

Make your website more accessible!

Top 5 tips

The pandemic forced the world to go digital in a way that had never been seen before and with this there has been a huge highlight in the digital divide. Digital exclusion happens in a variety of different ways and affects everyone differently. One of the ways you can help to promote digital inclusion is by making your website more accessible, so here are five tips to help you along the way.

1 – Font size

Font size should be at a minimum of 16px. This helps improve the readability and makes your written content clear. You can go bigger than 16px and it is recommended to use larger font sizes for different elements e.g. the title or subheadings to make it clear to the reader where their attention needs to be focused on first. This one is quite a quick and easy win to help make your website more user friendly.

<https://w3-lab.com/website-font-size-guidelines/>

2 – Borrow a nine year old

It's important that everyone is able to understand the content you put on your website otherwise it isn't inclusive. Most guides tell you to use language which is 'clear and easy to understand' and the way you can test your content is by borrowing a friend's nine year old – or use yours if you have one. Ask them to read the content on your website to see if they can understand it. Anything they have difficulty reading or understanding should be simplified to make your website more accessible. The average reading age in the UK is 9-15 years old, so by asking someone from this age group to test your content you will be able to find out if it is accessible for most people.

If you don't have a child handy then you can use the Hemmingway app to help you find out the reading age of your website - <https://hemingwayapp.com/>

<https://digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/knowledge/how-to-make-your-online-content-accessible/>

<https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2016/04/06/guest-post-looking-at-the-different-ways-to-test-content/>

3 – Audio and written content

If you have any videos or audio clips its useful to provide closed captions or subtitles for people who are deaf or hard of hearing so that they can enjoy the content too. The difference between the two is that subtitles provide translation for speech whereas closed captions also describe other audio cues such as background music. You could also provide a transcript of audio content by either setting some time aside for yourself or one of your colleagues to write the transcript or paying an external service to help with this. If you have a bigger budget, you could include BSL translation on videos which can be more engaging as it allows the user to watch rather than just read.

You should also make sure that any written content can be heard in an audio format. You could either be provide an audio clip of someone reading out the written content on the page or ensure the page is screen-reader friendly.

You can read more about making your website screen-reader friendly here -

<https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/topics/5-best-practice-tips-to-make-your-charity-social-media-posts-more-accessible-7870>

4 – No mouse – no problem

Making your webpage keyboard accessible means that users can access all elements of your website just at the click of a keyboard button and without using a mouse. Without keyboard access, your website may not be accessible for people with motor disabilities as they may experience difficulties using a computer mouse due to tremors. Enabling keyboard access on your website means that even more people can share and enjoy your content.

You can find out more about keyboard accessibility here -

<https://webaim.org/techniques/keyboard/>



5 – User testing with people who have lived experience

The best way to ensure your website is accessible is to ask for help from people with lived experience of disability to test the website. They are best placed to tell you how you can make their user experience more accessible and seamless. When developing new websites, services or anything else,



accessibility needs to be ingrained in the entire process from the beginning, not just something you try to fit in later on.

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/involving-users/>

You can read all of the key recommendations for website accessibility in this guide -

<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#intro>