



Introduction to Digital Accessibility

Special Guest



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What you'll learn in this course

[Watch the Video](#)



In this course, you'll master the basics of digital accessibility to ensure your website is usable by everyone, including people with disabilities.

This course covers:

- Why accessibility is critical for ethics
- Market reach
- Search engine optimization
- Legal compliance

You will learn about the nationally recognized minimum standard for digital accessibility, **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA**, and the fundamental POUR principles:

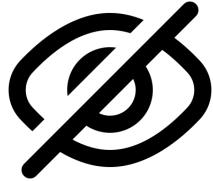
Perceivable, Operable, Understandable and Robust.

By the end of this course, you will understand how editors like yourself directly contribute to a site that is usable by all visitors by controlling key accessibility factors like **headings, alt text and links**.

What is digital accessibility



Digital accessibility means your website can be used by everyone, including people with disabilities.



Blind users



Physically impaired



Low vision



Cognitively impaired

Why is digital accessibility important?



**Right thing
to do!**



SEO benefits

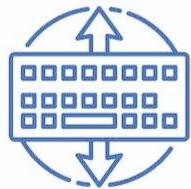


**Wider audience
reach**



As a content editor, you want users to find your information valuable and easy to use. Properly formatting your content positions your site as a trusted and reliable source of information.

How content editors can make a difference



NAVIGATION



TEXT-TO-SPEECH



COLOR
CONTRAST



SCALABILITY



SUBTITLES

You don't need to know code to make accessible content. Editors impact things like **headings, alt text, links** and **structure** — all of which directly affect accessibility.

- Clear structure, descriptive links and accessible documents improve usability.
- Accessible content reduces confusion and supports diverse learning styles.
- Your work can directly impact recruitment and retention by removing digital barriers.

A dark blue background featuring a video camera on a tripod in the lower-left corner. The camera's viewfinder shows a person with long hair. The background is dark with faint, scattered white shapes resembling leaves or petals.

WCAG 2.2 AA Overview

Digital Accessibility Standards



Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is widely recognized as the minimum international standard.

By April 24, 2026 public agencies in the state of Louisiana must create and maintain content at **WCAG 2.1 AA**.



Who sets the standards



WCAG is developed by the **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)**, an international community that develops open standards for the web. Our focus is on WCAG 2.2 AA, finalized in 2023.



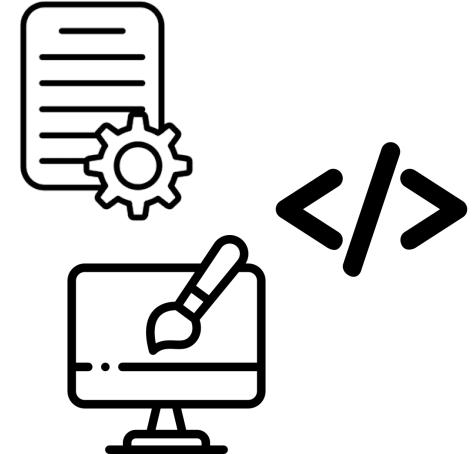
Web accessibility content guidelines



A set of guidelines that help website designers, developers and content managers make websites usable for everyone.

A comprehensive checklist to ensure content works for many types of users:

- Someone using a screen reader.
- Someone who cannot use a mouse.
- Someone with low vision or color blindness.
- Someone who processes information differently.



WCAG has three levels (we'll focus on Level AA), built around four core principles, known as **POUR**.

There are various success criteria. But don't worry — we'll focus only on the ones content editors can affect.

1. **Perceivable** - Alt text, captions and transcripts for audio and video, content presented in different ways, color contrast and font size for readability.
2. **Operable** - Keyboards, mobile devices considerations from a technical standpoint.
3. **Understandable** - Avoid jargon, explain acronyms on first reference, keeping the audience in mind.
4. **Robust** - Code is useable across a variety of technologies, browsers, screen readers, etc.

Editor vs developer responsibilities



You may not control templates or code, but you do control what people read, click and experience. Editors influence headings, alt text, links, tables, lists, color use and more. These are all editable in your CMS.



Why It Matters

One missed heading or unclear link can throw off users who rely on screen readers or keyboards. Small fixes = big impact.

A dark, semi-transparent background image of a professional video camera mounted on a tripod. The camera's viewfinder shows a person's face. The background is a solid dark blue.

Applying WCAG to Your Content

Page properties

Page Builder Plus

Pages Categories

Edit Page

Meta Info

Publish **Searchable**

Category
Water

Display Title
Drinking Water Protection Program

(H1 - Leave it blank if it's the same as the Page Name.)

SEO URL
/page/ drinking-water-protection-program

SEO Description
The Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) was designed by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) to assist

(Used for HTML meta tag, suggested maximum character limit: 160. Character count: 128)

SEO Title
The Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) was de

(Suggested maximum character limit: 40. Character count: 32)

Teaser Text
The Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) was de

(Used for search result only)

Page title (h1) is meaningful and reflects the content on the page.

Page description provides a concise summary of content.

Headings & page structure

Use heading styles (h1-h6) to organize your page. Don't just make text bold or big.

```
Heading 1
└ Heading 2
└ Heading 2
  └ Heading 3
  └ Heading 3
    └ Heading 4
└ Heading 2
  └ Heading 3
    └ Heading 4
└ Heading 2
  └ Heading 3
```

Official website of the State of Louisiana. Here's how you know:  Language  Accessibility 

For Businesses  For Providers  For Employees  Health Info & Services  Medicaid  Vital Records  Offices & Administration  Resources 

Civil Money Penalty (CMP) Reinvestment Program

Overview

A Civil Money Penalty (CMP) is a monetary penalty that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) may impose against Nursing Facilities for either the number of days or for each instance a nursing home is not in substantial compliance with one or more Medicare and Medicaid participation requirements for long-term care facilities (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 42 Chapter IV, Subchapter G, Part B). The CMPs are imposed as a punishment for failing to meet federal requirements. The funds are then distributed to the states in which CMPs are imposed. CMP funds that are collected from Nursing Facilities in Louisiana are deposited into the Nursing Home Resident Trust Fund established by the Louisiana Legislature in accordance with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation of 1987 (OBRA-87).

The CMP Reinvestment Program utilizes these funds to support projects that benefit nursing home residents and that protect or improve their quality of care or quality of life.

The CMP Reinvestment program was created as an effort to drive improvements in the quality of life and care for nursing home residents by equipping nursing home staff, administrators, and stakeholders with technical tools and assistance.

CMP Reinvestment Project Categories

CMS has established a list of approvable CMP Project categories. Each of the project categories has a maximum funding amount to ensure the costs of the projects are reasonable.

Residents or Family Councils 

Consumer Information 

Training to Improve Quality of Care 

Activities to Improve Quality of Life 

For a more extensive list of allowable and non-allowable uses of CMP funds, click on one of the options below:

- Allowable Uses of Civil Money Penalty Reinvestment Funds
- Non-allowable Uses of Civil Money Penalty Reinvestment Fund

How to Apply

Proposal Submission

Interested applicants and inquiries are encouraged to download and complete the following forms:

- CMP Reinvestment Project Proposal Summary
- CMS-Citizen Budget Request Form

Please email both completed forms to the Louisiana CMP Reinvestment Project Contact at LSA-CMP@lsd.la.gov. LDH - Office of Aging and Adult Services will perform an initial review of the proposed project summary and documentation.

Virtual educational sessions about the Louisiana CMP Reinvestment Project Overview are available.

Louisiana CMP Reinvestment Program Approval Process

CMP Reinvestment Project Applications are subject to a series of approval steps. Additional information may be requested from the CMP Project applicant during each step of the approval process. The approval steps include the LDH and OAAS Leadership Review and the CMS Civil Money Reinvestment Project Determination. Click below for more information on these steps.

LDH & OAAS Leadership Review 

CMS Civil Money Reinvestment Project 

- Use tables for data, not layouts. (See [Tables Tutorial](#) for proper table formatting.)
- Include header rows (`<th>`).
- Use scope to associate header cells with data cells.

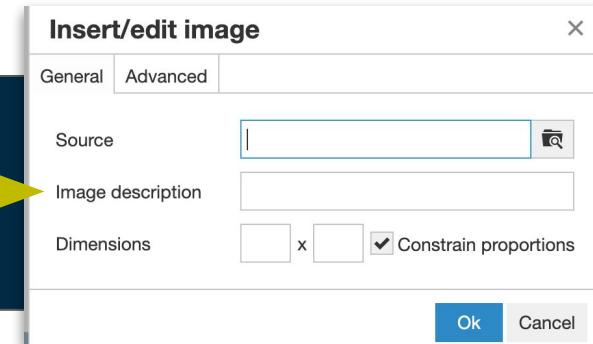
Sample Test Table

Column Heading A	Column Heading B ^	Column Heading C	^	Column Heading D ^
Link Test	Sample text	Sample text		Sample text
Sample text	Sample text	Sample text		Sample text
asdf	asdf	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit		asdf
Sample text	Sample text	Sample text		Sample text
Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate	Excepteur	Excepteur		Excepteur

Images & Adding Alt Text



Alt text should describe the image's function and support the overall context of the page it's being displayed on. If decorative, leave the alt blank.



Alt text examples - Same image, 3 scenarios



Scenario 1 Biography page

Alt text - Dr. Nathan Cole, a field ecologist with Bayou Environmental Systems, collects water samples from a Louisiana wetland as part of the Marsh Rescue Hydrology Project to track nutrient levels and early signs of ecosystem stress.

Scenario 2 Page describing research

Alt text - Bayou Environmental Systems conducts phase two of its Marsh Rescue Hydrology Project to support broader Gulf Coast conservation efforts, with field ecologist Dr. Nathan Cole collecting wetland water samples using a long-handled pole to monitor nutrient patterns and ecosystem health.

Scenario 3 Page about boat leasing

Alt text - A flat-bottom aluminum jon boat leased at a discounted rate from River Runner Research Fleet supports the phase-two MarshRescue Hydrology Project, with Dr. Nathan Cole using the boat's outboard motor and stable platform to collect wetland water samples alongside his five-person conservation team

Descriptive link text

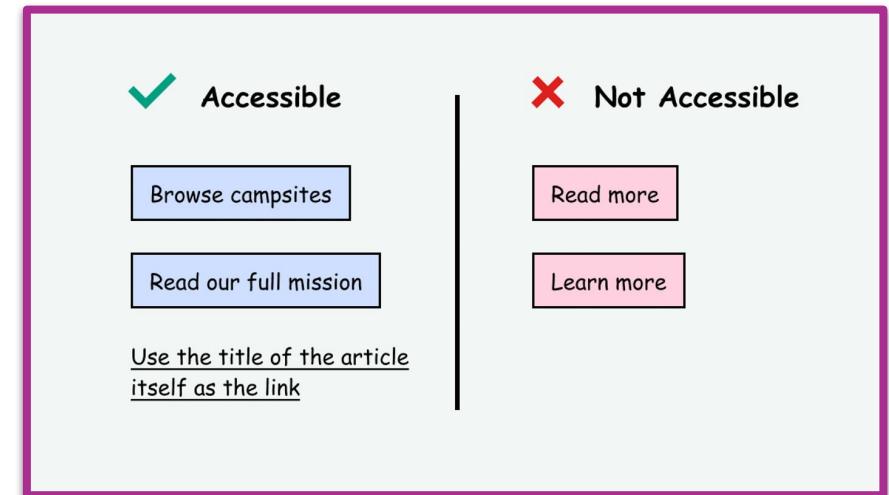


Links should make sense when read with no other context.

- Make links descriptive.
- Avoid 'click here' or displaying the URL.
- Say where the link goes.

If there are multiple links on a page serving a similar purpose, differentiate each one.

“Register Now” vs “Register for the Monday Webinar Now.”



- Ensure fields have clear labels.
- Provide meaningful error messages. Do not rely on colors alone to identify errors.
- Group related fields with fieldsets and legends.

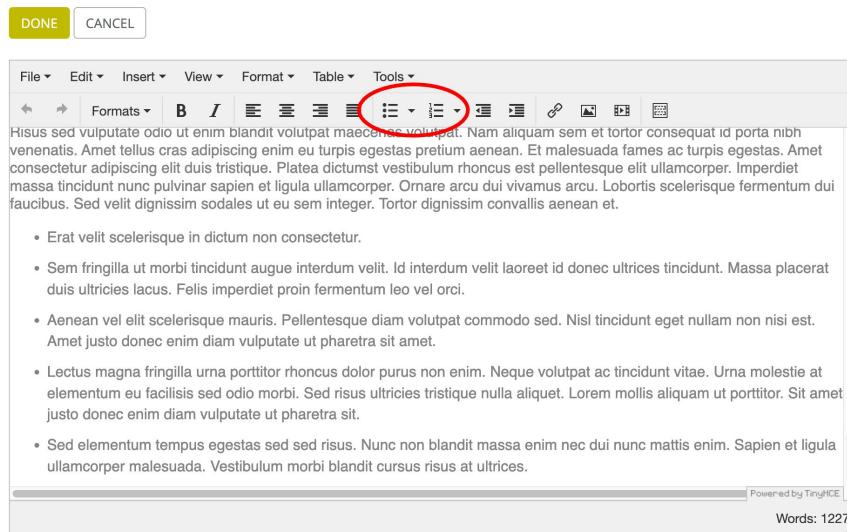
- Videos need captions that are 99% accurate.
- Audio-only files need text transcripts that are 99% accurate and must include timestamps and speaker denotations. (See [captions/subtitles](#) overview)
- Avoid auto-play. Provide a pause function!
- Plan for accessibility from the start.

Styled Lists



To create accessible styled lists, you **must use the appropriate semantic markup (HTML tags or built-in software functions)** and ensure that styling choices support, rather than hinder, the underlying structure. Screen readers use the semantic structure, not visual styling alone, to identify lists and their items.

Page Content



Shopping List

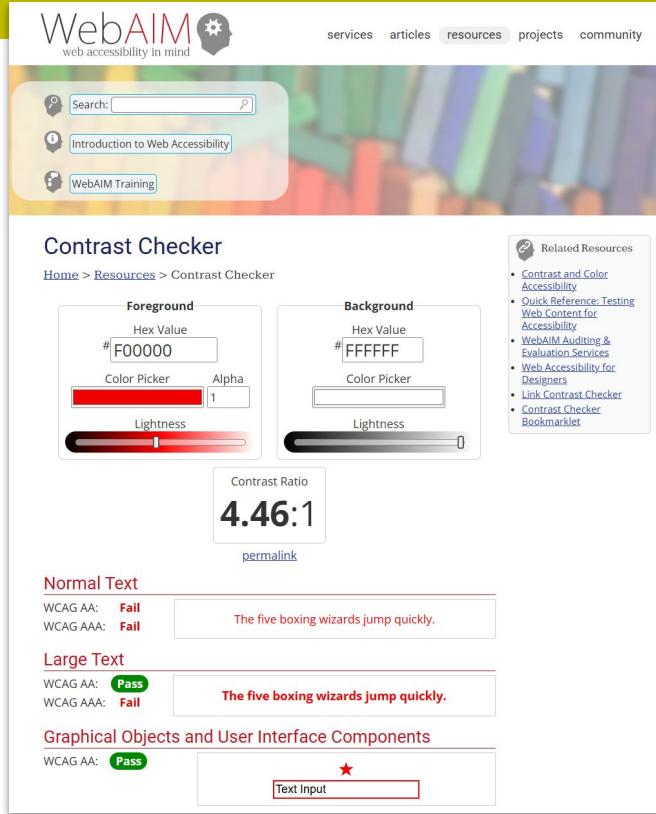
- Pear
- Pecans
- Lettuce
- Avocado

```
<ul>
  <li>Pear</li>
  <li>Pecans</li>
  <li>Lettuce</li>
  <li>Avocado</li>
</ul>
```

- Use actual list formatting.
- Avoid ALL CAPS and big blocks of text.

Color & contrast

- Don't rely on color alone.
- Check contrast using a tool (like WebAIM).
- Use icons or text labels in addition to color



The screenshot shows the WebAIM Contrast Checker tool. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for services, articles, resources (which is highlighted in light blue), projects, and community. Below the navigation is a search bar and a link to 'Introduction to Web Accessibility'. A 'WebAIM Training' link is also present. The main section is titled 'Contrast Checker' and shows the 'Home > Resources > Contrast Checker' path. It features two color pickers: one for the 'Foreground' (hex #F00000) and one for the 'Background' (hex #FFFFFF). Each picker has a color swatch, an alpha input (set to 1), and a 'Lightness' slider. Below the pickers is a large 'Contrast Ratio' box displaying '4.46:1' in bold black text. A 'permalink' link is located just below this box. The 'Normal Text' section shows WCAG AA and AAA results: AA is a green 'Pass' and AAA is a red 'Fail'. The text 'The five boxing wizards jump quickly.' is displayed in red. The 'Large Text' section shows similar results: AA is a green 'Pass' and AAA is a red 'Fail'. The same text is displayed in red. The 'Graphical Objects and User Interface Components' section shows a green 'Pass' for AA and a red 'Fail' for AAA. It features a red star icon and a 'Text Input' field. To the right of the main content is a 'Related Resources' sidebar with links to various WebAIM resources.

A professional video camera is mounted on a tripod, positioned on the left side of the frame. The camera's viewfinder screen is illuminated, showing a person from the chest up. The camera body is dark with various buttons and a large lens. The background is a solid dark blue.

Tools to Check Your Work

- WAVE (WebAIM), Siteimprove browser plugin
- WebAIM Contrast Checker
- CMS and Microsoft Office checkers (always run spell check!)
- Document checkers:
 - Use Microsoft accessibility tools in Word, Excel, Powerpoint
 - Use Grackle Extension Add-ons for Google Docs, Sheets and Slides
 - Use Adobe accessibility tools in InDesign, Acrobat



Testing and Maintenance

Remember to run an accessibility check every time a new document is created or an existing document is updated, even for the smallest and simplest content update.

Let's walk through WAVE



Red = Issues
Green = Successes

These tools help, but your choices matter most.
Don't just check a box — think like your users.



Communicating About Accessibility with Your Team

If you're asked to publish inaccessible content, try framing your response around inclusion and effectiveness. For example: "Can we adjust this so it's easier for all users to access—especially students using screen readers? It also helps us stay compliant and avoids issues down the line."

This positions you as a thoughtful communicator focused on quality and institutional goals.

A video camera on a tripod is positioned on the left side of the frame. The camera's screen is visible, showing a person's face. The background is a solid dark blue.

Wrap-Up & Quiz

Pop quiz!



1. Is it acceptable to leave an image's alt text blank if the image contains a visible caption?
2. Can Heading 3 immediately follow Heading 1?
3. When creating digital content, when should color contrast be measured?
4. Is it okay to use "click here" as link text if it is the only link being used on a webpage?
5. When referring to adjacent elements on a webpage, it is acceptable to say "see the table on the right"?
6. What are some ways that properly formatted lists can elevate content?
7. Is it acceptable to use acronyms and abbreviations without explanation if they are commonly used?
8. Is it acceptable to use a table to ensure that content stays in two columns for visual presentation?

(answers on the next page)

Quiz answers



1. **No.** Alt text provides assistive technology users with an understanding of the image. If a caption for all users is provided, the alt text and caption should not provide the same information.
2. **No.** Headings should be used in rank order, levels should not be skipped.
3. Always check color contrast levels when creating new text and background combinations.
4. **No.** Link text should be concise and meaningful when read with no additional context.
5. **No.** Some users do not see the position of elements and mobile devices may not retain the position; instead, use the name of the element being referred to or use a more general reference like “preceding” or “following.”
6. It makes it easier for assistive technology and mobile device users to scan content. It helps search engines index and rank content.
7. **No.** Acronyms and abbreviations should always be explained.
8. **No.** Tables should only be used for tabular data.

[WebAIM: Contrast Checker](#)

[Tables Tutorials](#)

[Captions and Subtitles](#)

Homework



What's next?





Questions? Comments? Conversation?

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