Website Accessibility

Text

Use a sans serif typeface, like Arial or Karla as it is easier to read for visually impaired people. A large font equivalent to Arial 14 is a good size – the alternative is to have a Large Print button at the top of the home page.

The text should be colour-contrasted with its surroundings– like black/white, yellow/blue, green/white. Many visually impaired people find it easier to read reverse coloured text – e.g. white characters (#FFFFFF), on racing green (#006600) background. See this page for examples.

The visited links colour should be a different colour and shade, so that people with colour-blindness or other visual impairments can distinguish it.

Images

Pictures / pictograms / icons help many people with learning disabilities, but can be a hindrance to people using voice software like Hal / Supernova (text-reader software). Where pictures are included, make sure the alt tags say what they are or what they do (e.g.: click here for Toyota cars)

When creating graphics with text, make sure the text doesn't overlay an image. This can make the text difficult to read for the visually impaired, as screen readers may not be able to identify the text, and some people with dyslexia may also find it hard to differentiate the text from the image.

Further information

Frames

Frames are about the most unhelpful thing for blind and visually impaired people, firstly because it is not easy to see what is going on, secondly, because most Text Reader software works from left to right (in the West), so someone using, for example, Supernova or a screen reader may be jumping from frame to frame and what they hear wont make sense.

Tables

Tables are inaccessible for many with visual impairments and some screen readers.

Forms

Web-based forms can usually be read by text readers, but it’s worthwhile including a “print” button, for people who can’t use the online version.

Document downloads

If written in Adobe Acrobat 7 or above, .pdf files can be read by text readers like Jaws, but not all screen readers, therefore it is best practice to offer documents in Word and in pdf

Structure

A logical and easy-to-follow structure may be the most important thing in making a website accessible:

avoid clutter keep the homepage as simple as possible pay particular attention to how you map out the site – the fewer clicks for a person to get to the information they want, the better – it is a resource not a Treasure Hunt

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Check Out

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Available at: www.w3.org/WAI/
