

Content accessibility checklist

A resource from Substrakt

Top 5 content accessibility checks:

- ☐ Write in plain English, using short sentences, avoiding jargon and formal language, and using the active voice.
- ☐ Use headings to divide text into chunks, allowing users to scan the content on a page and find what they are looking for.
- ☐ Use headings hierarchically, with the <h1> representing the most important idea on the page, and sub-sections organised with <h2> level headings.
- ☐ Write descriptive and concise [image alt text](#) for informational images. Don't start alt text with 'Graphic of' or 'Image of'
- ☐ Use specific language for links, (for example 'register now') not 'click here', 'read more' or 'more...'

The full content accessibility checklist:

Writing and language

- ☐ Write in plain English, using short sentences, avoiding jargon and formal language, and using the active voice.
- ☐ Aim for a [readability grade](#) of 8.
- ☐ Start with what matters most to your audience. Background, context and details can follow.

 Tool: Use the [Hemingway app](#) to check and improve writing.

Presenting written content

- ☐ Use headings to divide text into chunks, allowing users to scan the content on a page and find what they are looking for.
- ☐ Use bullets or numbered lists where appropriate, using the list styles in your web editor (rather than creating your own using spaces and dashes).
- ☐ Avoid underlining text, unless it is a link.
- ☐ Avoid italics and all caps, as they can be harder to read.
- ☐ Use bold text sparingly, it can be distracting.

Structuring headings

- ☐ All pages should at least have a <h1> level heading giving the title of the page.
- ☐ Use headings hierarchically, with the <h1> representing the most important idea on the page, and sub-sections organised with <h2> level headings.
- ☐ Avoid skipping heading ranks as this can be confusing. Ideally, make sure that a <h2> is not followed directly by an <h4>, for example. It is ok to skip ranks when closing

subsections, for instance, a <h2> beginning a new section, can follow an <h4> as it closes the previous section.

- ☐ Do not use bold instead of a heading. Although the text may look like a heading, the underlying code is not set correctly and screen reader users will not benefit.

 Tool: Install the [HeadingsMap](#) chrome extension to check your heading structure

Writing link text

- ☐ Use specific language for links, (for example 'register now') not 'click here', 'read more' or 'more...'
- ☐ Make sure the link text makes sense out of context.

Images and multimedia

- ☐ Where possible, use photos, illustrations and diagrams that aid the reader's understanding.
- ☐ Avoid embedding text within images.
- ☐ Write descriptive and concise [image alt text](#) for informational images. Don't start alt text with 'Graphic of' or 'Image of'.
- ☐ Image alt text is not necessary for decorative images
- ☐ Provide subtitles for any videos with spoken dialogue or where sound provides contextual meaning.
- ☐ Provide transcripts for audio files

 Tool: Use the [Alt-text decision tree](#) to determine whether your image needs alt-text

Colour

- ☐ Avoid relying on colour alone to convey meaning (many people are colourblind).
- ☐ Ensure colours have sufficient contrast between the text colour and background. This includes text on images, icons and buttons.

 Tool: Check colours using a [contrast checker](#)

PDFs

- ☐ Build content as a web page first.
- ☐ Use more accessible document formats such as Word or Google docs.
- ☐ Provide PDFs only as an alternative format and for specific use cases (such as for printing).
- ☐ Do not present PDFs through [inaccessible platforms](#) such as Issuu.