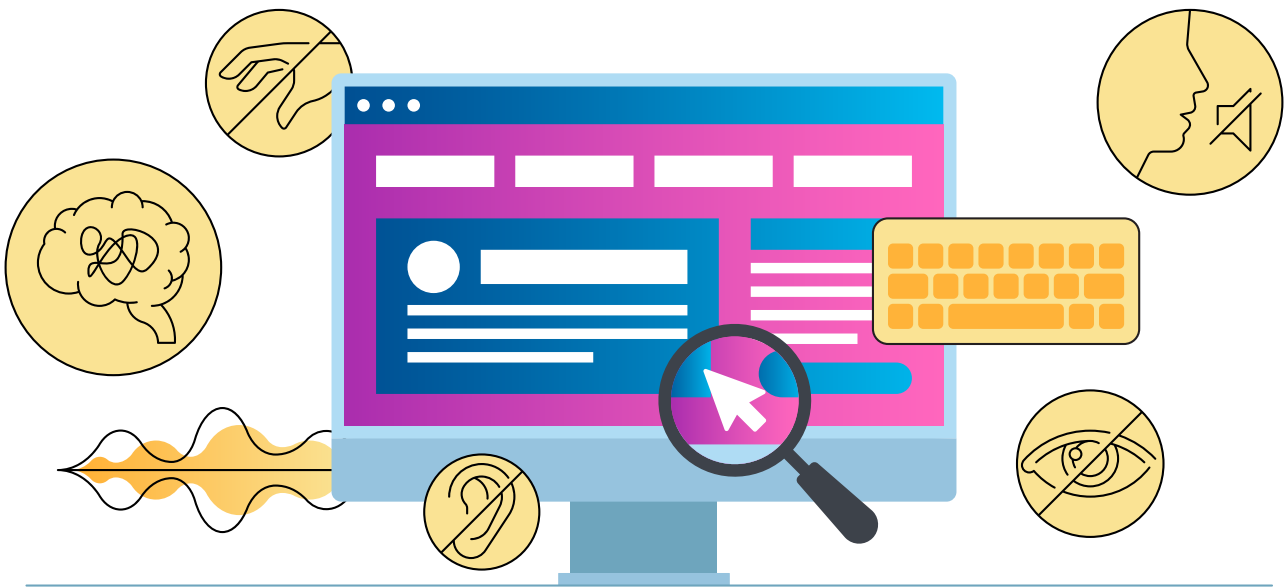


6 Accessibility Design Mistakes That Can Get You Sued

Ignoring accessible design is dangerous for your business.



Inaccessible design limits your ability to engage a potentially significant segment of your market. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than one billion people — a whopping 15% of the world’s population — live with some form of disability. And almost everyone experiences permanent or temporary disability at some point in their lives.

Furthermore, accessible design mistakes could get you sued.

In 2019, in *Robles v. Domino's Pizza*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that company websites may violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) if they're inaccessible to consumers with auditory, visual, or other disabilities. Since then, thousands of businesses have been sued. The Bureau of Internet Accessibility reported that 2,352 web inaccessibility lawsuits were filed in 2021 alone, up 14.3% from 2020. And about 1 in 5 independent community bankers have received an ADA demand letter against their websites.

These lawsuits can result in hefty financial penalties and permanently damage company reputations. It's simply not worth the risk.

So, what can you do to ensure you comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?

Today, we're covering a few of the most common accessible design mistakes we've seen land brands in hot water:

01

Failing to Leverage Alt Text

For the past several years, most advice around alt text has been SEO-related. Marketers often encourage adding keywords within alt-text to ensure content appears in search engine results for relevant queries. But thanks to greater awareness around website accessibility, organizations are now leveraging alt-text to assist people using screen readers.

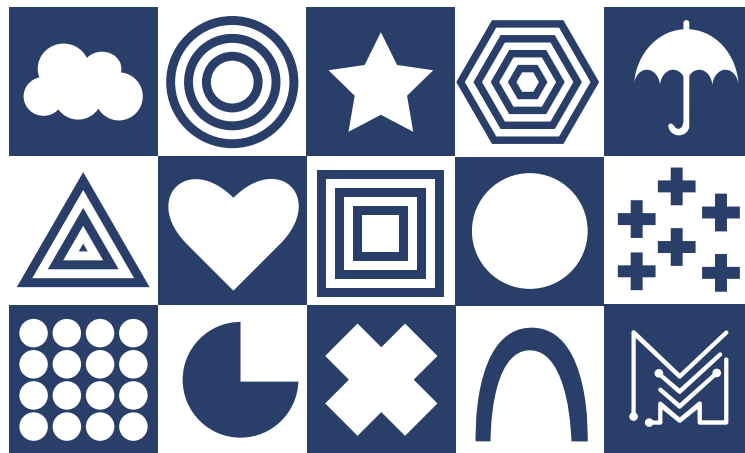


Here you'll want to describe your images, charts, graphs, and other value-adding visual elements using straightforward, plain language. If you're not sure how, just imagine you're describing the image to someone who wants to recreate it. What would you say to ensure they don't miss any crucial details?

02

Using Poor Color Contrast

Digital design allows for a broader spectrum of color than print design. And while this is undoubtedly beneficial, it also makes it trickier to achieve appropriate levels of contrast.



WCAG guidelines are categorized into three levels: AAA (the highest conformance), AA (the mid-range and what all organizations should strive to meet), and A (the lowest level at which your design meets minimum criteria but could be improved).

The AA contrast minimum is 4.5:1 for normal text (anything less than 18.5px font size) and 3:1 for large text (between 18.5px and 24px font size and/or bold text). These guidelines should serve as the lowest contrast ratio for text against any background. Anything lower would be difficult (if not impossible) for people with vision impairments to read.

03

Not Designing Experiences Navigable via Keyboard

People who can't use a mouse rely on their keyboard to navigate the web. Unfortunately, many websites fail to provide an experience conducive to keyboard navigation.



If you're unsure whether your website is keyboard accessible, go to your homepage and see how much you can accomplish without a mouse. Can you get from one place to another using tab and shift, or are you restricted? Can you use your arrow keys instead? Is it quick and easy, or frustrating and miserable enough to give up?

If it's the latter, it's time to focus on creating more accessible navigation.

04

Excluding Captions or Transcripts

If you have videos or audio on your site (like webinars or podcast recordings), it's crucial to include captions and transcripts. This benefits people with hearing impairments, users who would rather read information, and those consuming content in a place where they can't turn up their volume and don't have headphones nearby.



Fortunately, this one is easy to fix. Platforms like YouTube now automatically include captioning and transcripts. Additionally, many AI-based services can transcribe your audio and video files in minutes and on the cheap.

05

Using Small or Hard-to-Read Fonts

In recent years, websites have begun leveraging larger text to improve legibility. And while there's no formal rule on font size via WCAG, we recommend rarely using text below 16 pixels. Anything smaller can pose challenges for those with vision impairments.



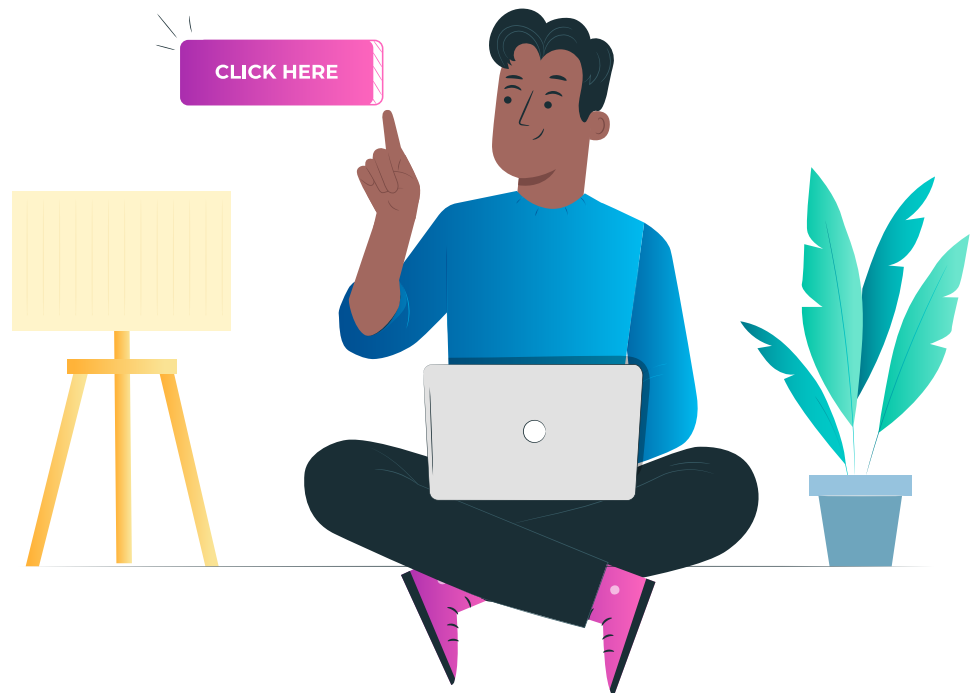
For apps, the rules are a bit different. Because the screen real estate is limited, you'll find smaller font sizes used in a lot of major phone operating systems. We'd still try to avoid it. Because some people set their devices to automatically increase display text size, it's always important to use fonts that can scale without degrading in quality.

For more tips on font usage, check out our blog post on data visualization best practices.

06

Failing to Make Links and Buttons Stand Out

Links and buttons represent another opportunity for more accessible design.



For example, text like “click here” or “read more” can be challenging for people in general, but especially those using screen readers. It makes it difficult to understand where the link will lead them. Instead, be descriptive about the action a button will take. For example, “schedule a consultation” or “delete” instead of just “confirm.”

Additionally, if links aren’t visually obvious, they may be difficult to decipher from other text — especially for those with color blindness or other visual impairments.

Meet Meticular

Of course, this list is far from exhaustive, and many other accessible design mistakes can lead to user challenges and legal trouble. Even with the best intentions, it's not always easy to determine where you're falling short or how you can improve experiences for people with disabilities.

That's where we can come in. As UX experts, we're dedicated to remaining educated on WCAG guidelines and creating digital experiences that are accessible for all users.

Need help checking these boxes?

[Contact us](#) to get started creating a more accessible design.