**RNIB WCAG 2.2**

**Website Guidelines**

Quick Start-up Guide

RNIB Accessibility Consultancy and User Experience Team

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**Please note:**

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# Introduction

This document is a quick start guide for good practice in website accessibility and inclusive design. The guide focuses on some of the most common issues that occur on websites and gives advice on how to address these.

We have selected the following areas for this guide as ones that are often found and, if addressed, will make a significant impact on the overall use of the website. The full guidelines cover many more issues but the ones we have selected here occur regularly and resolving these will go a long way to making your website much more accessible:

1. Keyboard Navigation and Visual Focus
2. Colour and Text
3. Headings
4. Text Alternatives for Images or Icons
5. Hyperlinks
6. Page Title
7. Document Language
8. Skip navigation link
9. Form, Labels and Errors
10. Audio or Video

# WCAG 2.2 Background

Web accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them - including users who have visual, auditory, motor, speech or cognitive disabilities. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 cover the issues that affect people with disabilities and conforming to Level AA is recommended.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 are a useful benchmark for assessing the accessibility of a website. It is a web standard that is used in many laws and regulations across the world. WCAG 2.2, was released by the W3C on 5 October 2023 (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/>).

Each guideline has a level of compliance assigned to it:

* Level A - must be satisfied
* Level AA - should be satisfied (recommended level)
* Level AAA - may be satisfied

Under the Equality Act 2010 or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (in Northern Ireland) organisations are legally required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people - i.e. to make sure websites and apps meet accessibility requirements. If the digital application is not accessible to anyone who needs it, this may signify a breach of the law.

WCAG 2.0, WCAG 2.1 and WCAG 2.2 are current standards. WCAG 2.2 does not denounce or replace WCAG 2.0 and WCAG 2.1. However, W3C advocates to use the most recent version of WCAG (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>).

When organisations are endeavouring to meet WCAG 2.0, WCAG 2.1 or WCAG 2.2 standards, this usually means that they are striving for A and AA compliance. Organisations with a lot of multimedia might need to meet Level AAA.

RNIB accessibility audits go through all the WCAG 2.2 A and AA success criteria for compliance and is seen as a general standard of web accessibility. When conforming to level AA, it is assumed to conform to level A as well as an audit to AA standard will include all the guidelines at level A.

Meeting WCAG 2.2 Level AA ensures the digital environment is accessible by common assistive technologies such as screen readers, switch devices or speech recognition software.

# ****Keyboard Navigation & Visual Focus****

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.1.1: Keyboard (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/keyboard.html)

All functionality on a page needs to be available using only a keyboard, keyboard emulator or speech to text software, as this is the primary form of navigating, interacting, and accessing content on the page when using assistive technology. For example, if, when filling in a form, the continue button is not in the tab order then someone who can’t use a mouse won’t be able to complete the form.

**People affected:** Blind people, partially sighted people and people with motor impairments

**WCAG details:** <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/keyboard.html>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.1.2: No Keyboard Trap (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/no-keyboard-trap.html)

Keyboard navigation must not become trapped or stuck on page elements. The user must be able to move away using the keyboard or instruction provided on how to exit the element.

**People affected:** Blind people, partially sighted people and people with motor impairments

**WCAG details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/no-keyboard-trap.html>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.3 Focus Order (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/focus-order)

Keyboard navigation of all elements must be in an intuitive and logical order.

**People affected:** Blind people, partially sighted people, and people with motor impairments

**WCAG details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/focus-order>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.7 Focus Visible (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/focus-visible)

All elements that receive keyboard focus need a strong visual indicator to show when they have current focus. It is also known as the ‘focus ring’. The focus ring acts like a mouse pointer and it is how a keyboard user knows what they are interacting with. Without this, the user will not know where they are on the page.

**People affected:** Partially sighted people and people with motor impairments

**WCAG details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/focus-visible>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.11: Focus Not Obscured (Minimum) (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/focus-not-obscured-minimum)

When the element receives keyboard focus, the interactive element is not overlapped by other content (e.g. sticky headers, notification banners). As a minimum, some of the element, with the focus indicator, needs to be visible.

**People affected:** Partially sighted people, people with motor impairments

or cognitive impairments

**WCAG details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/focus-not-obscured-minimum>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.5.7: Dragging Movements (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/dragging-movements)

Drag and drop is not the only method that an action can be performed using a single pointer (such as a mouse or touch contact). Provide an alternative method (e.g. for a slider range, offer keyboard accessible buttons to move the slider to the desired range or an input field to specify the required range).

**People affected:** People with motor impairments

**WCAG details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/dragging-movements>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.5.8: Target Size (Minimum) (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/target-size-minimum)

All interactive elements can use a minimum space of 24x24 CSS pixels from each other for pointer inputs (with exceptions\*). This can include padding within the target. There must be sufficient space between the targets.

\*Exceptions: links within a paragraph (inline text), user-agent controls through browsers such as date pickers or lists within a dropdown component.

**People affected:** People with motor impairments and low vision

**WCAG details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/target-size-minimum>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.2.1 On Focus (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/on-focus)

When an element, such as a button or link, receives focus, it must not trigger a change of context. It must require a keyboard stroke or a click if using the mouse to trigger the event. Otherwise elements will be activated when the user reaches them, and the user is not in control of what they are trying to do.

**People affected:** Blind people, partially sighted people, and people with motor impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/on-focus>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.2.2: On Input (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/on-input)

When an element is interacted with, it must not automatically change the context when it receives an input (e.g. inputs within a text field or making a selection from a dropdown component), without warning the user first, or its behaviour can be predicted. 3.2.2 is almost the same as 3.2.1 but this is to ensure it does not cause an automatic change of context.

**People affected:** Blind people, partially sighted people, people with cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/on-input>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.2.6: Consistent Help (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/consistent-help)

Help offered on multiple pages of a website, such as a self-help option or contact information must appear consistently on each page.

Note: Applies only if help is available on the site.

**People affected**: People who have cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/consistent-help>

# Colour & Text

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.4.1 Use of Colour (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/use-of-color)

Colour must not be used as a sole means to visually distinguish elements, content, or indicate actions. Some people find it difficult to see colour and may not be able to distinguish, for example, between a green button and a red button if the colour is the only difference.

**People affected**: People with Visual impairments such as colour blindness and low vision; people using devices with colour limitations

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/use-of-color>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.4.3 Contrast (Minimum) (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/contrast-minimum)

Sufficient colour contrast combinations must be provided for foreground and background. For normal sized text, the ratio should be at least 4.5:1, and for large text a 3:1 ratio is needed.

**People affected**: People with visual impairments such as colour deficiencies and low vision

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/contrast-minimum>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.4.11 Non-text Contrast (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/non-text-contrast)

Sufficient colour contrast needs to be present for all components and graphical objects such as icons, buttons, and form controls. This must be at least a 3:1 ratio between adjacent colours (e.g. a button against its background).

**People affected**: People with visual impairments such as colour deficiencies and low vision

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/non-text-contrast>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.4.10: Reflow (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/reflow)

Content on the page requires to reflow without loss of information or functionality, and without requiring scrolling in two dimensions. Content should be presented in one column so that scrolling in more than one direction is not necessary. The required zoom is up to 400% (320 x 256 [CSS pixels](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/reflow.html#dfn-css-pixel)).

Exceptions: where multi-directional scrolling is essential for meaning or function (for example images, maps, diagrams, presentations, data tables and components that require toolbars remain in view).

**People affected**: People with low vision

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/reflow>

# Headings

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.6 Headings and Labels (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/headings-and-labels)

Headings on pages as well as labels on forms and interactive controls, need to be descriptive to describe the purpose and provide structure on the sections on the page.

Nest headings on a page in a logical order using heading levels (<h1> to <h6>). Screen reader users use the heading structure to navigate and understand the page content. It also allows all users to understand the structure of the page clearly.

For best practice and to aid screen reader navigation a <h1> heading element is required and only one <h1> per page should be used.

Avoid skipping heading levels as screen reader users will not know this is a deliberate mistake and will spend time looking for information relating to the heading level that has been skipped.

**People affected**: Blind people, partially sighted people using a screen reader

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/headings-and-labels>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.3.1 Info and Relationships (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/info-and-relationships.html)

Elements that visually convey heading meaning need to match semantic heading markup.

**People affected**: Blind or partially sighted people using screen readers

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/info-and-relationships.html>

# Text Alternatives for Images or Icons

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.1.1 Non-text Content (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/non-text-content)

Non-text elements, such as images, require a text equivalent describing the purpose and importance of the element. This can be achieved using the alt attribute for images. The screen reader announces the alternative text.

Decorative images that do not have a function and are purely for cosmetic effects must be give an empty alt attribute (alt=“”) to enable screen readers to ignore them.

Complex images such as charts, graphs and illustration need a text equivalent such as a link to a text table of the same information.

Avoid using images of text, instead use text and style sheets.

An animated content requires the same information contained with the animated element and must have the same meaning. If possible, avoid the use of animated elements.

When using CAPTCHA, provide a non-visual alternative to accommodate people with various disabilities such as for those using a screen reader or have cognitive impairments.

**People affected**: Visually impaired people, people with low vision, people who are deaf or hard of hearing (e.g. when using imagery/animation with audio).

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/non-text-content>

# Hyperlinks

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.4 Link Purpose (in Context) (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/link-purpose-in-context)

Link text needs to be:

* unique within a page
* describe its purpose
* be identifiable out of context
* give an indication about its destination through its description.
* link text with the same name on a page, such as ‘Click here’, that goes to a different location needs to be easily identifiable. This aids screen reader users when using their shortcut commands (i.e. link text with the same name are meaningless out of context). Also, a user with a speech recognition software can select a link with a voice command, e.g. “click” followed by the link text. Hence it is important to use unique link text that are concise for easy distinguishable.
* label all links and do not leave them empty with no content
* receive keyboard focus with a focus outline present

For best practice for links:

* that leads to a file download, the text needs to reference this, such as ‘Brochure of hotel (PDF, 6.43 MB)
* that opens in a new window of the browser, the text needs to reference this for screen reader users and preferably through a visual indication
* underline links, as this is now a convention recognised by most users
* give the link a different colour from surrounding text for ease of identification

**People affected**: Visually impaired people, people with low vision or motor impairments and those using speech software

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/link-purpose-in-context>

# Page Title

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.2 Page Titled (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/page-titled)

All pages must have a title that uniquely and briefly describes the content of the page.

**People affected**: People who are visually impaired or who have cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/page-titled>

# Document Language

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.1.1 Language of Page (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/language-of-page)

All pages must have the primary language of the HTML document assigned (lang=“en” for English) so that assistive technology tools such as screen readers can programmatically determine the language.

**People affected**: People with visual and cognitive impairments who use software to convert text-to-speech

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/language-of-page>

# Skip Navigation Link

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.4.1 Bypass Blocks (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/bypass-blocks)

Provide a skip navigation before the main content on the page. This allows users to bypass the navigation menu, if required, to reach the main content. The skip link aids in navigation, bypassing repeated content on multiple pages and interaction with the website becomes more efficient.

**People affected**: People who are visually impaired or who have low vision or motor impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/bypass-blocks>

# Form, Labels and Errors

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.3.1 Error Identification (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/error-identification)

Required form elements must be clearly indicated to help correct mistakes. After form validation, error messages need to be placed next to the relevant form control that generated the error. It should be informative and provide help to rectify the error.

Colour alone must not be used to indicate error messages.

**People affected**: People who are visually impaired or who have low vision or cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/error-identification>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.3.2 Labels or Instructions (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/labels-or-instructions)

All form controls need associated labels markup with clear and unambiguous labels and instructions to help users understand various inputs and avoid mistakes. All interactive elements need an accessible name/label e.g. a button needs a label and not left empty.

The labels and instructions need to be position close to the pertaining element. Where applicable, add help text, as well, close to the element.

Common or related elements need to be grouped by fieldsets and legends. Fieldset and legend helps screen reader users by providing context to a group of form fields.

**People affected**: People who are visually impaired or who have low vision or cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**:

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/labels-or-instructions>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.3.3 Error Suggestion (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/error-suggestion)

When an error is detected, an informative error message should be provided that helps the user to correct the mistake. If possible, give an example of the format and/or specific suggestions for fixing a particular error.

**People affected**: People who are visually impaired or who have low vision, motor or cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/error-suggestion>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.3.5: Identify Input Purpose (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/identify-input-purpose)

Input fields that collect user data require the autocomplete attribute (e.g. lists relevancy or from search history). Autocomplete helps users to complete forms more easily as common fields are prefilled with the user’s data.

Autocomplete is only mandatory for fields that collect user data e.g. first name, last name, address, email, etc. It is not applicable for fields relating to security and privacy data e.g. a credit card input.

**People affected**: People who are visually impaired or who have low vision, motor or cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/error-suggestion>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.3.2 Meaningful Sequence (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/meaningful-sequence)

The reading and navigation order of form elements needs to be in a logical and intuitive manner not to distort the meaning when using a screen reader.

This also applies to the reading and navigation order on a page (under section ‘Keyboard Navigation’ above). The order needs to be logical and intuitive.

**People affected**: Visually impaired people

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/meaningful-sequence>

## WCAG Success Criterion [4.1.2 Name, Role, Value (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/name-role-value)

HTML and non-HTML markup of all elements needs to be accessible and work with all assistive technology. This relates to all user interface components including links, form control and components generated by script.

The name and role need to be programmatically determined. Also, the role, state and property need to be exposed to assistive technologies, e.g. for an accordion.

Standard HTML controls, when used according to specification, already meets this success criterion. Custom user interface components do not automatically meet this success criterion. Therefore, ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications) is required to enhance accessibility.

**People affected**: Visually impaired people and people with low vision or motor impairments (using speech recognition software)

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/name-role-value>

## WCAG Success Criterion [2.5.3 Label in Name (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/label-in-name.html)

The accessible name for elements such as links and buttons, must be the same name that is visible on the label or link text. So, users with a speech recognition software can select the element with a voice command. This is also helpful to low vision users who use a screen reader as the accessible name will match the visible name.

**People affected**: Visually impaired people, people with low vision or motor impairments using speech software

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/label-in-name.html>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.3.7: Redundant Entry (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/redundant-entry)

Users must not be asked to enter the same information twice in the same process. It needs to be auto filled or available to select in the step journey (e.g. for a checkout process where the billing address is the same as the delivery address).

**People affected**: People who have cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/redundant-entry>

## WCAG Success Criterion [3.3.8: Accessible Authentication (Minimum) (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/accessible-authentication-minimum)

The authenticating process requires to be without cognitive tests (such as memorising a password, transcribing information, solving a puzzle or question) unless an alternative is available. Copy and paste is allowed from users’ password managers or device authentication. Request for only certain characters of a passcode is not allowed as it is deemed as transcribing.

Note: certain types of CAPTCHAs, such as recognising common objects, is excepted at this level but advised not to use them.

**People affected**: People who have cognitive impairments

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/accessible-authentication-minimum>

# Audio or Video

In conjunction with the below Success Criteria for Audio or Video accessibility, follow the steps above for keyboard navigation and labelling. The controls on the media player needs to be labelled correctly and be accessible by keyboard.

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.2.1 Audio-only and Video-only (Prerecorded) (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/audio-only-and-video-only-prerecorded.html?source=post_page)

For audio or video content a descriptive text transcript needs to be provided that describes all visual (for video) and auditory content. Audio content can be a MP3 files or podcast. The transcript can then be presented in many different ways by assistive technology such as converting it to braille.

**People affected:** People who are visually impaired, deaf, or hard of hearing

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/audio-only-and-video-only-prerecorded>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.2.2: Captions (Prerecorded) (Level A)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/captions-prerecorded)

Provide captions for non-live video. Captions are a text equivalent for the audio content and needs to be synchronised to appear on screen with the relevant audio information, such as sound effects dialogue and music.

**People affected**: People who are Deaf or hard of hearing

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/captions-prerecorded>

## WCAG Success Criterion [1.2.5: Audio Description (Prerecorded) (Level AA)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/audio-description-prerecorded)

Provide an audio description of video content. It is a descriptive narration of the visual content to enhance the audio. It needs to be synchronised with the content; during existing pauses in the main soundtrack. This description must relate to the actions, characters, scene changes and on-screen text that are important to understand the video presentation.

**People affected:** People who are visually impaired or have low vision

**WCAG Details**: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/audio-description-prerecorded>

# Further Reading and References

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

How to Meet WCAG (Quick Reference)

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/quickref/>

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 - W3C Recommendation, 05 October 2023

<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/>

The WebAIM Million: An annual accessibility analysis of the top 1,000,000 home pages – In March 2023, 96.3% of home pages had detectable WCAG 2 failures!

<https://webaim.org/projects/million/>

Making the Web Accessible

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

DWP Accessibility Manual

<https://accessibility-manual.dwp.gov.uk/>

Web Accessibility Tutorials Guidance on How to Create Websites that Meet WCAG

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/>

GOV.UK Design System: Components

<https://design-system.service.gov.uk/components/>

WAI-ARIA Authoring Practices Guide (APG)

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/ARIA/apg/>

ARIA in HTML - W3C Recommendation, 21 December 2023

<https://www.w3.org/TR/html-aria/>

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