

ACCESSIBLE BY DESIGN

A Simple Guide to ADA Website *Accessibility*

What it means, why it matters, and easy first steps to welcome every visitor.

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Is your website open to everyone?

Picture a storefront with a step at the door and no ramp. Many websites work the same way for people with disabilities. This guide explains ADA accessibility so you know where you stand and what's next.

THE BASICS

What ADA Website Accessibility Means

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990, long before most businesses had websites. Today, courts increasingly apply it to the digital world too. If your business serves the public, your website should welcome every visitor.

A Site Everyone Can Use

Accessibility means people with vision, hearing, motor, or cognitive disabilities can use your site. That includes visitors using screen readers, keyboards, or captions.

Where the ADA Fits In

Title III of the ADA covers businesses open to the public, like shops, clinics, restaurants, and service providers. Courts and the Department of Justice often treat their websites as part of that public space.

The Standard to Aim For

The ADA doesn't spell out website rules. Most experts point to WCAG 2.1 Level AA (the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). Think of it as the building code for websites.

An Ongoing Habit

Every new page, photo, or video can open a new gap. Accessibility works best as a regular habit, not a one-time fix.

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WHY IT MATTERS

Protecting Your Business, Growing Your Reach

Accessibility isn't only about avoiding legal trouble. It's about making sure no customer gets turned away at your digital front door. Here's what's at stake on both sides.

Lawsuits Are on the Rise

More than 4,000 digital accessibility lawsuits have been filed every year since 2021. In 2025, that number topped 5,000.

Small Businesses Are Common Targets

Many claims are aimed at small and mid-sized businesses, especially online stores. Settlements and legal fees can quickly reach tens of thousands of dollars.

A Bigger, Loyal Audience

People with disabilities are a large customer group with real buying power. An accessible site also serves aging visitors and anyone browsing on the go.

A Better Experience for Everyone

Many accessibility fixes also make your site easier to use and easier for search engines to read. Clear headings, helpful links, and image descriptions benefit every visitor.



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

TIM BERNERS-LEE,
INVENTOR OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB

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THE FOUR PRINCIPLES

What an Accessible Website Looks Like

The accessibility guidelines are built on four simple ideas, often called POUR. If your site covers all four, you're on the right track.

Perceivable

Visitors can take in your content, whether they see it, hear it, or use a screen reader. Images have descriptions and videos have captions.

Operable

Everything works with a keyboard, not just a mouse. Visitors get enough time to read, and nothing flashes in a way that could trigger seizures.

Understandable

Content is clear and predictable. Menus stay consistent, forms explain themselves, and error messages show how to fix the problem.

Robust

Your site works with the tools people rely on, like screen readers and voice controls. Clean code keeps it working as technology changes.

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BEYOND THE LAUNCH

Making Accessibility a Habit

An accessible website isn't a box you check once. Like a car, it runs best with regular tune-ups. These habits keep your site welcoming long after launch.

Schedule Regular Check-Ups

Review your site once or twice a year and after any redesign. A mix of automated scans and real human testing catches the most issues.

Bring Your Content Team Along

Anyone posting blogs, photos, or videos plays a part. A quick refresher on image descriptions, headings, and captions goes a long way.

Don't Lean on a Plugin Alone

Quick-fix widgets can help, but they can't fix everything under the hood. Real accessibility starts in your site's design and code.

Share an Accessibility Statement

Add a simple page that shares your commitment and how visitors can report a barrier. It shows good faith and opens the door to feedback.

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"1.3 billion people worldwide live with a significant disability. That's 1 in 6 of us."

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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QUICK CHECK

Your ADA Website Checklist

Use this list for a quick gut check on your site. Every "not yet" is a great place to start.

- [ ] **Images and Media**
  - Meaningful images have alt text (short descriptions)
  - Videos have accurate captions
  - Audio and video have transcripts
  - Important text isn't baked into images

- [ ] **Easy to See and Read**
  - Text has strong color contrast (at least 4.5:1)
  - Color isn't the only way information is shown
  - Text can zoom to 200% without breaking the page
  - Pages use clear headings in a logical order

- [ ] **Easy to Navigate**
  - Everything works with a keyboard alone
  - A "Skip to Content" link is available
  - Menus and buttons look and act the same on every page
  - Each page has a clear, unique title

- [ ] **Forms and Interaction**
  - Every form field has a clear label
  - Error messages explain how to fix the issue
  - Auto-playing video or audio can be paused
  - Nothing flashes more than three times per second

Based on WCAG 2.1 Level AA. This guide is for general information and isn't legal advice.

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OPEN DOORS AHEAD

Accessibility Is Good Business

Now you know the basics, from what the ADA expects to the quick fixes that matter most. Every improvement makes your site easier to use for everyone who visits.

Next Steps?

Checked a few “not yet” boxes? That’s a great place to start. Our team will review your site and walk you through the fixes that make the biggest difference for your visitors and your business.

BOOK A FREE AUDIT

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