

2.1 Review of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

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Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Before we explore concepts of *Making an Accessible PDF*, our second unit of the Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Guide, it is important to understand the intentions of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG for short) and how they apply to accessible PDF documents. While current accessible content is required to meet WCAG 2.0 standards, this guide is designed to equip PDF content creators with the knowledge to meet WCAG 2.1 standards as well. In this and future modules, we will specifically reference A and AA criteria under the WCAG 2.0 and 2.1 standards. Keep in mind that examples for AAA criteria will not be featured in this guide.

POUR Standards for Accessibility

Both sets of standards, the original WCAG 2.0 revision and the 2.1 additions, are based on POUR. The POUR acronym refers to content that meets certain criteria for being Perceivable, Operable, Understandable and Robust. As a note, the accessibility guideline numbers (ie. 1.1, 1.2, etc) for each of these four principles will be referenced and explained briefly in this module. The criteria of these guidelines can be found in further detail on the World Wide Web Consortium's 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines' webpage.

Perceivable

The first principle of accessibility, 'Perceivable', is represented by the 'P' of POUR. Content that is perceivable presents information and user interface components in ways that all users can perceive. WCAG Guidelines 1.1 through 1.4 all relate to perceivable criteria.

Text Alternatives (Guideline 1.1)

The first guideline ensures all presented non-text content (ie. images, emoticons, logos, etc.) has text alternatives or alt-text. The 'Non-text Content' criteria ensures assistive technology can change content into other accessible formats such as braille or speech. Certain types of content only need to be named or briefly described to meet this standard.

Notable Content Exempt from Full Text Alternatives Include:

- Controls or user inputs.
- CAPTCHA testers.
- And decorative content.

Time-Based Media Alternatives (Guideline 1.2)

Time-based media, which usually refers to any video or audio content that plays in real time on a document or webpage, must also be perceivable.

Criteria for Time-Based Media Require That:

- Audio-only and video-only content have media alternatives that present the same information.
- Captions are provided for all prerecorded and live media.
- And audio descriptions or other media alternatives are available for all media with both audio and video.

Adaptable Content (Guideline 1.3)

Criteria falling under the 'Adaptable' guidelines aim to make content perceivable by ensuring content can be presented in different ways without losing meaning or structure.

Content Meets the Adaptable Criteria If:

- The information, structure and relationships of all content is presentable by assistive technology.
- A meaningful reading sequence is maintained throughout the content.
- And no information relies solely on sensory characteristics, such as sight, to be understood.

Distinguishable Content (Guideline 1.4)

A webpage or document is considered distinguishable if users can easily see and hear its content in all instances.

Content is Distinguishable If:

- Conveyed information does not rely on the user perceiving color.
- Audio content can be controlled or stopped manually.
- Readable text meets a minimum contrast standard.
- And text is not image-based.

Operable

The second accessibility principle, 'Operable', is represented by the 'O' of POUR. Content that is operable has user interface and navigation components that all users can operate. WCAG Guidelines 2.1 through 2.4 all relate to criteria for content operability.

Keyboard Accessibility (Guideline 2.1)

Criteria under this guideline ensure content is operable by requiring all content functionality to be operable from only a keyboard, including tab order. Additionally, content is considered keyboard accessible only if no keyboard traps (dead ends that lock keyboard users into certain areas of the content) exist.

Allowed Time of Use (Guideline 2.2)

Content considered operable must also allow enough time for users to access the material. Where time limits are set for user input or viewing, the user should have the ability to deactivate or extend this limit. All automatically moving, blinking or scrolling items should have functionality to be hidden or paused.

Seizure Proof Content (Guideline 2.3)

All materials displayed on a webpage, document or program must conform to a 'flash threshold' to minimize the risk of seizures induced by the content.

Navigable Content (Guideline 2.4)

While many criteria involving navigation pertain only to web pages, a few relate to PDFs and other documents.

Navigability Criteria for Documents Include:

- Consistently titled pages.
- Clear purpose and context for hyperlinks.
- And descriptive headings and labels for all content.

Understandable

The third principle of accessibility, 'Understandable', is represented by the 'U' of POUR and applies both to the information and user input functions of content. WCAG Guidelines 3.1 through 3.3 involve criteria for understandable content.

Readable Text (Guideline 3.1)

The language of all material within a document must be programmatically determined. In other words, screen readers and other assistive technology must be able to determine the default language of all text. This prevents special or incompatible fonts from being used.

Predictable Content (Guideline 3.2)

Documents and webpages must appear and operate in predictable ways to be accessible.

Predictable Content Criteria Ensures:

- Changes of context do not occur when a user moves the focus or selects an input/component.
- The format of navigational mechanisms, such as links and page shortcuts, are consistent throughout.
- And components with the same functionality can be identified consistently.

Input Assistance (Guideline 3.3)

Criteria for this guideline is designed to help users avoid and correct mistakes for inputs or interactive components of the content. Labels should be provided for all user inputs. Also, when errors are made, error identification and corrective suggestions must be in place to pass criteria for input assistance.

Robust

The final principle of accessibility, 'Robust', is represented by the 'R' of POUR. Accessible content is considered robust if a wide variety of users and assistive technologies can access it. WCAG Guideline 4.1 qualifies robust content.

Compatible Assistive Technology (Guideline 4.1)

The name and role of all links, form elements and components must be understandable by any accessibility program. Passing compatibility criteria often involves focus generated text hints, components with hidden names and contextual descriptions within a document's reading order.

Conclusion

In this module, we've examined POUR, the four principles governing web content accessibility standards, and explored how they apply to PDF documents. In the following module, we will apply the WCAG standards and outline the manual processes involved in making an accessible PDF.