ENDOH COLLABORATIVE

Accessibility checklist for content managers

Keep your website's content optimized for a wide range of audiences with this simple to follow set of guidelines

These days, content management systems are more flexible and easy-to-use than ever. However, with great power comes great responsibility. While accessibility can be quite a complex topic, you don't have to make sense of legal requirements all on your own.

This checklist will help you to take advantage of all the tools at your fingertips while keeping your content as accessible as possible with easy to understand and follow recommendations.

Keep this checklist handy while working on your website's pages and posts or use it to run a content audit and identify areas for improvement.

Following this checklist will ensure wide reach and drive the impact of your work!

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Structure & Text

Getting started with a bird's-eye view of the page.

Are you using proper heading hierarchy and skipping any levels?

Screen readers can output the outline of any page by using the headings presented on that page. Each heading level comes with a number (H1, H2, H3 etc.). Make sure that if you use a Heading 2 (or H2) to title a section that you don't skip to a Heading 4 (or H4) as your next heading. Likewise, you shouldn't have more than one Heading 1 (or H1) heading on any page of your website. And finally, don't set text to a heading just to mimic the formatting (like font size and boldness).

Is it easy to scan through your website's content?

Make it as easy as possible for your visitors to consume your content. Use headings and subheadings to break up content into sections. Write short paragraphs and use lists whenever possible.

Is your content easy to understand?

The content of your website should be easy to understand for a person with a roughly grade 8 education. You can also offer an alternative, more understandable version for technical information. A great tool to use is Hemingway (even the free version is very helpful): https://hemingwayapp.com/

Are you avoiding ALL CAPS for longer text?

Text set in all caps is difficult to read. It's OK to set short phrases in call caps but longer lines of text and paragraphs should never use all caps.

Are you defaulting to left-aligned text?

There might be parts of your website that have been designed to be center-aligned, usually shorter lines of text and buttons. Outside of this, you should default to using left-aligned text as is it easier to read in English and other left-to-right languages

Links

Making helpful connections and driving engagement.

Is your link text meaningful?

When adding links and buttons, the text you use should be meaningful even if the link is taken outside of its context. That's because screen readers can do just that - only read through the links on any page without reading the rest of the content. This means no "Click here" or "Read more". Instead "Click to read our impact report" or "Read more about our strategic plan".

We also recommend keeping an eye for link text length - keeping things succinct and meaningful is the best option!

Are your links easy to find?

The styling of your links should have been worked through during the design of your website. However, you might be able to change link styles within your website's content management system. If you do, make sure that links are sufficiently distinct from the text around them through use of more than just colour (underlines, bolding etc.) Ideally, links look consistent throughout your website so they are easy to recognize from page to page, as are buttons.

Are you letting users decide if they want to open links in a different tab?

While it might feel helpful to set links that lead to external websites to open in a new tab or even strategic to keep your website open in one tab while opening links that lead away from your site in new tabs this complicates things for visitors using assistive technology. Often, hitting the "Back" button is easier using this technology than navigating between different tabs. It's best to set all links to open in the same tab and let your website visitors decide if they want to open any of them in new tabs. (Your website should automatically let them know which links are external with an external link indicator to make this decision easier.)

Layout & Design

Diving into inclusive visual elements and cues.

Can your content be found without relying on colour, shape, or relative location?

Sometimes we want to be helpful by telling our website visitors how to find a link or form. We say it's "in the right column" or that they should "click the blue link" or maybe "click the round button". However, not all of your site's visitors will be able to discern link colours and shapes. Additionally, website layout adjusts from desktop to mobile making location-based clues unreliable. It's best to avoid these altogether.

Are blocks of text easy to read?

Modern website editing experiences often offer a few different widths for blocks of text. However, wide lines of text are difficult to read. It's important to ensure that the line-width of your paragraphs and other text-heavy content blocks does not exceed 75 characters (including spaces). You can test character counts using this online tool: https://www.charactercountonline.com We also recommend testing your website on larger monitors as content widths might adjust automatically there. Taking a look at your site analytics will tell you what browser widths to optimize for.

Is it easy to read and interact with the website for low vision and colour blind visitors?

If you're choosing or changing colours for backgrounds and text, make sure that they pass at accessibility standards level listed in your website's accessibility policy. WebAIM is a great tool for testing contrast levels: https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

Additionally, go to https://www.toptal.com/designers/colorfilter, type in your website's url and click the Fetch and Filter button. Make sure to go through all the options in the colour filter dropdown box - is your website still legible?

Additional Colour Accessibility Tools

Ideally, your brand guidelines document already includes information about accessible colour combinations in your brand palette. If it doesn't or you're working on extending your colour scheme, the following tools will help.

- Tools with suggestions for improving colour combinations: https://contrast-finder.tanaguru.com and https://coolors.co/contrast-checker/151316-19d8e6
- Fine-tuned control as you adjust colours: https://colourcontrast.cc/
- Colour scheme generators: https://supercolorpalette.com/?scp=G0-hsl-52D1DA-A052DA-DA5952-90DA52 and https://coolors.co/ddfff7-ffd2fc-e980fc-b96ac9-231b1b

Images & Media

Engaging users across devices and abilities.

Are you including alt descriptions for images?

Most content management systems (CMSs) out there will let you enter alternative description text for each image you upload to your website. This text should describe the image and will be used by screen readers to offer context for visitors using assistive technology. Use this simple flowchart to decide what alt text is most appropriate for an image: https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/decision-tree/

Is all text on your website actual text?

It can be tempting to use text in images that you create for your website, especially when it comes to events, resource publications, and sometimes news items. However, that text isn't going to be accessible. Furthermore, it might be helpful for social media posts (with appropriate description text) but will ultimately make your website look cluttered. The best rule of thumb is to simply not embed text into images. If you must embed text, then also adding it in the image's alt description is a must, unless the text is purely decorative.

Does multimedia content offer alternative ways to engage with its content?

Video and audio content should come with at least a descriptive transcript (for both video and audio) and captions (for video). The exception is if the multimedia content is already an alternative way to consume your website's content (e.g., it's an audio or sign language version of a web page).

Are your animations accessible?

Some folks are sensitive to movement. If you use animated elements, gifs, or embed video content that's over 5 seconds long, there needs to be a way to pause or stop the animation. By the same token, if an animation includes any flashing elements, they shouldn't flash more than 3 times per second.

Diving Deeper

Accessibility guides for content managers:
https://endoh.co/tag/accessibility

Companion talk on Accessibility for Content Managers
https://bit.ly/sasha-wceh-a11y-talk

Talk on Practical Accessibility for Designers and Devs
https://bit.ly/sasha-mtl-a11y-talk/

If you're interested in more detailed accessibility requirements two great places to start are:

- WebAIM's WCAG 2 Checklist: https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/checklist
- Web content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2: https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/

Get accessibility help

Go beyond this checklist with a thorough review of your site or on-going accessibility support from our team. Reach out to us at endoh.co or via email hello@endoh.co