

## Ten Quick Tests to Check your Website for Accessibility

The DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) says that websites must be made accessible to blind and disabled people. So how can you check that your website actually has good accessibility? There are a number of **basic tests** you can make to address some of the main accessibility issues. The following list includes guidelines that provide a good start in increasing accessibility to disabled people:

### *1. Check informational images for alternative text*

In Internet Explorer place the cursor over an informational image, for example, the organisation logo. Does a yellow box appear with a brief, accurate description of the image? For users whose browsers don't support images, this alternative text is what they'll see (or hear) in place of the image.

### *2. Check decorative images for alternative text*

Place the cursor over a decorative image that doesn't have any function other than to look nice. Does a yellow box appear with a description of the image? It shouldn't. This image serves no purpose so there's no reason for users whose browsers don't support images to know that it's here.

Be careful though as this **isn't a foolproof test**. If a yellow box doesn't appear, this could mean one of two things:

- The alternative text of the image is assigned a null value (**alt=""**), which means that it will be ignored by browsers that don't support images. This is the **ideal scenario**.
- The alternative text of the image is simply not set at all, which means that users whose browsers do not support images will be alerted to its existence but will be unable to find out what purpose it carries - something which is very frustrating! This is certainly **not the desired outcome**.

### *3. 'Listen' to video or audio content with the volume turned off*

If you turn your speakers off, you're clearly unable to listen to, or follow, any audio content. This situation is faced by a deaf person on a daily basis. Ensure your website supplies **subtitles or written transcripts** so that this type of content is accessible to hearing impaired users.

### *4. Check that forms are accessible*

Usually there's prompt text next to each item in a form. For example, a contact form might have the prompt text **'name'**, **'e-mail'** and **'comments'**, each one next to a box where site users will enter their details.

When you click on the prompt text, does a flashing cursor appear in the box next to that text? **If not, your forms aren't accessible.**

### *5. Ensure that text can be resized*

Can the text size on your website be adjusted? If not, then your website isn't accessible to web users with poor visibility. To check in Internet Explorer go to **'View > Text size > Largest'**. Alternatively, scroll with the wheel of your mouse whilst holding down the control key.

## ***6. Check your website in the Lynx browser***

The Lynx browser is a text-only browser and doesn't support many of the features that other browsers such as Internet Explorer have. You can check how your site looks in this browser with the [Lynx Viewer](#).

If your website makes sense and can be navigated through the Lynx browser, then it'll be fulfilling many of the web accessibility guidelines.

## ***7. Check you can access all areas of your website without the use of a mouse***

Can you navigate through your website using just tab, shift-tab and return? If not, then neither can keyboard- and voice-only users.

## ***8. Check there's a site map***

Can you find a site map? If not, then neither can people who are lost on your website.

## ***9. Ensure link text makes sense out of context***

Visually impaired Internet users often browse websites by tabbing from one link to the next. Does all the link text on your website make sense out of context? 'Click here' and 'more' are two common examples of non-descriptive link text that can cause a website to suffer poor accessibility.

## ***10. Check your web pages with an automated program***

Two accessibility programs available for free on the Internet are [Bobby](#) and [Wave](#). They're unable to provide you with all the information that you need, as some accessibility checks must be done by humans, but they can tell you some of the areas where your site might be going wrong.

This article was written by Trenton Moss. He knows an awful lot about [accessibility](#) and the [Disability Discrimination Act](#).

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