
The Must-Have Accessibility Handbook

2019 Edition

Siteimprove



This handbook provides everything you need to know to make your digital presence accessible. It includes a simple and thorough explanation of accessibility, where to begin, quick wins, best practices, tips and tricks, and more.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook aims to give you an introduction to accessibility from various perspectives, helping you to define roles and responsibilities and to understand the list of tasks at hand. It also gives you an introduction to Siteimprove Accessibility.

The handbook has two main sections:

- A Beginner's Guide to Digital Accessibility
- A Beginner's Guide to Siteimprove Accessibility

You can use the entire document as learning material or as a reference to look up specific areas of interest.

Who Should Use This Handbook?

Accessibility is relevant to anyone working with websites, regardless of whether you are a web designer, web developer, web manager or web editor. Generally speaking, digital accessibility is quite technical, and many aspects are established in the development phase.

Major Takeaways

- Digital accessibility overview
- Roles and responsibilities involved in digital accessibility
- Priority areas and quick wins
- Fixing errors with the Siteimprove Accessibility platform

SELECT the title to jump to the corresponding section

PART 1



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE
TO DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

PART 2



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE
TO SITEIMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY



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A Beginner's Guide to Digital Accessibility

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Part 1:

A Beginner's Guide to Digital Accessibility

Surveys show that up to one in five people have a disability that affects the way they use the internet. These disabilities encompass physical and cognitive barriers including color blindness, full blindness, hearing loss, dyslexia, paralysis, and more. Without an accessible website, 20% of internet users will encounter difficulties trying to navigate a site.

Having an accessible website not only increases your potential number of users, but it also increases search engine optimization (SEO) and improves usability for every user, regardless of ability. Achieving accessibility on your website is worth the investment. You ensure



that all people, including those with disabilities and reading difficulties, can use your web pages with ease. It allows most internet browsers and assistive technologies to render content in an understandable way.

What are Assistive Technologies?

People with disabilities such as low vision, cognitive challenges, and hearing or motor impairments often utilize assistive technologies when using the internet. By presenting content in a different way, such as reading a page aloud, these technologies assist the user in writing, spelling, reading, and navigating. It is important for software and websites to comply with the standards that allow assistive technologies to interpret and render content properly. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) provides information on how different types of users browse the web and the technologies used: www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web/browsing.

What is Digital Accessibility?

If you look at all areas of user experience (UX) on the internet, accessibility is one of many. Accessibility can and should be considered a fundamental technical foundation on which you build other aspects such as usability.

The term “accessibility” is used widely, but according to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, interact with, and contribute to the web.

Digital accessibility is about technical provisions. It is very much about how websites are implemented and about the tools that are used to publish content on websites. But accessibility is not just about techniques. The way you communicate on web pages—from the words you choose to the use of images and graphs—also affects accessibility.

What are WCAG Guidelines and Who Defines Them?

[The W3C](#) is the organization that standardizes the internet. The W3C working group [Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#) defines and composes guidelines for proper web accessibility. These globally recognized guidelines are called the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and are formulated in such a way that if a website complies, it ensures robustness that allows most user agents (such as internet browsers and assistive technologies) to interpret web pages in a consistent way.

WCAG was originally written in English and has since been translated into 16 other languages, plus several more “unauthorized translations.”

WCAG 1.0 was first introduced in 1999, and the 2.0 version of WCAG was released in December 2008. Version 2.1 was released in June 2018. Primary contributions for WCAG 2.1 came from the Mobile Accessibility Task Force, Cognitive and Learning Disabilities Accessibility Task Force, Low Vision Task Force, and public input.

WCAG 2.1 is divided into four main principles: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust. Each of these principles is divided into guidelines under which there are a number of success criteria for meeting the guidelines. These success criteria are most often used as compliance requirements around the world. The criteria are divided into three levels: A, AA, and AAA. Level A criteria affect the largest number of potential users in the most severe ways. In most countries, websites should be compliant to Level AA, encompassing the first and second levels of accessibility requirements. Becoming completely AAA compliant is challenging, and these criteria affect the least number of users in minor ways.

Level A and AA include 50 criteria, and these are the framework for the rest of this handbook.

The structure and details of WCAG are somewhat complex, but the WCAG quick reference guide is structured with information that outlines how to

understand and how to meet the criteria. The sections make it easier to navigate to information useful for your needs. For instance, if you are a developer, a high number of criteria are relevant to you. If you are a content management system (CMS) provider, another set of criteria are relevant for you. And if you are a web content editor, the third set of criteria is relevant to you.

The Process of Achieving Digital Accessibility

Web accessibility isn't achieved solely through a website development project: it is a process. To be successful, accessibility must be part of the overall website strategy.

Accessibility can often be neglected in a website's strategy. The project manager usually has too much on his/her plate, and accessibility can slip through the cracks. Sometimes there is an assumption that accessibility will cost too much or take too long to be worth it.

It is not neglected – due to a lack of care or interest - but because there is not enough transparency with vendors. Many organizations do not include accessibility as part of a requirement or service level agreement for vendors completing work on a website or for the software that the vendor integrates into a build. If it is included in the requirements you provide to a vendor, the tendency is to assume that ‘adding accessibility’ means it will be taken care of. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Another problem is that many web managers do not know enough about accessibility to know that proper web accessibility is a process rather than just a coding task during development.

Accessibility isn't something that can simply be added to a current web project and a new website budget. For example, if you want to add a video to your website and want it to conform to Level AA guidelines, which is mandatory in many cases around the world, there are many aspects to consider. You must provide captions, audio description, and several other things. If you wish to conform on Level AAA, you must also

provide sign language of the content. Do you have the resources for this every time you upload a video to the website?

Accessibility is relevant throughout the lifetime of your website. Every time you integrate a third-party solution or you upload video or audio content, you must consider accessibility. The content editing process and the website's CMS also influence the situation, and in some cases need to be revisited.

It's a good idea to create a strategy for accessibility goals and how you plan to achieve them. It is also important to integrate accessibility criteria into your organization's communications policy, design guide, policy for purchase, and so on. Create a matrix of stakeholders in the process.

Defining Resources

Assessing a website and its compliance with WCAG guidelines requires knowledge that you can gain from conducting both automated and manual testing to ensure you are testing the website for all relevant success criteria. First, clarify the roles and responsibilities within your existing teams to see who will assist in the assessment—and how. Each resource has a part to play in either testing, fixing or proactively designing websites to address these issues.

Many issues can be fixed within the organization. Some, however, require outside help especially those with code or additions such as captions on video. Sort through the list of issues and divide them into categories.

Remember that issues on Level A are considered most important, and Level AA issues are considered second but equally important. You can pick from Level AAA depending on the types of pages and target users.

Roles and Responsibilities of Digital Accessibility

Dividing ownership and establishing responsibilities is crucial. It helps to have an accessibility coordinator or a go-to person who is consulted when questions or decisions arise. These could involve general

accessibility knowledge, re-structuring, new purchases and integration, change of existing policies, and more.

It is also a good idea to divide your strategy into areas of responsibility and subsidiary goals:

- What dependencies do we have on external vendors and who will start a dialogue with them?
- Who will ensure that accessibility is integrated into different organizational policies? (Communications policy, design guide, policy for purchase, etc.)
- Who takes responsibilities for accessibility during design and development?
- How will we track our progress toward becoming accessible and who will hold us accountable?
- Who will organize training for not only the web team but the entire organization?

Web Managers

If you are responsible for achieving accessibility on a website, then all WCAG criteria are relevant to you (usually on Level AA). It is necessary to have a fundamental understanding of the subject in order to see a project through from development to compliance. It is also important to understand the requirement specifications, as well as any accessibility legislation that directly applies to your organization. You must also train your web editor colleagues on how to publish content that is accessible. This way, any new content enhances your site's accessibility and does not create new accessibility issues.

It is also vital to integrate relevant accessibility criteria into policies and brand guidelines and to educate the entire organization on any changes.

Remember, digital accessibility is a process, not a project. If your team is updating an existing website, it is often a question of "Realistically, what can be fixed now?" Start by using tools that give you a quick overview of issues. For large websites, this effort needs to be prioritized. Begin with your front page and a selection of template pages. Often, these require

minor adjustments in the CSS or in a template, and an issue will be fixed across all pages. If there is special content on some web pages such as video, dynamic content, or interactive content like forms, it is a good idea to include these pages as well.

There may be areas where a quick fix is not possible and that should be directed to development. Write these down so you don't forget and bring them up in the next relevant meeting.

Looking long-term, create a strategy for testing accessibility on a regular basis. Whether it is weekly, monthly, quarterly, or bi-annually, decide what is realistic and necessary for your organization.

Web Designers

Website designers are the architects of the user experience. They make important decisions about the layout that will be built. It's important for them to think inclusively with different needs and abilities in mind which effectively translate to the user experience of everyone.

As a web designer, several accessibility criteria are important to help you create an inclusive website for as many users as possible.

Consistent Design

For accessibility and general UX purposes, it is important that design is consistent across all your web pages. Global elements such as menus and help facilities should appear in the same order everywhere on the site. It is also important that elements with the same function (such as icons and references) are ordered and labeled in the same way on every page (Success criteria 3.2.3 and 3.2.4).

Navigation

In order for users to find information easily, there should be more than one way to find specific content on a web page. A user can find content on a page by navigating through the intended page hierarchy, but it should also be possible to find the page in another way through a sitemap, an index, or a search function (Success criterion 2.4.5). This allows visitors navigating your site by keyboard only to find exactly

what they need without barriers.

Headings

When designing the look, feel and architecture of a website, keep in mind that some users cannot get a visual overview of a web page; they have to do this structurally. Screen reader users often use a shortcut key to hear all of the headings on the page or to access a menu that generates a list of all the headings to which they can easily jump.

Make sure pages are divided into logical sections, each with a heading that describes the content so that assistive technologies can render them as section headings. To do this properly, sections must be tagged with headings such as <h1>, <h2>, <h3>, and so on.

In places on the site where you wish to logically and visually highlight an area by using bold font/ large font/another color, the heading should also be highlighted in the code. In this way, the heading not only functions visually but also structurally. (Success criteria 1.3.1 and 2.4.6)

Use of Color

A web page with information or data represented solely by color is frustrating and ineffective for users who are color blind. For instance, conveying links within text should go beyond making them a different color. Also, error messages are regularly expressed in a red color. This can make it difficult for those with colorblindness to interpret clearly. Supplement these links or messages with underlined text, a symbol, etc. (Success criterion 1.4.1)

For visually impaired users to read all the text on web pages, it is important that the color of the text and the color of the background are in sufficient contrast with one other. This can be achieved by conforming to the required contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for regular text and 3:1 for large text. There are a number of tools available to assist in measuring contrast ratios quickly. [Siteimprove has a built-in color checker](#) for this very purpose. (Success criterion 1.4.3)

Links

When an element on a web page is a link or something

actionable, it is important for the link text or element description to make sense when read out of context. Screen readers can access a menu that lists all the links on a page. Link texts such as “Read more,” “Click here,” or “here” are examples of poor link text, because visitors using screen readers or other assistive technologies will be unable to decipher where the link will lead without the proper context. Be specific and concise with link text. A good link text example would be to write “Click here to download the Accessibility Checklist.” (Success criterion 2.4.4)

Interactive Elements

When designing interactive elements, it should be clear to users what is to be entered, chosen, checked, etc. When using text fields, dropdowns, check boxes and radio buttons, they should always have descriptive text associated. For example, an input field with the label "First Name" must be coded (using ARIA) so it is associated with its input field. By doing so, the screen reader will announce the label when the user tabs into the input field with a keyboard or mouse. (Success criteria 2.4.6 and 3.3.2)

Web Developers

Page Titles

The page title is the content that appears in the tab on a browser page. It is different from the headings you use on your page. Make sure that all web pages have a descriptive title reflecting the page’s content. Also, make sure that web editors can enter page titles via the authoring tool (for example CMS). (Success criterion 2.4.2)

Headings

Not every CMS adds headings automatically. A website’s main content areas must be categorized by headings, often manually within the code. (If your team does not have access to manually amend the code, ensure that your CMS interface provides an input field for adding headings. Talk to your CMS provider about it.) Pay special attention to headings when creating templates. (Success criteria 1.3.1 and 2.4.10) Not every CMS adds headings automatically. A website’s main areas must be categorized by headings, often manually within the code. Pay special

attention to headings when creating templates. (Success criteria 1.3.1 and 2.4.10)

Keyboard Navigation

All content on a web page should be navigable both with a computer mouse and with a keyboard alone. This applies to forms, buttons, links and more. (Success criteria 2.1, 2.1.1, and 2.1.2)

Some users are unable to use a computer mouse and instead, use a keyboard or switch control device to navigate by tabbing through content on a web page. Because these users must always be able to see where they are located on the page, the indicator should always be visually evident. (Success criterion 2.4.7) Most browsers automatically show this with a dotted line around the content that is in focus. You can also implement your own way of showing this, though it's recommended that you keep the default visible outline as it is what is expected. In all cases, do NOT allow developers to add code to remove the visible indicator! Note: Some Reset Stylesheets remove this highlighting, so be sure to address this highlighting within the Reset CSS.

Forms

Placeholder text that indicates the purpose of a form field is not sufficient instructions for users. An example of placeholder text is the example phone number shown before the user enters the digits. Once there is an entry, the placeholder text disappears. It's good practice to include an example of the format in the visible label above the field. Plus, it will be announced by screen readers."

To make sure users can identify and use a form or search field, explicitly add text to the field through a label. (Success criterion 3.3.2)

Content Sequence

When content for web pages is coded, make sure that the content has a meaningful order, not only visually but also in the coding sequence. Some users navigate pages by this order. Be sure that the order of content is sensible when all visual styles are disabled and when tabbing through content. (Success criteria 1.3.2)

Enlarging

Make sure web page text can be resized up to 200% as a minimum, and still be understandable without loss of content. Also, ensure that content is not contained in any frames where users must scroll horizontally to view the enlarged text. Newer browsers can zoom content, and this is usually the way assistive technologies do it as well. (Success criterion 1.4.4)

Language

In order for web browsers to render content, and for screen readers to announce the content in the correct language, it is important that web pages have the correct language definition in the HTML tag. The language tag should be “en” for English pages, “da” for Danish pages, and so on. (Success criteria 3.1.1 and 3.1.2)

The CMS should also give web editors the ability to tag text that appears in a different language than the rest of the page and to choose the correct language for this part. The tagging should add the lang="" attribute in the code, for example, lang="en".

Coding

In order for the website to display consistently across different platforms such as operating systems and browsers—and for assistive technologies to render content in a meaningful way—you should comply with format standards. (Success criterion 4.1.1)

If, for instance, you are publishing in XHTML 1.0 or HTML 5.0, follow the syntax rules for this format. You can check your web pages for syntax errors within tools such as Siteimprove Accessibility or at validator.w3.org.

Also make sure that elements are marked up with the code that is intended for the purpose. For example, HTML headings should be tagged as <h1>, <h2>, and so on. (Success criteria 1.3.1 and 1.3.2)

Data tables should be tagged as <table>, and web editors should be able to describe the data tables via <caption>. Headings for columns and rows should be defined using <th> and perhaps “header id” and “scope.” If a complex data table needs explaining

for screen reader users, then this should be done via “summary.” (Success criteria 1.3.1 and 1.3.2)

When writing text, web editors should be able to emphasize with and . (Success criterion 1.3.1)

When form elements are used, a label should be explicitly connected to each control, and form elements that belong to the same group should be assembled. For instance, a group of radio buttons should be grouped with <fieldset> and <legend> or role="group"/role="radiogroup" and WAI-ARIA labels. (Success criteria 3.3.2 and 4.1.2)

User Input

If the user must enter information into a text field, ensure they receive instructions to enter the text correctly. (i.e. phone number with dashes, xxx-xxx-xxxx) Also, ensure that the user is notified if he/she make a mistake. Instant notification is better for all users rather than being notified upon submission. Remember not to use color alone (like red) when displaying error messages. Use the word "Error" or make the description clear that an error has occurred and how to fix it.

When filling out a form that is part of a financial transaction or a legal commitment, the input must be validated to avoid errors, or the user should have the option to review before submitting it. As a third option, the user should always be able to reverse the submission. (Success criteria 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, and 3.3.4)

Graphics

When web pages contain non-text elements such as images, graphics, charts, animations or embedded frames that contain videos, one of the most important rules is to provide a text alternative that describes the purpose of the non-text element. (Success criteria 1.1.1)

For example, images use the “alt text” HTML attribute alt="" . It is important to note that the alternative text reflects the purpose of the image and not necessarily what the image is of. (Find detailed information

on images in the section [Web Editors and Content Creators.](#))

For web editors to provide alternative text correctly, it is important that the authoring tool, such as the CMS, provides the ability to add alternative texts on images. The image tag should always include an alternative attribute (`alt=""`), regardless of whether an image description is needed.

Decorative images are those that are used as visual design or duplicates the information contained in the text. If the image has its own purpose, however, it should have a description. If the web editor decides that the image is only decorative and does not need an alt text, they must add a “null” alt attribute (`alt=""`).

Alternative text is context specific, so be sure if you enter alternative text for one image when uploading to a media library, review the alternative text if reusing it across several pages. You should be able to enter a new alternative text every time an image is used on a web page. A “title” attribute does not serve the same function as an “alt” attribute and should not be used in place of the “alt.”

If a web page contains a media file, it should also be given a descriptive alternative text.

Audio and Video

When audio and video files are published on a web page, there are a number of relevant criteria such as providing an alternative format, captions, and audio descriptions. These are described in detail in the section [Web Editors and Content Creators.](#) (Success criteria 1.1, 1.1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, and 1.2.5)

Throughout development, it is important to ensure that all buttons and controls in the player can be operated with a computer mouse and with the keyboard alone. At the same time, those buttons and navigation require text descriptions to help screen readers. (Success criteria 1.2.1, 2.1, 2.1.1, and 2.1.2)

For a video, it should be possible to add captions

and to enter a dedicated track for audio description. (Success criteria 1.2.1 and 1.2.2)

If a passage of audio starts automatically, the user should be able to pause, stop, or control the sound volume. (Success criterion 1.4.2)

User Control

Some users need more time to read and navigate web pages. Therefore, if some sort of time limit is present on pages, such as a time out, the user must be able to change the limit either by adjusting, extending, or disabling it. (Success criterion 2.2.1). A common solution is to have a dialog window that asks if the user requires more time to complete the task. They should be able to say yes and be allowed extra time.

If moving, blinking, or scrolling content is added, it is also important that the user can pause, stop, or hide this content. (Success criterion 2.2.2)

In order for screen reader users to avoid having to listen to the same content every time they load a new page, provide the option of skipping blocks of repeated content. Repeated content can be global and local menus and help functions. There are several techniques for ensuring this; the easiest way is to provide a link at the top of all pages that takes the user to the main content of the page. (Success criterion 2.4.1)

When an element is to be altered by the user, such as a drop-down menu, a radio button, etc., it is important that it acts as the user expects. Elements should not react solely when the user lands on it from the keyboard. It should react when the user has had the time to choose and confirm. (Success criteria 3.2.1 and 3.2.2)

Blinking Content

Content should not flash or blink more than three times per second, or else it may cause seizures. (Success criterion 2.3.1)

Web Editors and Content Creators

Page Titles

In a CMS, you name or title a web page when you

create it. This title is the content that appears in the browser tab. In some systems, there is also a specific field for this called “Title.” It is important that this title describes what the page is about because this appears in the top of your browser and is the first thing read by a screen reader. Page titles are also used for bookmarks and search results. (Success criterion 2.4.2)

Text

When writing text for web pages, consider the fact that some users can only get an overview of a page structurally rather than visually. Make sure that pages are divided into logical sections with descriptive headings. You can use several levels of headings: Heading 1, Heading 2, etc. (in the code <h1>, <h2>, etc., so assistive technologies can render them as headings). (Success criterion 1.3.1)

Some low vision users will perceive a web page very differently than the way other users would. Therefore, do not provide important information solely using color or with an instruction requiring sensory skills. For example, avoid writing things like, “You can read more about the event in the blue box on this page.” (Success criterion 1.4.1)

Not all people see a web page the way you do. While keeping disabilities in mind, also remember that many websites are built using responsive web design. This means that page elements can shift according to device (mobile, desktop, etc.) as well as by web browser. Therefore, providing important information based on direction is also not advised. For instance, “You can read more about the event in the box to the right” may render meaningless if page elements have shifted.

Always make sure you state the language of your content piece. In the code, this is done with the attribute lang=”. Your CMS may allow you to highlight the piece of text and choose a language from a drop-down menu. (Success criteria 3.1.1 and 3.1.2)

Links

When you add links on a page, write link texts that make sense when read out of context. For instance,

avoid using link texts such as “Read more,” “Here,” “Click here,” “Publication,” etc. An example could be: “You can read more about the Assistive Technologies event here.” This way you are giving a link text that in itself is a good indicator of what the destination page is about. (Success criterion 2.4.4)

Images

When you add images to a web page, consider the fact that some users cannot see images. They need a text alternative. In most CMS systems this is stated as “alternative text” or “alt text.” The text provided here is not visually displayed on the page but is hidden in the code and is accessed by screen readers. The alternative text is not the same as a tooltip, the text displayed when you hover over the image from the “title” attribute. (Success criteria 1.1.1)

Close your eyes and visualize what information you would need if you could not see an image. Describe the purpose of the image and not necessarily what the image is of. If the image links somewhere, it is important to describe where the link leads or what happens when you click. If the image contains pertinent information, that information should be stated in the alternative text. If the image is used solely for decorative purposes, such as creating ambiance or giving visual context, then it should have “null” alternative text. However, your CMS should automatically insert the tag alt=” to the image in the code, as this is important for decorative images.

Avoid using images of text. This means that you should never write or scan text into an image editing program and save it as an image. No screen reader technology can read images of text, because you cannot highlight text within an image and have it read aloud. Images of text also tend to pixelate and become blurry upon magnification, making them difficult to read for those with other visual or cognitive impairments. For many dyslexic web users, their assistive technology requires them to manually highlight text on a page to be read aloud. (Success criterion 1.4.5)

Video and Audio

If you are using video or audio clips on a web

page, there are several criteria to consider, such as captioning and audio description on video. Audio description is an extra track that explains to visually impaired users what is happening on screen. If you are not able to supplement your videos with audio descriptions, then give an alternative in the form of a transcript uploaded to or linked from the page. However, be aware that without audio descriptions you cannot be AA-compliant, but only A-compliant. (Success criteria 1.1, 1.1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, and 1.2.5)

If the content is solely visual or only audio, then a text version is an accepted alternative on both levels.

Tables

When using data tables, it is important to indicate headings for rows and columns. The way to do this is very CMS-specific. In some cases, the text editor provides an accessibility tab where this information can be entered when using data tables. (Success criteria 1.3.1 and 1.3.2)

Lists

When listing items, make sure to use the function for this that is built into the CMS editor. This will ensure that accessible code is entered for lists. Avoid using symbols that looks like a list item, such as bullets, dashes, asterisks, etc. (Success criterion 1.3.1)

Documents

Many WCAG 2.0 principles that apply to web content

Our guide [How to Create Accessible PDFs](#)

Developing or Redesigning a Website

As soon as you think “new website,” you should think “accessibility.” By considering and implementing accessibility early on, the process will be much more manageable than if you think “accessibility” in the late stages of website development or redesign.

The cost to budget, gather resources, and remediate after a site has launched is proven to be considerably more expensive than incorporating accessibility practices into your daily work. If it is incorporated in the right way from the start you will not have to deal with these repercussions.

Requirements Specifications

When you are writing your accessibility requirement specifications for your web development team, it is important to use the right standards, preferably WCAG 2.0. In web design projects, it is common for the buyer to request the website to be designed in conformance with WCAG 2.0 on Level AA. However, this requirement may not be as straightforward as it would appear.

In the middle of the project, how will you determine whether or not the website meets your expectations? Explicitly state the individual success criteria you wish to comply with. Have your website developer state if and how this will be achieved. For example, design a table or list to be filled out by you and your developer:

Criteria	Description	Notes	Developer Solution	Required
1.1.1	All non-text content that is presented to the user has a text alternative that serves the equivalent purpose, except for the situations listed below.	Relevant for images, inputs, CAPTCHA, and more.		X

are relevant for documents, including PDFs. There are 32 PDF techniques published by the W3C. In fact, most legislation around the world requires accessible documents in order for a website to be compliant.

It is also important that the CMS helps web editors publish accessible content. Pick the necessary checkpoints from the [Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines](#), which dictate that the tool generates

accessible web content, helps web editors to publish accessible content, and that the tool itself is accessible. Explicitly state requirements for how to:

- Handle alternative texts for images
- Use of headings
- Ability to create accessible data tables
- How to make quotes (<q> and <blockquote>)
- How to enter page titles
- How HTML code created by the CMS complies with W3C standards
- How to tag change of language in the text

Consider the organization's design manual and if there are any contradictions with accessibility guidelines. For example, there are contrast ratio requirements between background and text colors. For this reason, it is important to use accessible color combinations. (Success criteria 1.4.3)

Design and Development

A handful of accessibility criteria are relevant when starting the phase of designing and creating wireframes. Think about navigation, the use of headings, colors, link texts, white space, and descriptions, especially where the user is to click on, fill out, or choose content on web pages.

When it comes to the development process, most accessibility criteria are relevant. Therefore, it is important that the people developing the solution have a solid understanding of accessibility. Make sure you test the solution during the process from start to finish. If you wait until the end, it is nearly impossible to correct possible errors and shortcomings before the site goes live. It is especially important that templates are tested as early as possible before building on them to avoid spreading mistakes to hundreds or thousands of pages.

Publishing Content

When content is added both in the development phase and after you've launched, it furthers your site's accessibility and does not introduce new accessibility issues.

Migrating Media Players, Forms, and Old Content

Areas that are often neglected involve third-party solutions such as media players and forms. Remember these in the process of redesign or development. They should also be accessible!

Also, think about content you migrate from an old system to a new. If you change the HTML/XHTML version, the syntax specifications from W3C are different. There might also be content from the old system that is not accessible. After all your hard work, the last thing you want is to carry old problems over to your new website.

Accessibility Top 5

1) Images

- a. Provide alternative text for images that reflect the purpose:
 - ii. Decorative: alt=""
 - iii. Has a function: Describe the image
 - iv. Links: Describe the destination and whether it's external
 - v. Avoid images of text where possible. Where you cannot, make sure that text alternatives are exactly the same as the text.
 - vi. Be certain that backgrounds and text colors in photos and on web pages are in sufficient contrast to each other.

2) Links

- a. Write link texts that can be read out of context. Avoid "Click here," "Read more," etc.
- a. Do not convey a link by only changing the color. Underline the link, add an asterisk, etc.

3) Headings

- a. Divide pages into logical sections, each with a heading (<h1> to <h6>) that describes the content. Content that is logically connected must also be visually connected and connected in the code.
- a. Do not give instructions based solely on location of content such as "In the box to your right..." or on the use of color, such as "In the green box you will find..." Supplement with a heading.

4) Forms

- a. Label all form fields with text that indicates the purpose of the field.
- a. Be sure all forms are navigable by mouse and keyboard.

5) Skip Navigation

- a. Provide the option of skipping blocks of repeated content in areas such as global and local menus and help functions. Ensure your page has skip-to links to allow users to jump directly to the heading of a content section. It saves considerable time for the user. Not having these has been the cause of complaints in the past.

Digital Accessibility Resources

[Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\) with W3C](#)

(w3.org/WAI)

Find an extensive collection of information on how to work with accessibility.

[Accessibility Guidelines Working Group](#)

(w3.org/WAI/GL/)

[Siteimprove Blog](#)

(siteimprove.com/

blog/?topics=web-accessibility)

Dig through this library of blog posts covering accessibility from different angles.



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Part 2:

A Beginner's Guide to Siteimprove Accessibility

How Siteimprove Accessibility Helps Your Work

Siteimprove's automated accessibility tool scans a website, assessing every page using WCAG 2.0 guidelines. The tool then provides you an overview of issues, the pages on which you will find them, how these errors affect your website visitors, and tips on how to fix them.

There are two scenarios in which it is particularly beneficial to use the tool:

On an Existing Website – Use the tool to work through current issues and sort them based on issue type, where they occur, or by who should fix them. Monitor new issues and address them promptly.

When Building a New Website – Have the development site crawled to quickly catch any accessibility issues before they become too extensive and require a lot of time to fix.

Automated and Manual Testing

Many accessibility issues can be discovered through Siteimprove's automated Accessibility tool. Some aspects must be evaluated through human assessment, however, as it is impossible to test all issues via automated testing.

Who Should Use the Module

Webmaster

The person(s) in charge of the website may choose to assign themselves as an administrator, which allows them to sort through the reported issues and assign them to lists: Webmaster, Developer or Web Editor. The webmaster is able to make site-wide decisions about each issue. For example, if fixing a given issue is currently beyond what is feasible for the organization, then that issue can be marked as such. All users have access to a list that includes all of these "Can't Fix" issues.

Developer

The list of issues for this role is typically related to style sheets and CSS. Often, this list is for a website provider and not the website owner.

Web Editor

In the tool, a list is available for web editors. It lists issues that are introduced in the content creation process.

Accessibility Overview Page

Summary

The Accessibility dashboard provides an overview of several areas. The various circles indicate the number of issues present on the website and within the chosen WCAG group: A, AA, or AAA issues.

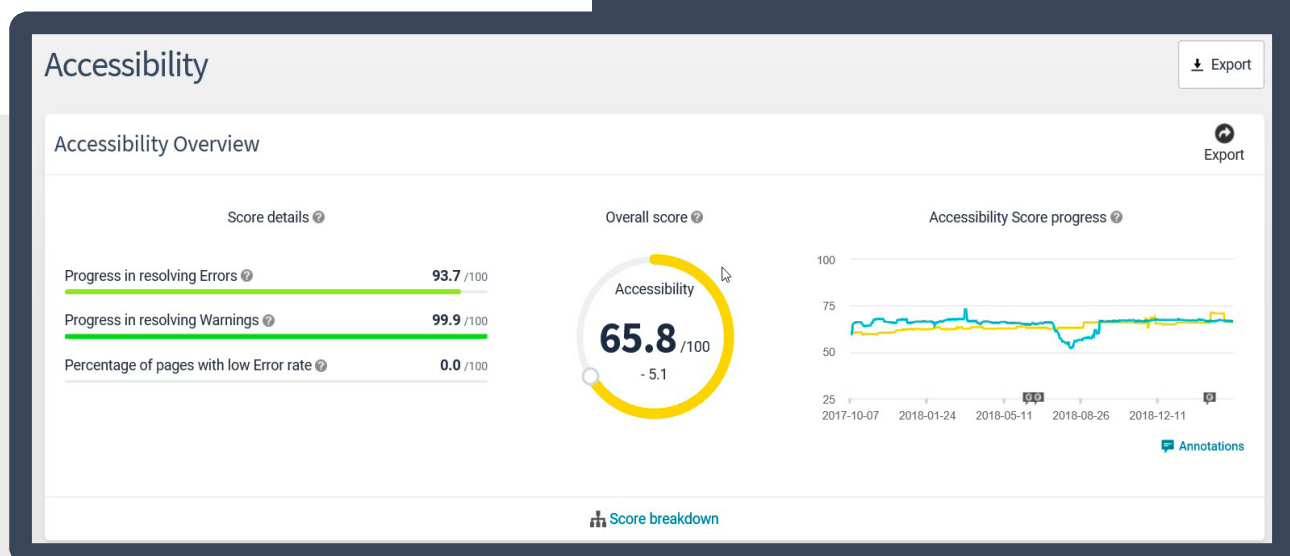
Depending on organizational responsibilities, an overview of issues within the categories of editor, webmaster, or developer are available.

First Time Using the Tool?

If you are new to the Accessibility tool, it is recommended that you explore the tool to get an overview of how the tool works with your site.

If you are looking for a list of issues on your website, take a look at the [Issues page](#).

If you would like to learn more about WCAG guidelines and the issues your website has in accordance with these, it would be beneficial to look at the [Guidelines page](#).



Additionally, you are provided with a group of high priority issues:

- Headings
- Images
- Links
- Forms

There are several dropdown options including "Priority" where you can select a high-priority element to focus your efforts on, one at a time. The list will be filtered to show all issues related to Headings so you can tackle them at once.

Issue-level Decisions

If decisions have been made for specific issues, they will appear in this table. Both issue decisions for all pages (Global decisions) and individual pages.

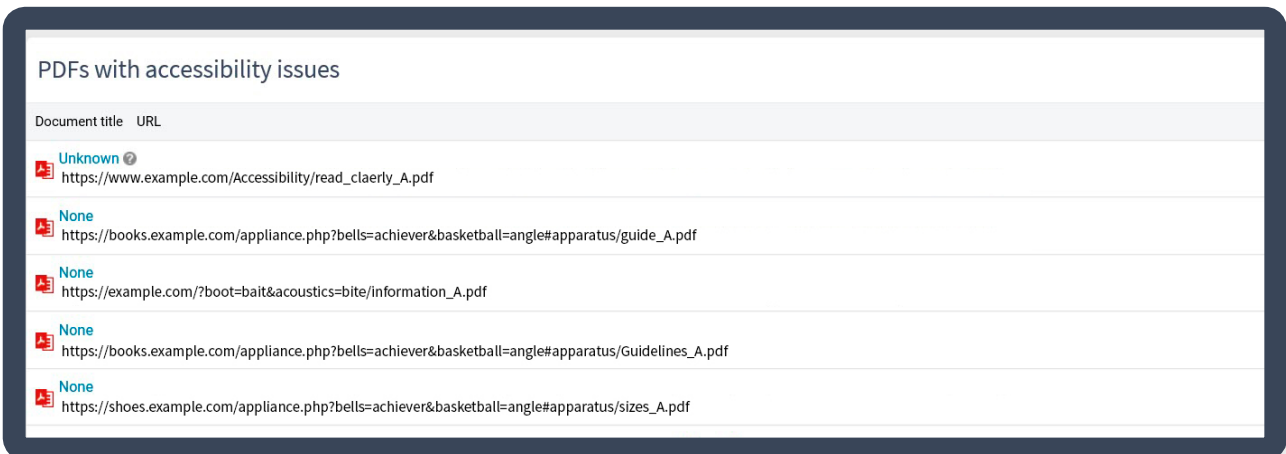
Export

Conformance level	Accessibility Issue	Note	Status	Added by	Decided on	Decision for
A	Image with no alt attribute 1.1.1	Can't fix				entire website
A	Local link destination does not exist 1.3.1	Can't fix			expand 'Decisions for' column for data	5 pages
A	Form elements are not grouped 1.3.1	Can't fix				entire website
A	"Bold" tag used to format text 1.3.1	Can't fix			expand 'Decisions for' column for data	3 pages
A	Webpage has multiple title elements or no title element 2.4.2	Can't fix				entire website
A	Link text used for multiple different destinations 2.4.4	Can't fix			expand 'Decisions for' column for data	5 pages
A	Image link is missing alternative text 2.4.4	Can't fix			expand 'Decisions for' column for data	1 page
A	Should image be marked as decorative? 1.1.1	Can't fix			expand 'Decisions for' column for data	13 pages
A	Does the "aria-label" attribute accurately describe the element? 1.1.1	Can't fix			expand 'Decisions for' column for data	1171 pages
A	Are landmarks appropriately applied? 1.3.1	Can't fix				entire website

A history graph reports fluctuations in the number of issues, and a progress bar monitors your progress with fixing issues over time. If you are working on portions of the website and want to check it right away, you may choose to generate a new sitewide scan on demand. You can also choose a specific date range to display in the history graph.



As PDF files are often a large portion of web content, the tool also provides you a list of and direct links to PDF files with the highest number of errors.



Document title	URL
Unknown	https://www.example.com/Accessibility/read_clearly_A.pdf
None	https://books.example.com/appliance.php?bells=achiever&basketball=angle#apparatus/guide_A.pdf
None	https://example.com/?boot=bait&acoustics=bite/information_A.pdf
None	https://books.example.com/appliance.php?bells=achiever&basketball=angle#apparatus/Guidelines_A.pdf
None	https://shoes.example.com/appliance.php?bells=achiever&basketball=angle#apparatus/sizes_A.pdf

My Sites

Gain an overview of the accessibility status across all your websites and filter by team tags. At a glance, see the total number of A, AA, AAA issues, plus the number of PDFs with issues.

Groups

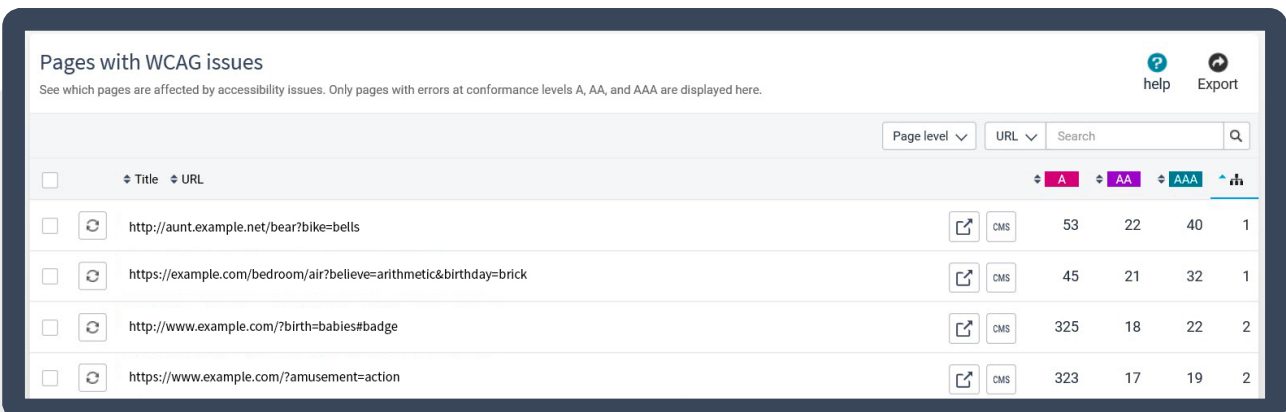
Groups are used to display information for specific sections of the website that belong to different team members. Only groups that are visible under your profile are displayed.

Accessibility Policies

Siteimprove Policy allows you to employ accessibility best practices across your digital presence and create checks specific to your organization. Examples include “Find all words in capital letters” or “Max length of words.”

Single Page Check

Enter individual URLs at any time to check the accessibility status of specific pages.



Pages with WCAG issues		help Export				
See which pages are affected by accessibility issues. Only pages with errors at conformance levels A, AA, and AAA are displayed here.						
Page level	URL	Search	A	AA	AAA	
↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	
<input type="checkbox"/>	http://aunt.example.net/bear?bike=bells		53	22	40	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	https://example.com/bedroom/air?believe=arithmetic&birthday=brick		45	21	32	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	http://www.example.com/?birth=babies#badge		325	18	22	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	https://www.example.com/?amusement=action		323	17	19	2

Issues Page

The Issues page provides you with a list of issues on your website and can be filtered according to an individual's responsibilities, high priority issues, conformance level, and severity. Here, you can move issues between the areas of responsibilities and continuously track progress toward accessibility compliance with the dynamic progress bar.

The screenshot shows the 'Issues' page interface. At the top, it says 'Issues' and 'Accessibility issues on your website, as defined by the WCAG 2 Guidelines. Issues are grouped by conformance level (A, AA, AAA) and severity (error, warning, review)'. There are tabs for 'All issues' and 'My starred issues (0)'. A 'Re-calculate issues' button is on the left, and 'Responsibility', 'Priority Issues', 'Conformance level', and 'Severity' dropdown menus are on the right. An 'Export' button is also present. A progress bar shows '116 issues fixed' and '21 issues to fix'. Below the progress bar, a filter for 'A' is selected. The main content area lists several issues:

Issue	Conformance Level	Pages	Progress	Changes
Image with no alt attribute	1.1.1	27	0%	No changes
Link text used for multiple different destinations	2.4.4	27	0%	No changes
"Bold" tag used to format text	1.3.1	13	0%	No changes
2 Element ID is not unique	1.3.1, 4.1.1	12	0%	No changes
HTML is used to format content	1.3.1	12	0%	No changes

Guidelines Page

The Guidelines page provides you an overview of all WCAG success criteria to WCAG 2.1, displaying which criteria your site complies with and which criteria it does not. Keep in mind that some WCAG criteria require manual testing, which is distinguished within the tool. You can also view all individual issues for each success criterion.

The screenshot shows the 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)' page. It includes a 'Conformance level' dropdown menu. Below is a table with columns for 'Conformance level', 'No.', 'Guidelines and Success Criteria', 'Errors', 'Warnings', and 'Reviews'.

Conformance level	No.	Guidelines and Success Criteria	Errors	Warnings	Reviews
	1	Perceivable			
	1.1	Text Alternatives			
A	1.1.1	Non-text Content	1	✓	✓
	1.2	Time-based Media			
A	1.2.1	Audio-only and Video-only (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓
A	1.2.2	Captions (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓
A	1.2.3	Audio Description or Media Alternative (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓
AA	1.2.4	Captions (Live)	✓	✓	✓
AA	1.2.5	Audio Description (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓
AAA	1.2.6	Sign Language (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓
AAA	1.2.7	Extended Audio Description (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓
AAA	1.2.8	Media Alternative (Prerecorded)	✓	✓	✓

Issues / Specific issue under 2.4.4 Link Purpose (In Context)

Link text used for multiple different destinations

★ Link text used for multiple different destinations help options Export

Download Excel file (.csv)

Pages with this issue (Table)
 Progress on this issue (Table)

[Visible rows](#) [All rows](#)

Export to PDF or HTML
 Export all visible content of this component

[Export to PDF / Print](#) [Export to HTML](#)

Add widget to dashboard

[Add to dashboard...](#)

Add to report template

[Existing template](#) [New template](#)

Pages Page

If you wish to work with individual pages, you can view and navigate a list of “Pages with Issues.” Consider prioritizing pages with high priority issues or higher traffic. Once you click on a page in this part of the menu, you are brought to Page Reports.

Pages with WCAG issues help Export

See which pages are affected by accessibility issues. Only pages with errors at conformance levels A, AA, and AAA are displayed here.

Page level URL Search

<input type="checkbox"/>	Title	URL		A	AA	AAA	
<input type="checkbox"/>		http://aunt.example.net/bear?bike=bells	CMS	53	22	40	1
<input type="checkbox"/>		https://example.com/bedroom/air?believe=arithmetic&birthday=brick	CMS	45	21	32	1
<input type="checkbox"/>		http://www.example.com/?birth=babies#badge	CMS	325	18	22	2
<input type="checkbox"/>		https://www.example.com/?amusement=action	CMS	323	17	19	2
<input type="checkbox"/>		http://www.example.com/	CMS	136	17	22	2
<input type="checkbox"/>		https://www.example.com/#arm	CMS	134	16	18	2
<input type="checkbox"/>		https://example.com/bedroom/air?believe=arithmetic&birthday=brick	CMS	94	17	23	2
<input type="checkbox"/>		http://aunt.example.net/bear?bike=bells	CMS	91	16	19	2
<input type="checkbox"/>		https://www.example.com/?amusement=action	CMS	79	18	24	2

Page reports

Individual Page Reports display all issues that are present on that page. Filter by security or conformance levels and read detailed descriptions of issues that are also highlighted on the page, where possible. You will also find links to techniques that can help you fix issues.

The screenshot shows the Siteimprove Page Report interface for a page titled "Quant117 Financial | Level-headed solution...". The interface includes a navigation bar with "Quality Assurance", "Accessibility", "SEO", and "Policy". The "Accessibility" tab is active, showing a list of issues. The main content area displays a product page with three product cards: "Quant117 Nostradamus" (Best Selling, 24.99\$), "Quant117 Advanced" (15.99\$), and "Quant117 Basic" (9.99\$). The "Accessibility" sidebar on the left provides detailed information for the selected issue, including a "How to fix it" section, "Occurrences on this page" (8), and "Text colour" (rgb(6, 138, 289)). The "Contrast ratio" is shown as 3.77 / 4.5, with a note that the minimum contrast ratio should be 4.5. The "Highlight in" section shows "Page content" selected. The "Testimonials" section at the bottom of the page is also visible.

PDFs Page

We can crawl all PDFs on your website and provide you with an overview page of PDFs with accessibility issues. We provide a summary of issues for each PDF and a link to a document report with detailed descriptions of each issue, as well as a visual highlighting of the issue on the actual page (where possible).

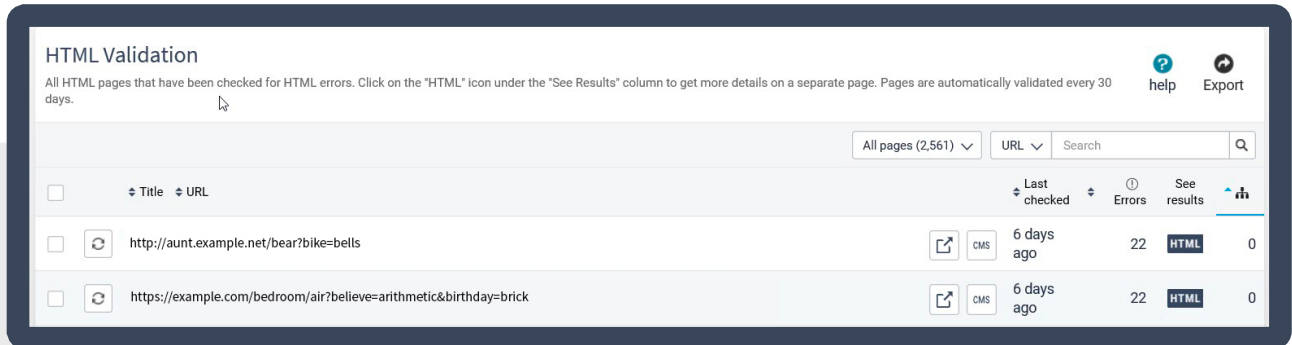
The screenshot shows the Siteimprove Document Report interface for a PDF document titled "Achieving Digital Accessibility With Siteimprove". The interface includes a navigation bar with "Quality Assurance", "Accessibility", and "Siteimprove User". The "Accessibility" tab is active, showing a list of issues. The main content area displays the PDF document with a red box highlighting an issue: "The image has no alternative presentation". The "Issues" sidebar on the left provides detailed information for the selected issue, including a "Page content with issues" section and a "Page 2 / 2" indicator. The "Get A Free Demo" button is visible at the bottom right of the page.

Validation

If you would like to know how your website is performing in accordance with the W3C syntax requirements for HTML and CSS, we provide you with two pages: HTML validation and CSS validation.

HTML Validation

We provide you with an overview of all your web pages and the number of errors on each page, plus a link to the W3C validation service that provides detailed descriptions of each error.

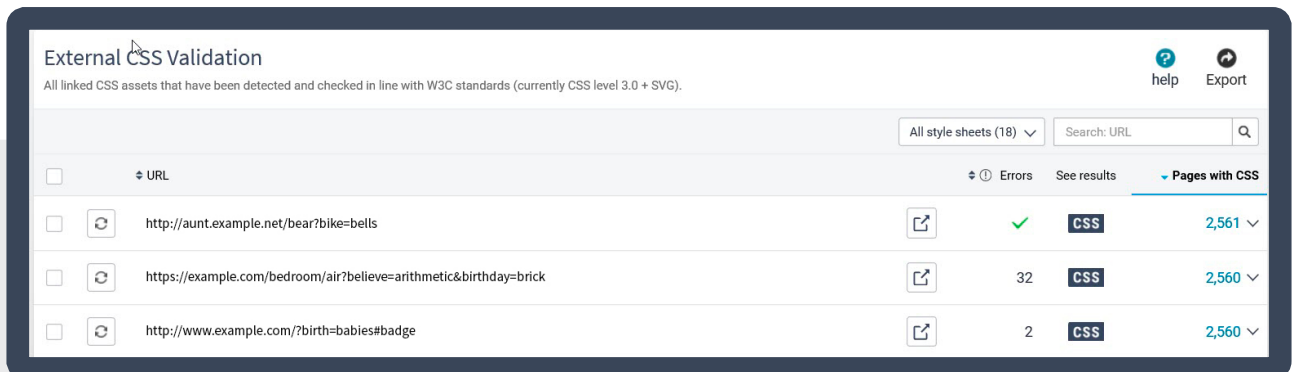


The screenshot shows the 'HTML Validation' interface. It includes a header with a help icon and an 'Export' button. Below the header is a filter for 'All pages (2,561)' and a search bar. The main table has columns for 'Title', 'URL', 'Last checked', 'Errors', and 'See results'. Two rows are visible, both showing 22 errors and 0 HTML errors.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Title	URL	Last checked	Errors	See results
<input type="checkbox"/>		http://aunt.example.net/bear?bike=bells	6 days ago	22	HTML 0
<input type="checkbox"/>		https://example.com/bedroom/air?believe=arithmetic&birthday=brick	6 days ago	22	HTML 0

CSS Validation

We provide you with an overview of all your style sheets and the number of errors on each style sheet, plus a link to the W3C validation service providing detailed descriptions of each error.



The screenshot shows the 'External CSS Validation' interface. It includes a header with a help icon and an 'Export' button. Below the header is a filter for 'All style sheets (18)' and a search bar. The main table has columns for 'URL', 'Errors', 'See results', and 'Pages with CSS'. Three rows are visible, showing 0, 32, and 2 errors respectively.

<input type="checkbox"/>	URL	Errors	See results	Pages with CSS
<input type="checkbox"/>	http://aunt.example.net/bear?bike=bells	0	✓ CSS	2,561
<input type="checkbox"/>	https://example.com/bedroom/air?believe=arithmetic&birthday=brick	32	CSS	2,560
<input type="checkbox"/>	http://www.example.com/?birth=babies#badge	2	CSS	2,560

All Decisions

When you choose to make decisions on an issue for the entire website, on individual pages, or for individual items, your decisions are saved in a section which contains two pages:

Issue-level Decisions

If decisions have been made for global issues or on individual pages, these will appear in this table.



The screenshot shows a table of accessibility issues. It has columns for 'Conformance level', 'Accessibility issue', 'Note', 'Status', 'Added by', 'Decided on', and 'Decision for'. Three rows are visible, all with a status of 'Can't fix'.

Conformance level	Accessibility issue	Note	Status	Added by	Decided on	Decision for
A	Image with no alt attribute 1.1.1	Can't fix	Can't fix			entire website
A	Local link destination does not exist 1.3.1	Can't fix	Can't fix	expand Decisions for column for data		5 pages
A	Form elements are not grouped 1.3.3	Can't fix	Can't fix			entire website

Decisions Based on Specific Occurrences

If specific occurrences of an issue have been reviewed on the Accessibility Page Report, they will appear in this table. This applies both to occurrences that have been reviewed on individual pages and at a site-wide level.

Element	Conformance level	Accessibility Issue	Note	Status	Added by	Decided on	Decision for
	A	Image with no alt attribute 1.3.1	-	Approved	-	-	entire website
	A	Image with no alt attribute 1.3.1	-	Approved	-	-	entire website
Google	A	Image with no alt attribute 1.3.1	-	Can't fix	-	-	entire website
	A	Image link is missing alternative text 2.4.4	-	Approved	-	-	entire website
	A	Image link is missing alternative text 2.4.4	-	Approved	-	-	entire website

For the [latest updates on Accessibility Decisions](#), follow our help center articles.

Getting Started

First, the person(s) predominantly in charge of the website should sort through the list of all issues reported. Afterward, they can assign issues to the correct team member (webmaster, developer, web editor), or they can decide on issues that do not need to be handled immediately.

Siteimprove Issues: **Errors, Warnings, and Reviews**



Error = Issues that can be tested automatically and where the instances are with certainty violations of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).



Warning = Issues that can be tested automatically and where the instances are with certainty violations of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).



Review = Issues that cannot be checked automatically but require a manual inspection to determine if each item lives up to the success criteria.

Start with Level A issues, as they are considered the most severe. Begin with the errors flagged by the exclamation point icon. Next, move on to AA errors.

When you have worked through errors on Levels A and AA, then you can move onto warnings, flagged with the triangle icon. These are also important to tackle in order to become Level AA compliant.

Finally, sort through review items to determine next steps and delegate amongst your team. If you have limited resources, another way to prioritize is to use the filtering option for high priority areas: issues with headings, images, forms, and links.

Remember that you can always revisit Issue-level Decisions when you have the resources to fix them.

Quick Wins

Most quick wins are issues introduced via style sheets or templates. It is usually a matter of fixing a bit of code in one area, and the fix will take effect on all pages where the issue occurs. Look for errors that are present on a large number of pages, as this likely indicates a CSS/template issue.

Examples:

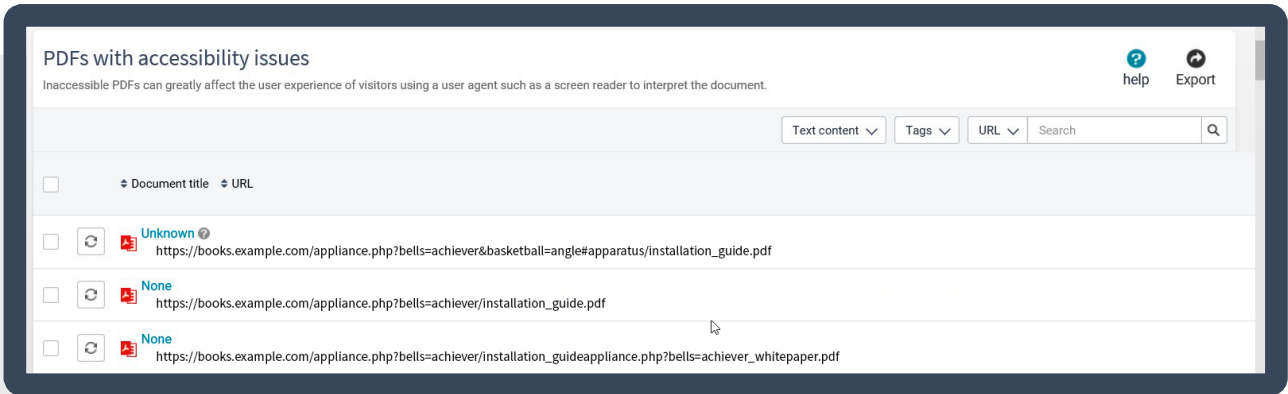
- Issues with contrast ratio
- Issues with forms such as global search field
- No definition of language for web pages
- Inability to bypass blocks of repeated content

The developer or web provider often needs to fix these types of issues.

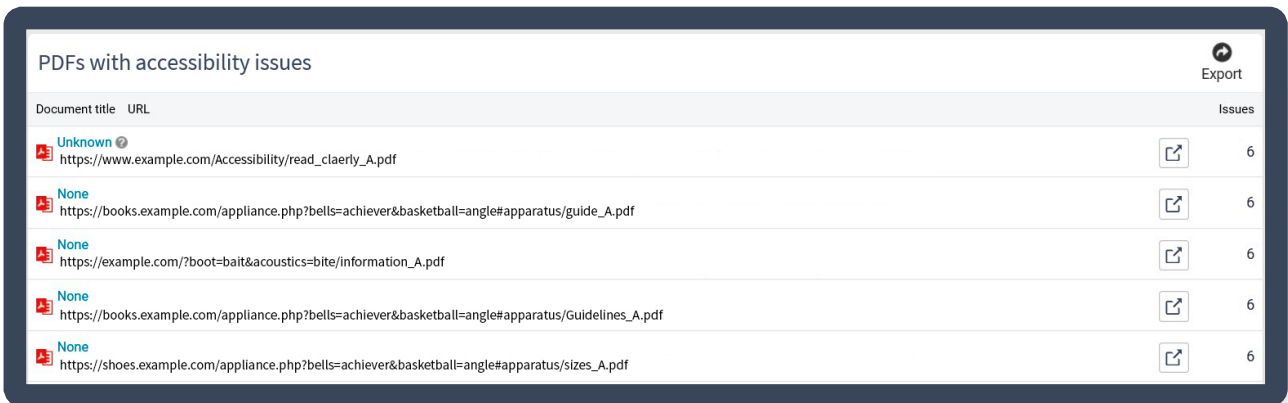
Working With PDFs

PDFs may be a big part of your web content, and it is possible to greatly increase the accessibility of these documents for many users.

In the PDFs page, which is available from the left-hand menu, you are given a list of all PDFs on your website (or within a chosen group) that have accessibility issues. PDFs without issues will not appear in this list.

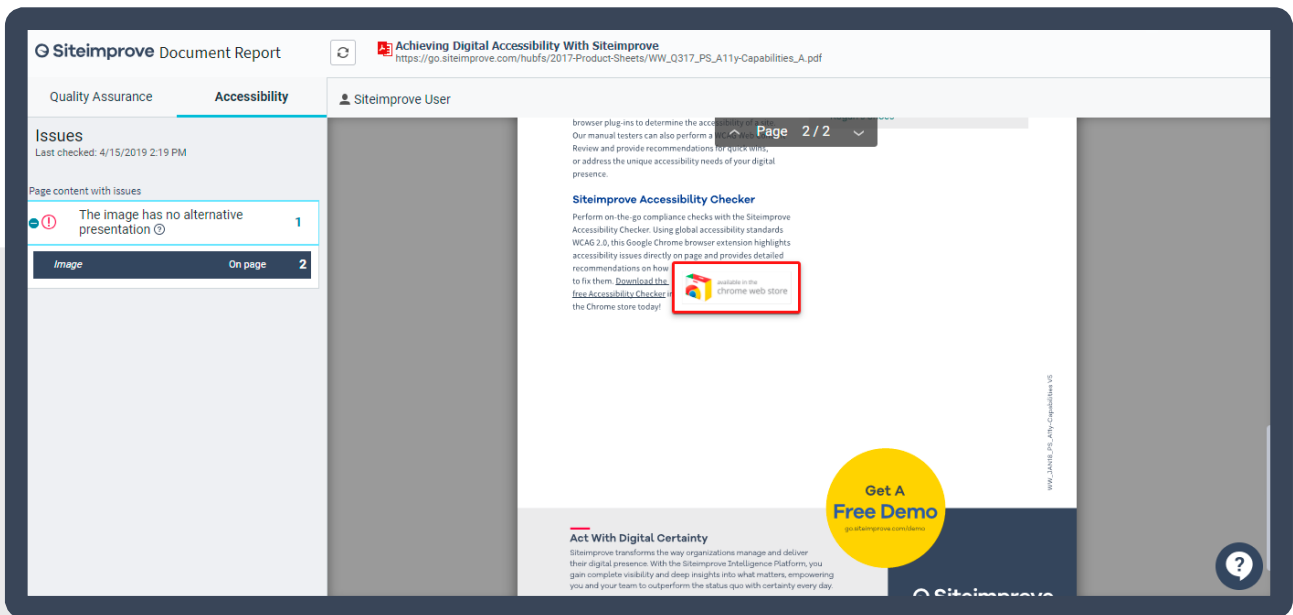


You have several filtering options available. One option is to look only at PDFs that are not tagged. Tagging is a fundamental prerequisite for accessibility because it allows user agents such as screen readers to know how to render content in a meaningful way. If there is no tagging, then there is no information on text types such as paragraphs, headings, lists, tables, and so on. You may also filter for documents without machine-readable text which likely indicates that a document is scanned.



Fixing PDFs that are not tagged is a good way to optimize your efforts. PDFs with a high number of issues can also be good to prioritize. If you have analytics integration, you can also prioritize your efforts on PDFs that have had a lot of traffic.

Clicking on a PDF link will take you to a document report for that specific PDF which gives you an overview of all issues present. Where possible, it will highlight the individual issues on the actual page.



You are given a help text on what each issue entails and suggestions on how to fix it. Remember that fixing PDF issues will need to occur in a program like Adobe Acrobat and then reuploaded.

Once you start fixing issues, run a crawl of an affected page to check if the issue is fixed. When you are done for the day, it is recommended to order a crawl of the website to ensure you have fresh results when you come back. A crawl can be ordered from the bottom of the front accessibility page.

The image has no alternative presentation

An image is present.

If the image is used for decoration, background or another purpose where it has no function it should be defined as an 'Artifact'.

If the image conveys information or has a function of some sort, an alternative text description should be provided for the image. This way a screen reader will be given information about the image.

How to fix it:

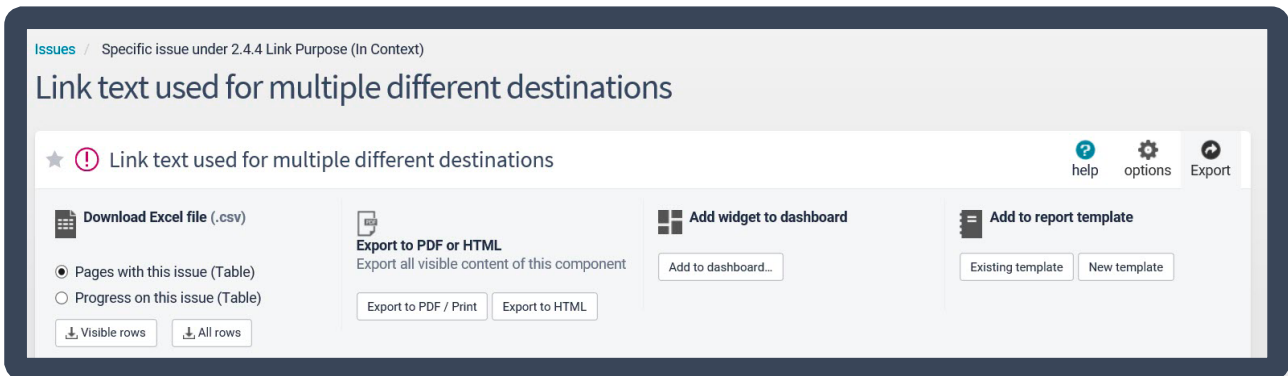
Provide alternative text or 'Artifact' definition for the image in the original document (such as MS Word or Adobe InDesign) and save it as pdf with tagging.

If this is not possible the alternative text or Artifact definition can also be added in the pdf with a remediation tool.

A good practice is to have your team ask, "Is it really required that this be a PDF?" If it's not, then you can reduce the number of PDFs you have to fix and manage on your site. Also, if the content is secure and fairly static, it can be much easier to place it in a web page as HTML. HTML is the most accessible format in many cases. However, if the content is secure or private, PDF is the best format.

Creating a Printable Report & Email Reports

Most overviews are exportable and can be added to a printable report or to a spreadsheet file. You can also choose to send a report with specific components to any given user after each crawl.



Siteimprove transforms the way organizations manage and deliver their digital presence. With the Siteimprove Intelligence Platform, you gain complete visibility and deep insights into what matters, empowering you and your team to outperform the status quo with certainty every day. With a worldwide customer base of more than 7,000 customers, Siteimprove serves dozens of markets from offices in Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, London, Minneapolis, Oslo, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Vienna, Stockholm, Paris, Singapore, and Zurich.

To learn more, visit [siteimprove.com](https://www.siteimprove.com)

Get a Free Demo
go.siteimprove.com/demo



Perfect Your Digital Presence
with eye-opening insights

 Siteimprove

Siteimprove offers the world's most comprehensive cloud-based Digital Presence Optimization (DPO) software. Create higher quality content, drive better traffic, measure digital performance, and work towards regulatory compliance—all from one place. Find out why more than 7,000 organizations around the world are using the Siteimprove Intelligence Platform at [siteimprove.com](https://www.siteimprove.com).