Top 7 Things for Digital Accessibility

(This document was inspired by The University of British Columbia's *OER Accessibility Toolkit*.)

For the digital accessibility of websites, apps, and documents, these Top 7 Things are crucial:

1. No Mouse Challenge
2. Headings
3. Color Contrast
4. Alt Text
5. Link Text
6. Captions and Transcripts
7. Testing Document Types (like PDFs or things made with Canva)

No Mouse Challenge

Being able to navigate a website, an app, or a document completely without a mouse is a great test of accessibility. Success with the No Mouse Challenge means not only that you can navigate without a mouse but also that the website was correctly designed for accessibility. Try the No Mouse Challenge with your favorite website. What do you notice?

- http://www.washington.edu/
- https://www.lib.washington.edu/
- https://www.nytimes.com/
- https://feralatlas.supdigital.org/

Headings

With headings, the general rule is that any page should have just one Heading 1 (H1) and that a Heading 2 (H2) should follow an H1. You can have as many H2's as you want. Heading 3 (H3) must follow H2, and you can have as many H3's as you want. Headings that are consistent and hierarchical organize information for people who use screen readers and save them time. It's

unbelievable how many websites have bad heading structure. (The WAVE tool says espn.com has 180 errors on its homepage, and some of those errors are headings, like no H1.)

Accessibility Bookmarklets is a tool you can install in your bookmarks toolbar to inspect headings.

WAVE evaluation tool is something you can install as a plugin in Firefox and Chrome. This tool measures lots of things (like color contrast and alt text) aside from just heading structure.

Color contrast

WCAG 2.2AA is very specific about accessible color contrast. It's amazing how many "minimalist, modern" website templates like to use thin gray text against a white background. Weebly sites seem to have lots of contrast issues.

Contrast checker is great if you know the HEX codes of the colors you're using for a website or infographic you're making. (For example, the UW brand has certain HEX codes for certain colors.)

Eye dropper is a plugin you can use in Chrome to figure out the HEX codes of colors in websites.

Alt text

It is important to include alternative text (or "alt text") with any image you include in a document, a slide presentation, an infographic, or a website. Some platforms (like Google Docs or Word Docs or Wordpress) make it very easy to add alt text, while other platforms make it hard or don't provide the functionality to do so. There are lots of debates and discussions about how to write good alt text – not to mention how much text you should include – but in general you want to keep it short and direct and think about your audience.

Writing Effective Image Descriptions or "Alt Text" has some guidance about writing alt text.

WAVE evaluation tool can tell you if alt text is present in a website.

Accessibility Bookmarklets can tell you if alt text is present, too.

Link text

Link text is the text that you put a link into, and you want your link text to let your readers know where you're taking them. For example, if you make your link text Click Here, there is nothing about "Click Here" that tells people where you're taking them.

You also don't want to give people long, convoluted links in your documents or web pages or infographics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOS0yf74xMI&list=PLVQ3aPZNFf0HHMqz80wLg_9LZlWY70pBk

So, instead, make sure to put your links into text that is accurate and descriptive. For example, to learn more about link text, you can go to Google developer recommendations.

Captions and Transcripts

If you are including audio-visual media in your teaching – or if you're making AV work – then you want to include captions and/or transcripts. Using machine learning to include captions and transcripts can save you a lot of time, but don't skip the step of making sure those captions are accurate and editing them if they are not. Machine learning makes lots of mistakes and has a deep, programmed bias against accurately captioning the ways groups of people talk.

You can use UW Panopto to add captions to videos. (This will work only for people at the UW.) Panopto has better privacy protections than regular YouTube or even UW Youtube.

You can use YouTube to add captions to videos.

ClipChamp, which is an app that's included in your UW Microsoft Office 365 suite of apps, will make machine-learning captions for videos you make.

Otter.ai is a machine-learning-captions service that offers 300 free minutes of transcription a month. (That's very little if you're working on an oral history project but maybe enough for students working on a podcast assignment.)

If you go into your Zoom settings, you can save captions and make a transcript.

Accessible documents

Many of the ways that websites can go wrong (bad headings, no alt text, bad link text, bad color contrast) are also ways that documents can fail. PDFs are notorious for being inaccessible, Canva can make inaccessible infographics, and EPUBs can have poor accessibility.

With regard to PDFs, a classic trick to see if one *might* be accessible is to try and select text. If you can at least select text (like how you would select text when copying and pasting) then that's something of a good sign. UW Accessible technology has more guidance for checking PDFs for accessibility.

Ace by DAISY is a tool you can use for checking EPUBs.

Otherwise, as you'd do for a website, you can check different document types (like Google Docs, Word Docs) for things like headings, color contrast, alt text, and link text.

The scanners in the UW Libraries have Optical Character Recognition (OCR), so if you make a good, clean scan, there is a good chance it will be accessible.