



# GUIDELINES

## For Accessible Online Content



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The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.  
~ Helen Keller

## **MISSION**

“Our mission is to promote Lionism by ensuring that it is accessible to everyone by removing barriers for those who face visible and none-visible challenges and by creating a culture of inclusion and acceptance.”

## **INTRODUCTION**

Before the word Accessibility became mainstream, Lions Clubs have championed for the needs of individuals with disabilities through its sight programs. The incentive? Helen Keller’s challenge for Lions Clubs International to become Knights of Blind at its 1925 convention. With such a long history of helping those who navigate the world a little differently, it is not a leap in a time where online communication has been a main way of sharing information to look at ways to make online content easier for individuals with physical disabilities to consume.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

This Guidelines for Accessible Online Content will provide ways for Lions Clubs to easily make their online content more accessible for individuals with primarily visual and auditory disabilities. Guidelines are based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), that web developers use as the standards with which to build online content. The document will cover the following areas:

1. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
2. Web Content Accessibility Guides (WCAG) 2.0
3. Web Content Guidelines
4. Word and PDF Guidelines
5. Social Media Guildelines

NOTE: This document assumes that the majority of individuals creating online content for their respective Lions Clubs do not have a web development or accessibility background. The recommendations presented in this document provide the greatest impact for making content accessible in the easiest way possible. Today, most programs have built-in tools to help make content accessible electronically.

## **AODA**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is an Ontario law which ensures that all Ontarians, including those with physical and medical disabilities, have the legal right to fair and equitable access to programs, services, and physical buildings. There are five main standards which outline accessibility guidelines that all levels of government, private organizations, and non-profits must comply with in order to meet the requirements of this legislation.

### **AODA STANDARDS IMPACTING LIONS CLUBS**

As non-profits which run events, communicate using electronic methods and share information online, Lions/Lioness Clubs are most impacted by the Information and Communication Standards and Customer Service Standards.

The **Information and Communication Standard** gives guidelines for organizations to develop and provide information for individuals with disabilities. Note: All internet, websites and web content meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards by January 1, 2021. For more information on this standard visit: <https://www.aoda.ca/what-is-the-information-and-communications-standards/>.

The **Customer Service Standard** outlines accessibility guidelines for organizations which provide goods and services to the public, including documentation requirements. For more information in the Customer Service Standard visit <https://www.aoda.ca/customer-care-standard/>. For details on how to comply with the Customer Service Standard visit

the Customer Service Guide at <https://www.aoda.ca/customer-care-guide/>.

Note: For this document, the focus will be on the Information and Communication Standard with the goal on how to easily make online content more accessible for individuals with visual and hearing impairments.

## **WCAG 2.0 LEVEL AA STANDARDS**

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 outlines the guidelines for making Web content more accessible for individuals with physical and medical disabilities. The WCAG 2.0 covers four principles:

- *Perceivable – ensures individuals can access information*
- *Operable – ensures individuals can navigate content*
- *Understandable – ensures individuals can read and comprehend information*
- *Robust – ensures individuals can use assistive technologies such as screen readers to interpret content*

A deep dive into explaining how to make web content fully accessible is beyond the scope of this beginner document. This document will focus on meeting the WCAG 2.0 standards that deal with color contrast, page structure (heading hierarchy, content layout) and media/graphics (image descriptions, timing, text alternatives, and flashing). Note: Most web-based platforms such as Facebook and website builders such as WordPress include accessibility features for individuals with mobility issues.

# WEB CONTENT

Website development typically comes to mind when thinking about making web content accessible. However, the WCAG 2.0 guidelines can help remove barriers in online content, for example social media, websites, email, electronic Word documents and PDFs, for individuals with disabilities. Making some small and easy changes helps individuals with disabilities to be able to read your information.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR WEB ACCESSIBILITY

There are a number of simple considerations that can be made in order to make online content more accessible. For specifics on each standard, refer to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

- **Text Alternative for Images:**

Individuals with vision loss are not able to visually see images embedded in online content. Alternative text provides a word equivalent for an image which allows everyone to understand the context of an image. Text alternatives are added behind the scenes in special alt tags that can be read by a screen reader or seen when an image fails to load in a web browser.

- **Image Descriptions:**

Similar to text alternatives, images descriptions provide a text equivalent for images that are included in online content. Image descriptions are written either below or above the image describing the context of the image as well as any text included on the image. Image descriptions benefit all individuals as they make reading text on images easier for individuals who are sighted as well as those with vision loss.

- **Video Descriptions:**

Amateur Lions Club videographers may not have the technology to add closed captioning and embed video descriptions into their videos. A brief video description, similar to an image description, will help bring the content of videos to life. A transcript of the video audio enables dialogue to be read by individuals who are deaf. For each video, write a summary of the visual content and include any text that is contained within the video.
- **Animation:**

Animations that flash or change images too quickly can cause seizures. In order to solve this concern, reduce animations, blinking or image changes to no more than three animations per second. As well, animations that are triggered when individuals interact with them need to have a way to disable them. Animations and videos also need a way to start and stop them.
- **Explain Infographics:**

Screen readers are unable to read text on images. When adding images which are graphs, tables, infographics, or text-based, add a text description that explains the image in detail and translates the text. Too many words in an alt tag is difficult for screen readers to navigate through.
- **Contrast Colors:**

Color contrast deals with the contrast ratio between the foreground color (quite often the text color) and the background color. If the contrast ratio is too low, for example black text on a dark blue background or light-yellow text on a white background, even sighted individuals will have difficulty reading the text. WCAG 2.1 asks for a minimum of 4.5 to 1 contrast ratio for readability. An easy rule of thumb is a light color on a dark background and a dark color on a light background.



- **Use of Colors and Shapes:**

Web based designs often use only color or shapes to indicate an action, convey information, or distinguish visual elements. For individuals with color blindness, low vision or assistive technologies, this practice will stop them from being able to complete certain tasks. When using colors or shapes to draw attention to content or actions, add additional information such as button labels and instructions with clear directions on what to do and where to find the element. For example, an order form uses a green arrow that needs to be selected in order to move on to the next page. To make this element accessible, add the word 'Next' and add instructions for the location and action required for the arrow.

- **Weblinks:**

Hyperlinks are common elements found in online content that provide a link to a second element. Weblinks are such a basic function in online content that it is important to make sure they are accessible by using the following best practices:

- a. Links need to look like links and be distinguishable from the surrounding content. In order to achieve this, underline and make the link a different color from the surrounding text. Ensure non-clickable elements (text and images) included in the content do not look like links as this will create frustration for your audience.
- b. Length of a weblink is important:
  - i. Long Links, for example when paragraphs are made into a weblink, are difficult for screen readers. Screen readers listen to content in its entirety and are not able to skim through long links.
  - ii. Short Links, for example a single character, can be difficult for individuals to click on. Individuals with motor issues may not have the muscle control needed to be able to precisely click on a small area.

- c. Link phrases need to make sense out of content. For example, avoid phrases such as click here, here, more, link to, info and other non-informative link phrases.
- d. Links should never be left empty as links that do not connect to content can be confusing for keyboard and screen reader users.
- e. Image links require alt text which describes the image and explains the link's function. For example, arrow icon which opens the next page of the order form.

- **Headings:**

Headings serve as descriptive and organizational sign posts to help individuals, especially those using screen readers, understand the relationship between sections of information on a page. Use the following guidelines to help guide individuals through online content:

1. Write headings that describe what information individuals can expect in an upcoming section. This is especially helpful for individuals with disabilities that make reading slow and those with short-term memories.
2. Rank headings according to importance. Microsoft Office and Web Site Building software provide hierarchically heading styles that enable individuals to add Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, etc. tags to content headings. These enable assistive technology users to easily navigate through online content. Each page should only have one Heading 1 title located at the top of the page. Subsequent sections would begin with Heading 2 titles and sub-sections with Heading 3 titles and so on. Note: most online pages will only have one main title (Heading One); possibly a few section titles (Heading Two) and the occasional sub-section title (Heading Three).

3. Use the proper styles for headings rather than bolding or enlarging paragraph text. The text may look like a heading, however for screen reader users, the underlying code will read as paragraph text and not provide a way for them to easily navigate online content.

# WORD AND PDF DOCUMENTS

Screen readers navigate Word and PDF documents in a similar manner to web content using headings, content structure, and alt text to read the content. Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat have built-in tools that make creating accessible documents easy.

## HOW TO MAKE ACCESSIBLE PDFS

PDFs have the unique challenge of not always being created in a linear fashion which means screen readers don't read the page in a logical order unless the content pieces on a page are organized properly.

To help individuals with visual disabilities easily read a PDF, the following needs to be addressed: identified page elements, organized content, and described images. Adobe Acrobat Pro includes an accessibility tool which addresses these needs. Note, this tool is not available in Adobe Acrobat Reader.

In Acrobat Pro, select the accessibility tool. To start, select the Reading Order tab. With this dialogue box open, hold down the left mouse key and draw a box around an element on the page, for example the top-level heading. Once highlighted, the buttons options will appear. Click the button which best reflects what the element is, for example Heading 1 for the main title; Heading 2 for subsequent headings; text/paragraph for content, and figure for images.

Once all the elements in the document have been identified, click the Show Order Panel button. This will allow the content to be organized in a logical reading order. Each element will have a number which indicates the order in which it will be read. Use the list on the left-hand side to drag the elements into the correct reading order.

Once the elements have been identified and the content organized, select the Set Alternative Text tab to add description text for the page figures. Once completed, click the Save & Close button. You are done.

To test how a page will read for an individual with a vision disability, in the navigation bar, select View > Read Out Loud > Activate Read Out Loud and then Read Page or Document.

For more information on creating Accessible PDFs using Adobe Acrobat Pro visit <https://helpx.adobe.com/ca/acrobat/using/creating-accessible-pdfs.html>.

## **HOW TO MAKE ACCESSIBLE WORD DOCUMENTS**

Similar to the way that the content of PDFs is organized, Word documents have accessibility options to ensure that titles are appropriately tagged and images have descriptive text for screen readers to read. Word also has an added feature under Review > Check Accessibility that analyzes a document and provides feedback for areas that do not meet accessibility standards. This tool can be kept open while the document is being worked on.

The following are guidelines to follow in order to make your word documents more accessible.

- **Tag Content:** Use the Styles selector to format document text as a Heading One (main title); Heading Two (second level titles); Normal (paragraph text), etc.
- **Describe Images:** To add descriptions to document images, highlight the image by clicking on it > mouse right click the image > select Edit alt text from the menu > add the image description in the Alt Text dialogue box.
- **Set Link Targets:** Select Insert > Links from the Navigation bar. Click the link icon. Once you have added the display text and url for the link in the open dialogue box, select the Target Frame button > New Window from the dropdown menu.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are valuable forums for sharing club information. For individuals with vision disabilities though, being able to fully participate in social media content, especially being able to understand images and videos, can be difficult without it being made accessible. Social media platforms have added tools to help make certain content accessible.

## FACEBOOK POSTS

For more Lions/Lioness Clubs, Facebook is the primary means for sharing news updates about what the club is up to. Posts often include images, oftentimes with embedded text that are not able to be read by a screen reader. As well as the accessibility guidelines found in the Web Content section of this document, the following best practices will make your content 'readable' for individuals using assistive technologies.

### Image Descriptions:

Images included on a Facebook post require a text description that visually describes the essence of the image as well as any text contained on the image. The description is added to the end of a Facebook post.

### Alt Text:

Facebook allows for alt text to be added to images. To add a text description to your post images:

1. Add the image to your post.
2. Hover over the image with your mouse.
3. Select the Edit button in located in the top-left hand corner of the image.
4. Select the Alternative Text button from the menu list on the left-hand side of the diagram.

5. Add your text in the Custom alt text input box.
6. Click the Save Button and then the Back-Arrow button on the top, left-hand corner of the image to return to your post.

## **INSTAGRAM POSTS**

Lions Clubs use Instagram to pictorially share their stories with others. While image descriptions can make posts lengthy, Instagram has an alt text option. To add alt text in Instagram:

1. Upload image to Instagram. Select Next.
2. In the Write a caption screen, select the Advanced Settings link.
3. In the Accessibility tab, select Write Alt Text.
4. In the input box located on the right side of an image thumbnail, describe the image and write out any text on the image.
5. Select the Save link in the right hand and then the back chevron located in the top left-hand corner of the screen to return to the image.
6. Add a caption and select the Share link.

## **TWITTER POSTS**

Twitter allows Lions Clubs to send sound bites of information to its followers. On occasion, images are included in Tweets. As Twitter caps tweets at 280 characters, Twitter includes an option to add alt text for images. To add alt text to a Tweet:

1. Upload image to Twitter.
2. Select the Add description link located below the image.
3. Add an image description in the Description input box and select the Save button.
4. Post the Tweet.

## REFERENCES

This section provides definitions and more information on the guidelines and standards used in this document.

### **AODA**

seeks to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and equitable access to programs and services and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act address barriers in Customer Service; Information and Communication; Employment; Transportation; the Design of Public Spaces. Website: <https://www.aoda.ca/the-act/>

### **WCAG 2.1**

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines developed by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to provide best practices for designing content for the Internet. The standards make content more accessibility for individuals with disabilities and users of mobile devices. In June 2018, WCAG 2.1 added guidelines for individuals with learning disabilities, low vision, and mobile phone users with disabilities.

Website: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>