

Web Site Accessibility

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 19.3% of the nation's population, or approximately 50 million people, have disabilities. A Harris Poll from June 2000 found that 43% of those, over 21,000,000 Americans with disabilities, are online.*

Providing equivalent access to electronic and information technology to all students, faculty, and staff is required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and California SB302. Following these guidelines can help ensure that your Web pages are more accessible to users with disabilities.

ALT TAGS

- Provide text alternatives to visual and auditory content. For example, type Aerial photo of Sac State in the alt tag text box in your Web editor or enter directly into HTML code.
- Keep alt tags meaningful and short.
- If you must use bullets or buttons, use " " as the alt tag.

COLOR

- Text and graphics must be understandable when viewed without color. Avoid statements such as "Read the red text first." Users with color blindness or otherwise sight-disabled may not see which text is red.
- Select foreground and background colors with sufficient contrast between them. Print the pages of your site in black and white to check the contrast and readability.
- Use solid, single color backgrounds.

GRAPHICS

- Avoid using graphics that contain multiple objects.
- Provide alt tags for all graphics on your pages.

LINKS

- Place a 2x2 pixel invisible gif in the upper left corner of your Web page, add alternate text to the gif such as "Jump to main content," and link the invisible gif to the beginning of your main content. This gives the returning disabled user the option to skip through the headers and navigation.
- List links on your page, rather than placing them on one line separated by vertical lines or pipes. This facilitates screen readers to accurately read the links and allows users with fine motor control limitations to more easily select one link.
- Size links so that you, as a test, can readily click them using your non-dominant hand.
- Place links on words describing what is to be accessed, such as Resources rather than Click here.

NAVIGATION

- Check that your site can be navigated without using the mouse. Use the tab key and directional arrows.

SOUND, ANIMATION, VIDEO

- Provide alternate text files for sound.
- Use closed-captioning on videos.
- Provide alternate descriptions for animations.

STRUCTURE

- Use style sheets to control layout and presentation. However, check that your page is readable with style sheets turned off to give the user the choice of what works best for her needs.
- Use screen layouts that are consistent and uncomplicated.
- Avoid using images to represent text where you can, with the possible exception of navigation links.

TABLES

- Tables can be used for layout if used correctly. Test your page with a screen reader, such as JAWS.

TESTING

- Enlist the help of people with disabilities to test your pages.
- Test your pages with an accessibility page validator, such as Cynthia Says at <http://www.cynthiasays.com>.

TEXT

- Use style sheets to format text. Avoid using absolute font tags such as font face or font size.
- Specifying relative sizes for h1 and h2 allows users to adjust text size.
- Avoid using images to represent text. Users cannot increase the size of text in images to increase readability.
- Use formal grammar. Write for your audience.
- Avoid the use of large blocks of italicized text.
- Don't use flashing or animated text.
- Provide the long version of acronyms at the beginning of every page where the abbreviated name is used.

NOTES

- Additional bookmarks on accessibility are available in the Faculty/Staff Resource Center (ARC 3012).

* U.S. Census Bureau, <http://factfinder.census.gov> and IBM Accessibility Center, <http://www-03.ibm.com/able/>