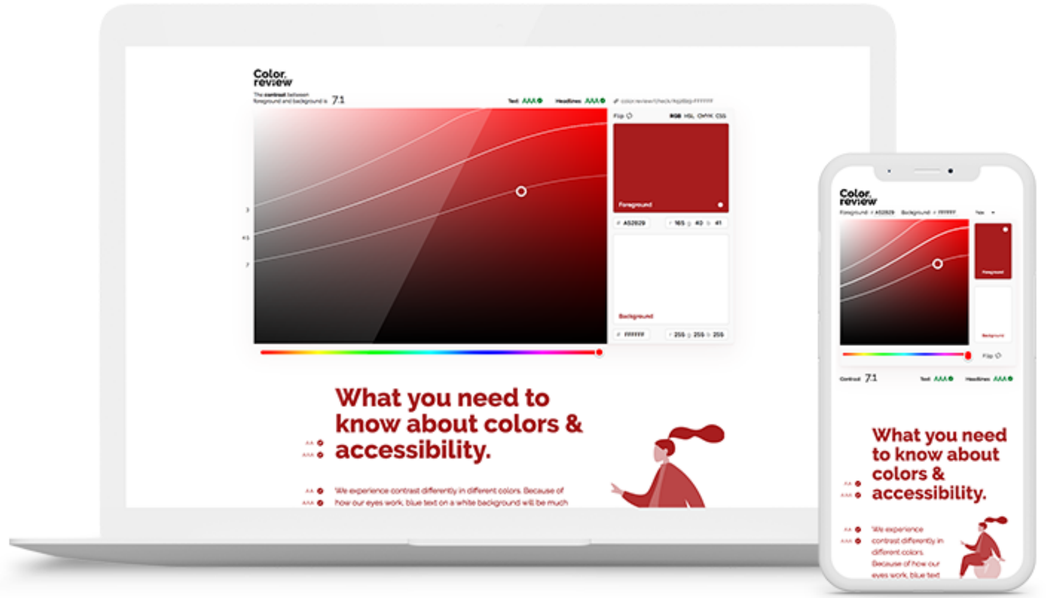
What are some best practices around digital accessibility?

1. Colors with contrast

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 1.3 billion people live with vision impairments.

Tools like color.review make it easy to check your colors throughout the design process.

For users with low vision and color blindness, make sure color is not the only means of communicating information. Consider size, pattern, shape, and placement too!



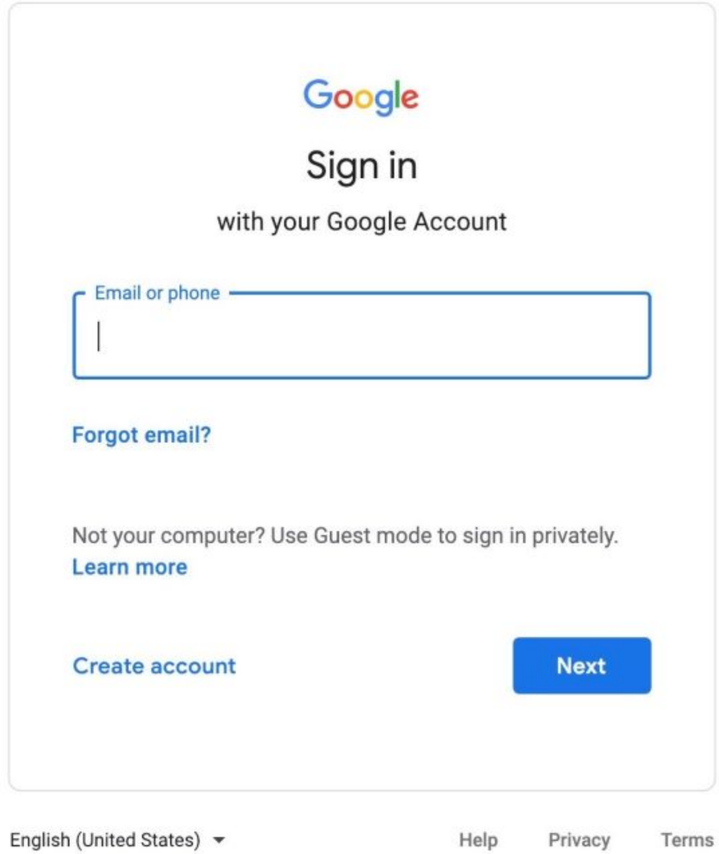
Source:
https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment

2. Input Assistance

Input assistance on form fields and text inputs are critical to making sure users have enough information to complete their tasks without friction.

Examples include how to format a birthdate, how many characters are required in a password, etc.

It’s important to note that input assistance is specific to forms and text inputs and not a replacement for other accessibility practices and common UI patterns.

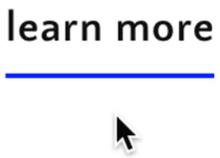


3. Feedback

Hover states, error messages, and progress bars are examples of feedback. Feedback is used to engage and communicate.

The three important aspects of feedback:

Responsiveness: Signal to the user that elements are interactive. (Hover states)

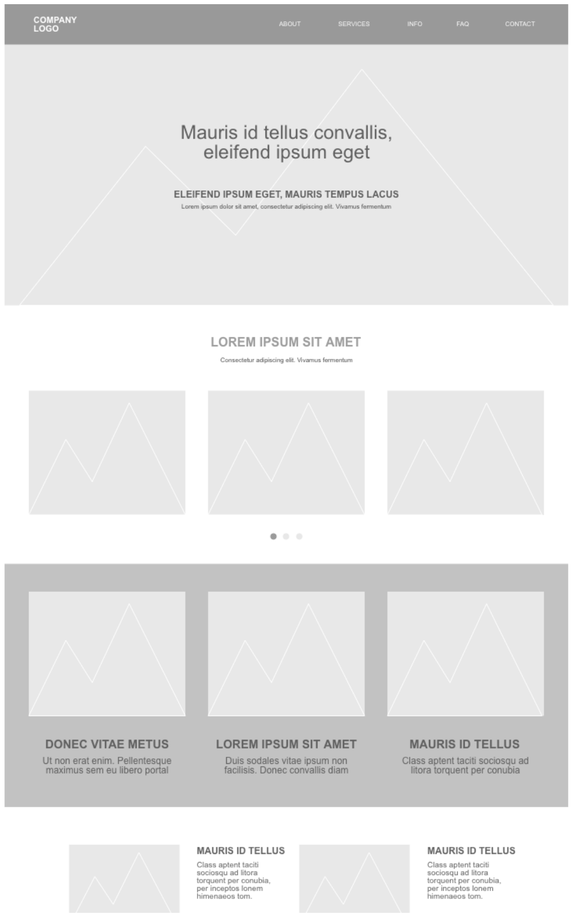


Engagement: Visual effects engages attention and gives life to the static elements on the screen. (Progress bars)

Activity: Visual changes indicate that the underlying system is changing. Animation for its own sake can be distracting, but as part of the visual feedback can help explain how the system works. (Pre-loader)

4. Layout and hierarchy

The best and most accessible layouts are scannable and have a clear hierarchy of information.



Other best practices for layouts include:

- Consistent styles and UI patterns
- Clear and usable navigation mechanism
- Limited navigation options (helps fuel action)
- Readable and legible copy
- Generous whitespace to create separation of sections or information
- Less on screen for promoting focus and the digestion of information

5. Interactive elements

Buttons, links, controls, form fields, and other interactive elements should be visually differentiated from static content and include styles for different states such as hover and focus.

Hover styles indicate interactivity, which helps cue users with different cognitive abilities to take an action.

Focus styles allow users who require or prefer keyboard navigation to see the element they are “focused” on.

Be sure your interactive elements are at least **32x32px**. And don’t place them near scrollbars or navigation mechanisms for users with reduced dexterity.

6. Language

Shorter sentences and paragraphs are better than longer ones for readability and comprehension.

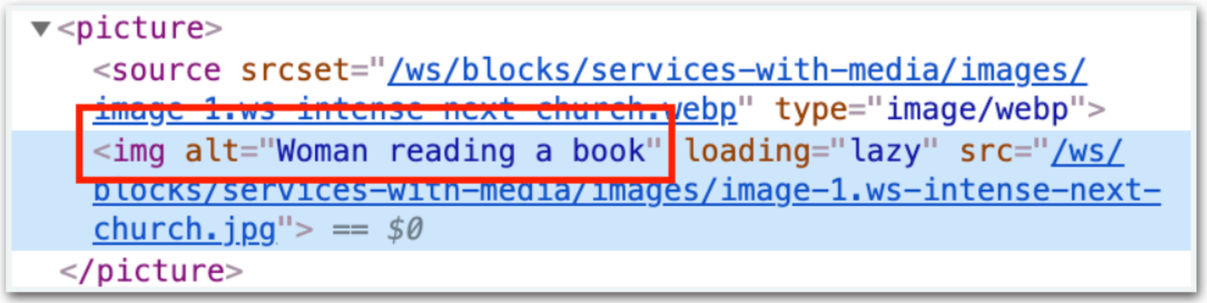
Keep language clear and avoid complicated jargon - everyone wins!

7. Alternative text

Alternative text (alt text) should be used to succinctly describe images.

Alternative text is useful in three different ways:

- Explain images that fail to load
- To aid non-visual readers through assistive technologies
- Strengthens SEO



8. Time-based media

There are three primary methods for providing alternatives for time-based media:

Captions
To assist deaf, hard of hearing, or users who simply prefer captions.

Transcripts
To assists users using assistive technologies like screen readers.

Audio descriptions
To assists blind or low-vision users.

“The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect”

Sir Tim Berners-Lee
Inventor of the World Wide Web


LIVE
7:16 pm
LET THAT SINK IN