

Making websites accessible to all

The WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) is considered the international standard for accessibility guidelines, and is the standard we work to when producing websites.

It is important that websites conform to Web Accessibility Initiative guidelines. These are guidelines put in place to enable people with disabilities to use the web. Many disabilities can effect how people perceive the web including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, neurological as well as simply people with a slow internet connection. Below are brief descriptions of things you need to be aware of when producing a website.

Images and Animations: A text equivalent must be given for all non-text elements. This could be in the form of a short description which will be picked up by on screen readers and read aloud to the user.

Image Maps: An image map is an image with clickable hotspots or active regions, which the user can click to go through to another section. If these are used it is essential to provide text equivalents for the image hotspots.

Multimedia: It is important to provide captioning for any multimedia elements. Transcripts of audio and descriptions of video are also important to ensure an understanding of the page.

Hypertext Links: It is important that links within text makes sense when they are read out, so that it is clear where the link leads. This is why it is best to avoid links like "click here".

Page Organisation: It is best to have a consistent structure to your web pages to ensure it is easier to understand. Semantic mark-up (headings, paragraphs, lists, etc.) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) can help with this.

Graphs and Charts: As non-text elements, graphs and charts need a text equivalent. They may need a longer descriptions to ensure full understanding.

Scripts, applets and plug-ins: It is essential that when these features are not supported the user can still navigate through the website using basic links.

Frames: Although frames can organise a page into different sections, they can be problematic for the visually impaired. Each frame must have a meaningful and descriptive title. If this is still confusing there should be a description of how each frame links together.

Tables: When using tables it is important that when it is read out line-by-line it makes sense. It is also possible to create a summary which can describe the contents of the table and its relationship to the rest of the page.

Check your Work: It is possible to check if your website conforms with the WAI guidelines using an online validator at: <http://validator.w3.org/>

We trust that you find this information interesting and useful, and we welcome your feedback at info@landb.co.uk.

Information is based on our experience and should not be taken as official or legal advice.