WebAIM Quick Reference: Web Accessibility Principles

Principles of Accessibility

• **Perceivable** - Available through sight, hearing, or touch.
• **Operable** - Compatible with keyboard, mouse, voice control, and other devices.
• **Understandable** - Easy to comprehend.
• **Robust** - Works across browsers, assistive technologies, mobile devices, etc. Follows standards.
  ➢ [webaim.org/articles/pour](http://webaim.org/articles/pour)

Alternative Text

• Every non-text element needs a text equivalent (often conveyed in the `alt` attribute) to provide an alternative to the image content.
• The `alt` attribute should present the content and function of an image, but not necessarily a detailed description.
• If an image is decorative, or redundant to nearby text, it should have empty alternative text (`alt=""`).
• If an image is a link or hotspot, the `alt` text must describe the link’s function.
• Words like "picture of," "image of," or "link to" are redundant. Screen readers already identify images and links by default.
• Ensure alternative text is as succinct as necessary.
  ➢ [webaim.org/techniques/alttext/](http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/)

Readability

• Use the simplest language appropriate to your content and audience.
• Use white space (line length, text spacing) to improve readability.
• Supplement text with images and icons.
• Check spelling, grammar, and reading grade level.

Content Navigation

• Create semantic structure with regions, headings, and lists.
• Provide a skip link to help users get straight to the main page content.

Data Tables

• Identify data table headers with `<th scope="col">` for column headers and `<th scope="row">` for row headers.
• If appropriate, add a `<caption>` for the data table.
  ➢ [webaim.org/techniques/tables/](http://webaim.org/techniques/tables/)

Color

• Color can enhance comprehension, but do not use color alone to convey information. Be especially cautious of red/green color combinations.
• Ensure that text, icons, and user interface elements have strong luminance contrast.
  ➢ [webaim.org/articles/visual/colorblind/](http://webaim.org/articles/visual/colorblind/)

Forms

• Position form labels adjacent to or near their controls, so the labels are associated visually.
• Use `<label>` to associate labels with controls programmatically.
• Use `<fieldset>` and `<legend>` to group related controls (like radio buttons) with a higher-level label.
• Clearly identify required form elements. Don’t make a field required if it is not necessary. Ensure all directions and cues are readily accessible.
• Ensure validation errors are obvious to screen reader users, and that users can easily make corrections and resubmit the form.
  ➢ [webaim.org/techniques/forms/](http://webaim.org/techniques/forms/)

Links and Buttons

• Ensure links and buttons contain descriptive text.
• Avoid generic phrases such as "click here", "here", "more", "more information", "read more", "continue," etc.
• Ensure links can be visually differentiated from other page content.

Multimedia

• Videos and live audio must have captions and a transcript.
• Captions must be synchronized, equivalent, and accessible.
• Archived audio must have a transcript.
  ➢ [webaim.org/techniques/captions/](http://webaim.org/techniques/captions/)

Documents

• For the most robust accessibility, use HTML instead of proprietary document formats.
• When only a document will do, PDF, Word, PowerPoint, and Excel provide basic accessibility features.
• If document content cannot be made fully accessible, provide an accessible alternative.
• Test document accessibility in a screen reader.

Miscellaneous

• Ensure that content reflows without breaking layout up to 400% zoom (from a 1280 pixel wide viewport).
• Ensure responsive layouts and structures are keyboard accessible. Provide a descriptive page `<title>`.
• Ensure functionality available to mouse users is also available via the keyboard.
• Make all scripted and dynamic content, dialog pop-ups, and page widgets available to screen readers. ARIA, when used appropriately, can be helpful.
• Ensure the web page language is defined (e.g., `<html lang="en">`).
• Implement and test to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

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