



Quick Check for Digital Accessibility

Thorough testing for accessibility is a 3-tier approach:

1. Automated
2. Manual (taking a deeper look)
3. Testing with assistive technologies

This document is written for non-programmers and addresses the first and second tiers only. Thus, fully passing the checklist is ideal, but still not an absolute guarantee of accessibility compliance.

Quick Inspection Checklist

Review each item and mark it as pass (true) or fail (false). If an item doesn't pertain to your resource, then mark it as passing. A document or web page with even a single failure is not accessible.

Corresponding explanations of each criterion appear after this list.

- (1) Pass / Fail:** No errors are found using an automated accessibility validation tool.
- (2) Pass / Fail:** Appearance (layout) and reading order is intentional using section headings, columns, paragraphs, bulleted and numbered lists, and placing objects – such as images – in line with the text. In a PowerPoint file, this is controlled with title and other placeholders. Web pages achieve this through programming.
- (3) Pass / Fail:** All text is legible because it uses a sufficient font size (> 11 pt in most cases) and fancy fonts are avoided.
- (4) Pass / Fail:** All acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations are expanded the first time they are used.
- (5) Pass / Fail:** Tables are only used for displaying sorted data and never for controlling layout. There is information in every cell, and there are visible borders between rows and columns.
- (6) Pass / Fail:** Color is never used as the only way to distinguish something, including emphasizing a word or phrase nor distinguishing a line or bar on a chart.
- (7) Pass / Fail:** There is sufficient contrast (light-to-dark) between overlapping items. Make sure to check all text against its background plus graphics (e.g., maps and charts) without contrasting borders.
- (8) Pass / Fail:** All hyperlinked text is meaningful, avoiding vague phrases such as “click here”. Full URLs (web addresses) are avoided except when necessary.
- (9) Pass / Fail:** Equations are presented in an accessible format. If there is also an equation in an image, there is an appropriate alternative or adjacent text to describe it.
- (10) Pass / Fail:** Non-decorative images, embedded media, complex tables, and complex charts have alternative text (alt text), a caption, or other adjacent text to explain the non-text item.
- (11) Pass / Fail:** All recorded multimedia with narration (video and audio) has closed captioning, an interactive transcript, and/or a downloadable transcript. Live-streamed videos promise live captioning.
- (12) Pass / Fail:** Anything that is time-based can be controlled. There are ways to avoid “timing out” on a web page. All embedded media players include ways to start and stop the media plus control its speed.
- (13) Pass / Fail:** There is a title in the document's file properties or in the open web page's browser tab.
- (14) Pass / Fail:** There is a consistent, easy way to know where you are in a document (slide or page numbers) or web page (anchors or navigation points).



More on Automated Accessibility Validation Tools

Documents

- ✓ Use an appropriate automated accessibility verification tool (built in or separate), such as:
 - [Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker](#) (PowerPoint, Word, Outlook, Excel, and more)
 - [Adobe Acrobat Pro Accessibility Full Check](#) (PDF)
 - [PAC \(PDF Accessibility Check\)](#) – *free to use; compatible only with Windows*

Websites

- ✓ Use an online automated accessibility verification site, such as:
 - [WAVE](#) browser extension tool (Chrome or Firefox)
 - [AI Inspector](#) for Firefox
 - [Siteimprove](#) (for JHU sites outside of CoursePlus)
 - [Ally \(for Canvas\)](#)

More on Manual Validation

Automated tools sometimes miss things when checking accessibility. Therefore, human inspection is an important next step. **To better understand the criteria, read below and use the relevant resources linked to each description.**

- ✓ **Structure and formatting:**
 - **Headings** – Only a single H1 (Heading 1) style is present. No headings are repeated at the same level, including PowerPoint slide titles.
 - **Lists** – There must be true bulleted or numbered lists and not lines of text that just appear as lists.
 - **Reading and Navigation Order** – Using a built-in immersive reader, screen reader, or tabbing through a document, make sure it reads logically and matches the perceived visual order.
- ✓ **Text properties:** Small fonts (less than 11 points) and fancy, decorative fonts are avoided. All text is legible, so a document can be magnified, and its integrity maintained. Text in images is avoided.
- ✓ **Acronyms:** Acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations must be expanded or explained the first time they are used.
- ✓ **Tables:** Tables are only used to sort data and never for layout. Additionally, they should be formatted correctly with no empty cells and visible borders between rows and columns.
- ✓ **Color alone:** Color is not used as the only means to distinguish something, such as a bar on a chart or an emphasis in a text paragraph.
- ✓ **Contrast ratio:** Overlapping objects (e.g., text over a background) must have sufficient contrast. Details should be distinguishable whether viewed in grayscale or on a bright digital display.
- ✓ **Hyperlinks:** Linked words or phrases are meaningful, indicating where interacting with it will navigate the user. Full URLs are avoided unless the address is meaningful text.
- ✓ **Equations:** Equations are not included as only an image. Note that equations are not accessible in PDFs, so they must be presented in a separate document (Word or PowerPoint) or website.
- ✓ **Alt text for non-decorative images, embedded media, and complex Charts or tables:** There should be succinct, appropriate alt text or an adjacent caption or description.
- ✓ **Videos and audio alternate formats:** There is closed captioning or a transcript that reflects the same recorded content. (Music files can have a description.) For videos, the text version should be a time-based media, such as captions or an interactive transcript. Live streamed videos should have real-time captioning.



- ✓ **Media players and time-based interactions:** Any embedded media player should allow the user to stop and start it and, ideally, control its speed. Additionally, there should always be a way to avoid getting kicked out of a website or other resource because of the time it takes a person to interact with it.
- ✓ **Document Properties, including Title:** At a minimum, make certain there is a logical title in the file information, or, for a website, the title is clearly identified in the browser's tab.
- ✓ **Page and Slide Numbers:** Numbers are included in a consistent place for documents that extend beyond a single page. *This is not necessary for websites; however, a lengthier web page should have a straightforward way to navigate to its sections.*

Further Assistance

This resource is only a “quick check” and does not guarantee accessibility compliance. There is still another tier (assistive technologies testing, ideally with users that are part of the disability community) to ensure compliance. For further assistance with checking for digital accessibility, please start by visiting the [Digital Accessibility Group at Johns Hopkins University](#) page. You may also reach out to the Bloomberg School of Public Health's [Student Disability Services](#), who work directly with this group.

These resources authored by WebAIM (Web Accessibility in Mind), an internationally recognized web accessibility group, may also be helpful:

- [Quick Reference: Testing Web Content for Accessibility](#)
- [Web Accessibility Reference Guide](#)
- [Word and PowerPoint Accessibility Guide](#)

And if you are interested in learning more about accessibility, including how to create digitally accessible materials, please visit [the CTL Teaching Toolkit page: UDL, JEDI, & Accessibility](#).