# Top tips for accessible online forms

## Form instructions

Place instructions on how to use the form before the form. Instructions should be concise and in plain English. Where form fields are mandatory, notify users within these instructions e.g. that these will be marked with an asterisk.

## Keep the form simple

It should be easy to follow, with no clutter such as distracting images or complex questions.

## Keyboard accessibility

Ensure all interactive form elements are accessible and have a visible focus indicator when they receive keyboard focus. It’s also known as the ‘focus ring’ (a solid or dashed ring around the focused element is visible). The focus ring acts like a mouse pointer. It's how a keyboard user knows what they are interacting with.

## Predictable navigation

Ensure consistent navigation is available between questions and pages for forms containing more than one page (e.g. a multi-step journey).

## Labels

Use visible labels for form fields and they will act as instructions as well. These need to be coded programmatically to be associated with its form fields so screen reader users can identify their relationship. Each form control such as input fields and buttons require a descriptive label. If using images/icons that are required to understand the form, these should have the correct alternative text (alt text). Group related form controls and code them programmatically as well, to provide context for screen reader users (e.g. a group of radio buttons).

Mark required fields with an asterisk as well as assign them programmatically. Avoid placeholder text as a label as these disappear when inputting into the field and some older screen readers do not support them. For further information, please see: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/forms>/.

## Avoid CAPTCHA

CAPTCHA authentication can be challenging for some users.

## Avoid time limits

Time restrictions on forms can make it difficult for some users. Include an option to allow to turn off or extend the time (except for live events such as an auction).

## Provide clear and easy to find error messages

The error message needs to explain what the error is and how to fix it. Return the focus to the first error message and/or the list of error messages. At this point announce the error message to screen reader users. Avoid error indications by colour alone such as red outline on the form field. Use red text with a visual cue, such as an exclamation mark, that clearly indicates the location of the error message. These should have good colour contrast ratio (search for an online colour contrast analyser to check this). It should be close to the related field e.g. beneath the field and programmatically coded for the respective form field. Additionally, provide an error notice at the top of the form as a quick indication there are errors on the form. Do not clear the form as a result of one or more error messages as it’s time consuming and frustrating to re-fill the form.

## Confirmation message

Ensure a confirmation message is available to validate successful form submission with good colour contrast for text.

Document ends.