# Website Accessibility: Why it’s important

Providing an accessible website means that you are removing barriers for users who have limited vision, hearing, and mobility to access your information and resources. People with disabilities use tools (assistive technologies) to navigate the internet. By following community standards for online accessibility, you are ensuring that your content “plays well” with these tools.

In the United States, approximately:

* 74.8 million adults\* live with at least one basic actions difficulty or complex activity limitation
* 40.3 million adults\* report some trouble hearing
* 21.7 million adults\* report experiencing vision trouble
* 7.5 million people have trouble using their voices
* >6 million people have some form of language impairment
* 8 percent of men and 0.5 percent of women of Northern European ancestry have red-green color blindness

\* Noninstitutionalized adults aged 18 and over

## More than 50% of adults aged 18-64 report having some form of disability

### Percent of United States Population with Disabilities by Age (chart)

* .4% of those less than 5 years old
* 7.4% of those aged 5 to 17 years
* 51.9% of those aged 18 to 64 years
* 40.3 of those over age 65

## Planning and getting started:

Because of the role the web plays in accessing information, it is important to provide equal access and opportunity to people with disabilities. Consider the following when planning how to improve the accessibility of your website.

* **Build time into your planning**:
Build accessibility into your timelines; decide what steps to take and who is responsible.
* **Create organizational support:**
Making content accessible is more likely to be successful if people at all levels of your organization understand its importance.
* **Consider those with disabilities:**
Meet the standards and make your content accessible to as many people as possible.
* **It’s good for your organization:**
You want visitors to be able to access your community and content, and to feel included.
* **Remind yourself that it’s the law:**The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that you create accessible web content; your organization can be sued if you don’t.
* **It’s not as hard as it may seem:**
There are many programs for web content creators available that have accessibility tools built in. Search online for a tool that meets your needs or to find out how to use the tools in programs like Microsoft Office, YouTube, or Adobe Acrobat.

## Simple tips for improving your website:

* **Colors & effects:**
Use text and colors that meet accessibility standards. Use other visual indicators such as borders, underlining or asterisks to distinguish interactive elements and organize content.
* **Alternative content:**
For audio or video content, provide captioning or transcripts that can be changed into other accessible forms. Transcripts benefit all users by allowing them to access content quickly.
* **Descriptive links:**
Use descriptive language for web links so screen readers can help direct users efficiently.
* **Alternative text:**
Use alternative text to describe an image so users who can’t see it will still understand what you are trying to convey. This is similar to providing informative captions for your photos and figures, which is always a good idea.

# Resources

1. World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI): <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>
2. WebAIM (Introduction): <http://webaim.org/intro/>

## Sources

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