Digital Accessibility Best Practices

Any time you create digital content, follow these general best practices in accessibility.

Write clearly

• Use plain language, when possible.
• Include images in addition to text.
• Check spelling and readability.
• Be careful not to confuse the reader with abbreviations and jargon.

Use proper structure

• Organize content using your program’s built-in headings.
• Avoid skipping heading levels, such as jumping from a Heading 1 to a Heading 3.
• Craft a Heading 1 that captures the main idea of the content.
• Use the bulleted and numbered lists built into your program.
• Include a descriptive page title.
• Format on the web unless only a document will work for your content.

Add meaningful alternative text

• Add alternative text (or alt text) to images by writing a concise description that conveys the content and purpose of the image.
• If the image is purely decorative and provides no extra meaning to your content, mark the image as decorative or leave the alt text empty.
• Do not include the words “image of” in your alt text, as this is redundant.

Use color wisely

• Do not use color by itself to convey information. Use color in conjunction with symbols or text.
• Use sufficient color contrast between the text and background. Verify with WebAIM’s Contrast Checker.

Design accessible tables

• Provide headers for data tables and include text in each header.
• Use tables to present data in a simple structure, not for visual layout.
• Add a caption or description to summarize the table’s purpose.

Include descriptive links

• Avoid generic link text such as “Learn more” or “Here”. Make the purpose of the link clear in the link text itself.
• Include alt text for linked images when there’s no other text provided in the link.

Provide captions and transcripts

• Include captions and a transcript for all videos and live audio.
• If using auto-captioning services, edit the captions to ensure accuracy.

Learn more at USC’s Digital Accessibility Website, sc.edu/accessibility.