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DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

WHAT IT IS

Digital accessibility ensures that websites, apps and online content can be used by everyone, including people with disabilities. Following Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA) helps organizations create an inclusive digital experience and comply with the Accessible Canada Act (ACA).

In this guide, we share key accessibility principles, highlight common red flags, and provide practical steps to help you improve your organization's digital accessibility.

WHY ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS

- **22% of Canadians** live with a disability (Statistics Canada).
- Compliance with **WCAG 2.1 AA** and the **Accessible Canada Act (ACA)** is required for many organizations.
- Accessible websites improve user experience, increase engagement and broaden your audience reach.
- Better accessibility enhances SEO and search rankings.

ACCESSIBILITY RED FLAGS

If your website has any of the following issues, it may not be accessible to all users:

❌	**No captions or transcripts for videos**
❌	**Poor colour contrast,** making text difficult to read
❌	**No keyboard navigation** support for users who do not navigate with a mouse
❌	**Images without alt text,** making them unreadable for screen readers
❌	**Unclear or ambiguous link text** such as "Click here" instead of "Read our accessibility guide"
❌	**Complex forms without labels or instructions**
❌	**Auto-playing content** with no pause or stop function

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR WEBSITE ACCESSIBLE

Structure your content for screen readers

✅ Use proper **headings (H1, H2, H3, etc.)** to organize content
✅ Write **descriptive link text** instead of generic terms like "Click here"
✅ Ensure all images have **alt text** describing their purpose

Enhance visual accessibility

✅ Maintain **high colour contrast** such as dark text on a light background
✅ Ensure text can be **resized** without breaking the layout
✅ Avoid using **colour alone** to convey meaning

Ensure keyboard and assistive tech compatibility

✅ Allow users to **navigate without a mouse** by using keyboard-friendly menus and links
✅ Avoid elements that **trap focus** and prevent users from navigating freely with the Tab key
✅ Test web pages with screen readers like **NVDA, JAWS** or **VoiceOver**

Make multimedia content accessible

✅ Provide **captions or transcripts** for all videos and audio content
✅ Ensure interactive content has **keyboard-friendly controls**
✅ Avoid auto-playing media or provide an **easy way to stop it**

RESOURCES FOR TESTING AND COMPLIANCE

There are free tools to help you check and improve your website's accessibility:

📌 **Government of Canada's Accessibility Testing 101**
📌 **WAVE Web Accessibility Tool**
📌 **Axe Accessibility Checker**
📌 **Google Lighthouse** (Built into Chrome Developer Tools)