

A Quick Guide to Accessibility

REQUIREMENTS AND BEST PRACTICES

GPS COMMUNICATIONS

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Text

Structure

Headings

- Use headings [H1, H2, H3....] to label the content. Do not skip headings. H2 should always be nested under H1, H3 should always be nested under H2, etc.
- Present content in a meaningful sequence with descriptive headings.
- Don't use more than 6 levels of headings. H7, H8 and H9 should not be used.

Bullets points and ordered lists

- Use a numbered list when the order matters.
- Use bullet lists when the order does not matter.
- Do not manually type bullet points or letters/numbers for ordered lists. Use the list functions in the document builder.

Content

Meaning

- Do not rely solely on the color of content for meaning. For example, a list of color-coded events will need additional text labels to be interpreted by a screen reader. For example, this document communicates the different headings with the use of color, contrast, weight and size.
- Do not use drop caps. They separate the letter from the rest of the word for screen readers.
- Concise, informative, and standard language for readability and comprehension, avoiding too many abbreviations or jargon.
- Do not use ALL CAPS for any writing, unless absolutely necessary as in the case of an acronym. All-caps writing spells out every word on screen readers.
- Don't use ASCII art.

Text Size

- Line height (line spacing) is at least 1.5 times the font size.
- Space following paragraphs is at least 2 times the font size.
- Letter spacing (tracking) is at least 0.12 times the font size.
- Word spacing is at least .16 times the font size.

Text Color Contrast

- The contrast ratio between text and background is at least 3:1 for bold text 14px or larger and medium-weight text 18px or larger.
- The contrast ratio between text and background is at least 4.5:1 for all bold text smaller than 14px and all medium-weight text smaller than 18px.

Links

- All links should have a descriptive name indicating where they will take the user. “Learn More” and “Click Here” are not descriptive.
- Provide information in the link text about where the link leads. For example, if you’re linking to a PDF document, say so directly in the link text.
- If the text is going to be printed, the link should include descriptive text followed by the link URL in parentheses).
- Multiple links with the same destination must have the same text. Links going to different URLs should not have the same text.

Images and Graphics

Alternative text

- Provide text alternatives for non-text content in the form of alt-text. If an image or graphic is purely decoration or if the image has been described in the text, then alt-text can be empty.
- Don’t start alt-text with “photo of” or “image of.” Screen readers already identify the file type as an image.

- Alt-text should be limited to 125 characters. Alt-text that needs to be longer than 125 characters should be displayed in the surrounding text in the body of the document.
- Images should be placed inline with text.

Captions vs. Alt-text

- Captions and alt-text are different. Captions provide context for an image, while alt-text describes the image itself in very literal terms. Both are helpful for search engine optimization, and both provide a benefit to people with visual impairment, but alt-text is required. Captions are only required for print.
- Captions should be placed below their respective images. This differs from tables, where the captions should be placed before the table.

Graphics Color Contrast

- Minimum of 3:1 color contrast ratio for all graphics that convey meaning. Logos are excepted from this rule.

Images of text

- Don't use images of text.

Special Requirements for Documents

Documents over 8 pages in length

- A cover page should be included.
- An up-to-date and linked table of contents should be added.

Tags

- Tags have been applied to every part of the document.
- All tags in the document are nested under a "Document" tag.
- Tags include <H1>, <P>, <Table>, <Figure>, etc.

Formatting

- Assign the language to the document that the document is written in the document settings.
- Set the title of the document in the settings.
- Begin documents with a descriptive page title, written as an H1 heading, at the top of the page. This title should closely match the title in the document settings.
- Scanned documents are not accessible as PDFs.

Data tables

- Do not use tables for design layout purposes.
- Give tables clearly labeled row and column headings.
- Do not use tabs or spaces to give the appearance of columns.
- Do not use the draw tool to draw tables.
- Do not use the document headings styles as column or row headings.
- Split tables up into simpler and smaller tables, when possible. Every effort must be made to avoid having a table extend between pages.
- Do not split or merge cells.
- Do not use empty cells or spaces to create white space or to format the table.
- Captions should be placed above the table, not below.
- Add alternative text to all tables.

Graphs

- There should be clear text that labels the significant parts of the data, such as the chart title and the horizontal and vertical axis.
- Use labels and legends that clearly mark and distinguish the data points.
- Link graphs to the same data in table form.
- Use "direct labeling" if possible — position the label directly beside or adjacent to the data point.

Forms

- Give the form a title which should be displayed at the top of the form.
- Always label your form inputs with clear, simple, short labels
- Provide additional concise instructions, where needed.
- Avoid placing form fields side-by-side unless that placement creates a clearer structure.
- Break long forms into smaller, organized sections.

Audio recordings

Control

- Do not play audio automatically without user input.
- Provide a transcript of the audio in the same location as the podcast itself.

Pre-recorded Video

Closed captions

- Provide closed captions. Closed captions are a separate track that can be turned on and off. Make sure the video player being used supports closed captions for accessibility.
- Captions don't need to be a word-for-word transcript of the audio, but they should be an accurate and concise equivalent.

Open captions

- Do not rely on open captions. Open captions are integrated into the video frames and cannot be turned off, nor can they be read by screen readers or adjusted in size or color.

Alternative audio track

- Provide an alternative audio track that describes the video unless that description is already a part of the video's primary audio track.

Streaming Video

Closed captions

- Provide closed captions. Closed captions are a separate track that can be turned on and off. Make sure the video player being used supports closed captions for accessibility. For streaming, use a platform that supports automatic live speech-to-text captioning.

Special Requirements for Social Media

Links

- If the link is short enough, don't use a link shortener. If you do use a link shortener, you need to describe what the link does in the post *e.g. Click here to register: tiny.cc/XYZ*

#Hashtags

- Write hashtags in PascalCase, #LikeThis, not #likethis. You can also use camelCase hashtags #likeThis, not #likethis.
- Hashtags are ideally placed at the end of the post, not in the middle as that interrupts screen readers.
- Don't use large blocks of hashtags.

Tags

- Tags are relevant and contextual. Don't tag accounts solely based on special requests or to reach a larger audience.
- If the tag doesn't clearly indicate the account it links to, it is ideal to name the person or organization directly and then place the tag in parentheses after that, or simply place the tags at the end of the post.

Emojis

- Use limited, relevant emojis — no more than 3 in the entire post.
- No color or symbol dependence. Don't use emojis in place of text.

- Place emojis at the beginning or the end of posts. Emojis in the middle of posts disrupt the flow of screen readers and confuse the meaning of sentences.
- Don't use emojis as bullet points.
- Don't repeat emojis multiple times.

Images and Video

- Avoid using GIFs or images with flashing or excessive movement, as these formats can trigger epilepsy and migraines. If you must use this type of media, place a warning in the post.
- Images should be relevant and specific. Unrelated stock photos are not helpful to the reader.
- Be careful when posting images because platforms automatically crop them if they are not formatted correctly for that specific platform. Look up the ideal image dimensions for the platforms you use.

Links

Free Tools

- [Wave Browser Extension for Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, and Firefox](#)
- [Lighthouse Browser Extension for Google Chrome](#)
- [Hemingway Readability Checker](#)
- [WebAIM Color Contrast Checker](#)

Resources

- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA](#)
- [UC San Diego Accessibility Committee](#)
- [GPS Branding Page](#)

Have questions?

Contact GPS communications for help:

Accessibility

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