



Spotlight:

Accessibility and barrier-free webdesign



Whitepapers and technical documentation

Information about this document

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Accessibility - barrier-free access to the World Wide Web

Accessibility /əksɛsɪ'bɪlɪti/ - something made reachable or is easy to handle.

... is so much more than just a word, it's a **quality mark of today's webdesign !**

The term "barrier-free" usually refers to the **reduction of hurdles** when people with limited physical or mental abilities are **accessing web-based contents**.

The **ideal barrier-free website** is exclusively made up of **text-based contents** and **hierarchically structured information**.



An **attractive website** is always using the **latest web-based technologies** and stunning **multimedia elements** to impress visitors.

A professional website design makes both possible !

Practical tips to turn your website into a barrier-free (low-barrier) one:

1. Always provide **alternatives for non-textual contents**... when we talk about **pictures and graphic text**, applying alt attributes at HTML level is sufficient. For **video and audio media**, you may consider using text transcripts or at least offer different formats.
2. Ensure that **text-based contents are legible** by preferring bright, contrasting colours and easy to read serif typefaces.
3. Introduce a **logical, intuitive navigation** that can be used by both, the mouse as well as the keyboard. If applicable, offer additional ways to **make contents accessible** (e.g. site-wide local search, site maps, breadcrumb navigation).
4. **Strictly differ between layout and contents** (e.g. use HTML as a markup language to structure contents and use CSS to build the layout).
5. Build your **website on a hierarchical structure** and **prefer text-based contents** wherever possible. Make meaningful use of multimedia elements !
5. Give your website a **review with deactivated extensions and plugins** (JavaScript, CSS):
 - Are all contents and information still accessible ? → Is it possible to navigate through the website ?
 - Can you use all services the website provides (like contact forms, image galleries) ?

Principles of barrier-free website design

1

Perceivability

All provided contents must be published in a way that every user is able to **easily gain access to the site without any restriction**.

2

Operability

The user interface components must be **operable by every user without any restriction** (e.g. site navigation and form elements).

3

Understandability

All provided contents and the used way of navigation must be **understandable** (considering the abilities of the target audience).

4

Robustness

The web presence must be **developed robust (compatible)** enough to be accessed by a **wide variety of user agents** without causing errors.

Accessibility and search engine marketing ?!

All applicable techniques to achieve accessibility are also suited very well for **search engine optimisation (SEO)**.

➤ Search engines prefer **text-based, hierarchically structured contents**, because these are **easier to index**.

Considering accessibility is worth twice as much: It shows that all visitors are welcome and increases search engine visibility.

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Contact Information

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You have **questions, which are related to this whitepaper** and want to get in touch with the author ? Please have a look at the title page to find the author's name and personal e-mail address.

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