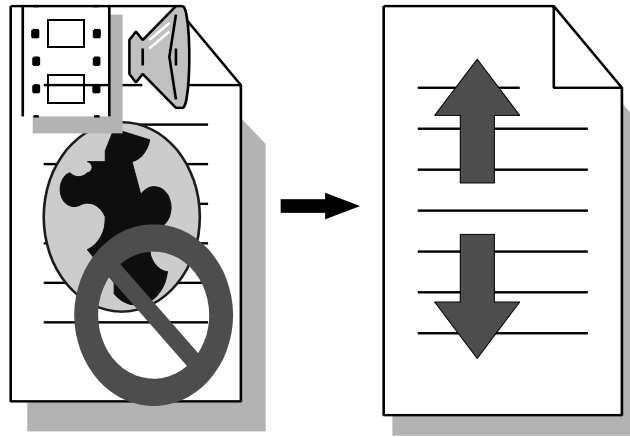


Make Links Accessible



BACKGROUND |

For people with special needs, label the media contents

For users who are visually handicapped, hearing impaired, or disabled, provide text equivalents for any sounds, animations, image maps, and images.

In general, avoid using images as bullets, spacers, and decoration. If you do put them in, take the time to add alternate text versions, to explain what they are doing.

Separate content from format by creating a stylesheet, so that the disabled can have their browsers display the page appropriately. Use conventional H1, H2, and H3 tags so blind users can have the top level headings read aloud, allowing them to skim through long pages.

Making the Web more accessible for users with various disabilities is to a great extent a simple matter of using HTML the way it was intended: to encode meaning rather than appearance. (Nielsen, 1999f)

Move to the eXtended Markup Language (XML) as fast as you can, because its tags indicate content and structure, and let you move formatting rules into a stylesheet, separate from the main document. Use the mathematical markup language, MathML, not graphics, to display equations for the visually impaired.

Make links in text

Don't rely on an image or button as a link. Add alternate text explaining what the link is, including the actual URL, so a person who cannot see the image can still hear what it would do, and take action.

Use relative, not absolute font sizes, so a browser can enlarge the text for people who are visually impaired.

Give the full term, not an abbreviation or acronym, as the text in the link, because the shorter version may get misinterpreted by software as a real word, or mispronounced by the machine.

AUDIENCE FIT

If visitors want this...

TO HAVE FUN

TO LEARN

TO ACT

TO BE AWARE

TO GET CLOSE TO PEOPLE

How well does this guideline apply?

Barriers to access are no fun.

Confusing people doesn't help them learn anything.

Clarifying what you're offering helps people with special needs follow your links, vote, and buy.

Accessibility shows your own consideration, and lets visitors avoid becoming angry.

Making these adjustments to your site shows you want to invite everyone in.

See: Nielsen (1999f), W3C (1999).

For your review only.

Excerpt from *Hot Text: Web Writing that Works*.
(New Riders).

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