

Understanding Success Criterion 3.2.6: Consistent Help

Success Criterion [3.2.6 Consistent Help](#) (Level A): For each [web page](#) within a [set of web pages](#) that provides one or more of the following ways of finding help, access to at least one form of help is included in the same relative order on each page:

- Human contact details;
- Human contact mechanism;
- Self-help option;
- A fully automated contact mechanism.

Access to help mechanisms may be provided directly on the page, or may be provided via a direct link to a different page containing the information.

Status

This understanding document is part of the [draft WCAG 2.2 content](#). It may change or be removed before the final WCAG 2.2 is published.

Intent

The intent of this success criterion is to ensure users can find help for completing tasks on a Web site, when it is available. This is distinct from interface-level help, such as contextual help, features like spell checkers, and instructional text in a form.

Locating the help mechanism in a consistent location across pages makes it easier for users to find it. For example, when a mechanism or link is located in the header of one Web page, it will be easier to find if it is in the header of other pages.

The location in a smaller viewport may be different than in a larger viewport but the mechanism or link should be consistent across a set of web pages. The location should remain consistent both visually and programmatically.

When having problems completing a task on a Web site (or part of a Web site, what we call a [set of Web pages](#)), people with some types of disabilities may not be able to work through the issue without further help. Issues could include difficulty: completing a form, or finding a document or page which provides information required to complete a task.

Without help, some users may abandon the task. They may also fail to correctly complete a task, or they may require assistance from people who do not necessarily keep private information secure.

Self help methods beyond the site, such as using internet search to find the contact information for an organization, can be too difficult. Further, the user's disability may make it more difficult to find the help available (such as a "contact us" link, phone number, or support page) if the information is not present within a few interactions (e.g., displayed in the header, or via a menu). In addition, for some users with disabilities, struggling to complete a task on a site may cause additional cognitive challenges when searching for help within the site.

When a user is quickly able to find help, they are able to complete the task even if they encounter challenges.

At least one of the following mechanisms to get help should be included on all websites:

- Human contact details such as a phone number, email address, hours of operation.
- Human contact mechanism such as a messaging system, chat client, contact form, social media channel.
- Self-help option such as an up-to-date Frequently Asked Questions, How Do I page, Support page.
- A fully automated contact mechanism such as a chatbot.

While it would be best for all sites to offer at least one of these types of help, this SC does not require help be provided. The SC requires that when help is available that it be in a consistent location.

The human contact details should enable the user to connect with the organization or the part of the organization that can assist with the content. For example, an online jobs / recruitment portal should provide a contact method for the team that supports the recruitment portal and not a catch-all for the entire company. Each layer of contact added prolongs the time before the user will receive help.

The human contact mechanism enables a person to express what they are looking for using their own words. For some with cognitive disabilities, this may be the best way for them to find an answer to their problem.

For pages for which no human support is available, a self-help option should say that no human support is available. Self-help options should go beyond allowing the user to search within the site. Contextual help is still recommended (See SC 3.3.5 for more information) but a self-help option should provide a single location that makes it easier for people with cognitive disabilities to understand what help is available without having to hunt for it. While some people may easily be able to identify that no support would be available for a particular type of Web site, this may not be apparent to some users with disabilities.

If a chatbot is provided, it should meet other WCAG Success Criteria for your conformance level. Chatbots which work more effectively for everyone, and particularly for people with cognitive disabilities should:

- recognize misspelled words,
- provide human contact details if the chatbot is unable to provide a satisfactory response after 3 attempts, and
- be dismissed with a single interaction, and recalled using a link or button.

It is not the intent of this Success Criterion to require authors to provide help information on PDFs or other static documents that may be available for viewing/download from the Web pages. It is also not the intent to require contact information if:

- A Web site is not supported,
- Content is archived, or
- When finding help would invalidate the activity such as in a testing situation.

It is also not the intent of this Success Criterion to require a human be available at all times. If the human contact is not available during certain hours or certain days, information should be provided so the user can tell when it will be available.

Benefits

- This Success Criterion helps people who may have difficulty locating help that is not part of the page they are using. Ensuring they can connect with help allows them to complete the task.
- When a user can easily find help for their specific questions, they are more successful completing tasks.

- Users that experience cognitive fatigue or cognitive shut down will be able to reserve their energy for the task, instead of using it to find support.
- Enabling users (especially those with cognitive disabilities) to find solutions while expressing their question using their own words increases their chances of success for completing a task.

Examples

- On-line job application - Some of the application questions may be hard for new job seekers to understand even after reading the contextual help. For example, the form may request their identification number, but they may have several and not know which one to enter. Easily findable contact information will enable them to use phone or email so they can get an answer to their question.
- Medical appointment scheduling form - When the service a patient is trying to book is not easily findable within the interface, they may need human help. A built-in messaging option (chat client) enables them to quickly interact with a staff person that can help, without requiring them to manage a second interface.
- Finding a specific policy or procedure - An employee who needs to complete a work task may have difficulty locating the specific policy or procedure document on their employer's Web site. A How Do I page may include the information that enables them to independently complete this task.

Techniques

Each numbered item in this section represents a technique or combination of techniques that the WCAG Working Group deems sufficient for meeting this Success Criterion. However, it is not necessary to use these particular techniques. For information on using other techniques, see [Understanding Techniques for WCAG Success Criteria](#), particularly the "Other Techniques" section.

Sufficient Techniques

1. [G220: Provide a contact-us link](#)

Failures

The following are common mistakes that are considered failures of this Success Criterion by the WCAG Working Group.

- Inconsistent Help Location

Key Terms

assistive technology

hardware and/or software that acts as a [user agent](#), or along with a mainstream user agent, to provide functionality to meet the requirements of users with disabilities that go beyond those offered by mainstream user agents

NOTE

functionality provided by assistive technology includes alternative presentations (e.g., as synthesized speech or magnified content), alternative input methods (e.g., voice), additional navigation or orientation mechanisms, and content transformations (e.g., to make tables more accessible).

NOTE

Assistive technologies often communicate data and messages with mainstream user agents by using and monitoring APIs.

NOTE

The distinction between mainstream user agents and assistive technologies is not absolute. Many mainstream user agents provide some features to assist individuals with disabilities. The basic difference is that mainstream user agents target broad and diverse audiences that usually include people with and without disabilities. Assistive technologies target narrowly defined populations of users with specific disabilities. The assistance provided by an assistive technology is more specific and appropriate to the needs of its target users. The mainstream user agent may provide important functionality to assistive technologies like retrieving Web content from program objects or parsing markup into identifiable bundles.

Assistive technologies that are important in the context of this document include the following:

- screen magnifiers, and other visual reading assistants, which are used by people with visual, perceptual and physical print disabilities to change text font, size, spacing, color, synchronization with speech, etc. in order to improve the visual readability of rendered text and images;
- screen readers, which are used by people who are blind to read textual information through synthesized speech or braille;
- text-to-speech software, which is used by some people with cognitive, language, and learning disabilities to convert text into synthetic speech;
- speech recognition software, which may be used by people who have some physical disabilities;

- alternative keyboards, which are used by people with certain physical disabilities to simulate the keyboard (including alternate keyboards that use head pointers, single switches, sip/puff and other special input devices.);
- alternative pointing devices, which are used by people with certain physical disabilities to simulate mouse pointing and button activations.

set of web pages

collection of [web pages](#) that share a common purpose and that are created by the same author, group or organization

Examples include a publication which is split across multiple Web pages, where each page contains one chapter or other significant section of the work. The publication is logically a single contiguous unit, and contains navigation features that enable access to the full set of pages.

NOTE

Different language versions would be considered different sets of Web pages.

user agent

any software that retrieves and presents Web content for users

Web browsers, media players, plug-ins, and other programs — including [assistive technologies](#) — that help in retrieving, rendering, and interacting with Web content.

web page

a non-embedded resource obtained from a single URI using HTTP plus any other resources that are used in the rendering or intended to be rendered together with it by a [user agent](#)

NOTE

Although any "other resources" would be rendered together with the primary resource, they would not necessarily be rendered simultaneously with each other.

NOTE

For the purposes of conformance with these guidelines, a resource must be "non-embedded" within the scope of conformance to be considered a Web page.

A Web resource including all embedded images and media.

A Web mail program built using Asynchronous JavaScript and XML (AJAX). The program lives entirely at <http://example.com/mail>, but includes an inbox, a contacts area and a calendar. Links or buttons are provided that cause the inbox, contacts, or calendar to display, but do not change the URI of the page as a whole.

A customizable portal site, where users can choose content to display from a set of different content modules.

When you enter "<http://shopping.example.com/>" in your browser, you enter a movie-like interactive shopping environment where you visually move around in a store dragging products off of the shelves around you and into a visual shopping cart in front of you. Clicking on a product causes it to be demonstrated with a specification sheet floating alongside. This might be a single-page Web site or just one page within a Web site.