

Creating Digitally Accessible Materials for Public Health Campaigns



WHY ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS

The goal of creating accessible content is to create an equal experience for everyone. Accessibility is at the core of public health and advancing health equity. Making digital content accessible allows all people to find, understand, and interact with digital content. People with disabilities interact with the world in diverse ways. It is important to consider people with different types of disabilities and degrees of disability, including visual, auditory, motor, speech, and cognitive impairments when designing content.



Assistive Technologies

People with disabilities use a variety of assistive technologies to access digital content, including:

- Screen readers
- Audio descriptions
- Captions
- Keyboard navigation
- Braille keyboards
- Speech-to-text software
- High contrast mode

It is your responsibility to ensure digital platforms, content, and materials are compatible with assistive technologies to maximize engagement.



Section 508 Compliance

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Although State and local health departments are not directly bound by Section 508, it serves as valuable guidance to ensure all components of digital materials and products are accessible.



Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are the internationally accepted gold standard for design. WCAG offers recommendations to ensure websites and digital content are more accessible for people with disabilities. Web-accessible materials should adhere to four principles:

- **Perceivable:** Present information and user interface components to users in a way they can perceive it, including alternative text and audio media.
- **Operable:** Design the user interface components and navigation to be usable, such as by ensuring they are compatible with keyboard accessibility, limiting the use of flashing lights (for people susceptible to seizures), and ensuring the content is intuitive to navigate.
- **Readable:** Make content readable, considering text size and color contrast.
- **Robust:** Maximize the content's compatibility with current and future assistive technologies.

Although WCAG publishes updated guidance documents every few years, Section 508 remains aligned with WCAG 2.0.

Key Accessibility Considerations

Ensure accessibility for all platforms and digital media by considering their unique features. Your digital materials should consider five key recommendations:

Text Alternatives

- For all meaningful images, develop descriptive text, known as alternative text or alt text for short, that screen readers can detect. The alt text should be concise and illustrative.

Color Contrast

- To maximize readability, ensure there is sufficient color contrast between text and background colors.
 - Regular text and images of text should have a contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for regular text and 3:1 for large text between foreground and background colors.

Keyboard Accessibility

- Ensure all functionality, including menus, forms, and interactive elements, can be accessed and operated using only the keyboard.

Focus and Navigation

- Test tab navigation to ensure the tab order is logical, and test focus indicators to ensure they are always visible.

Forms and Interactive Elements

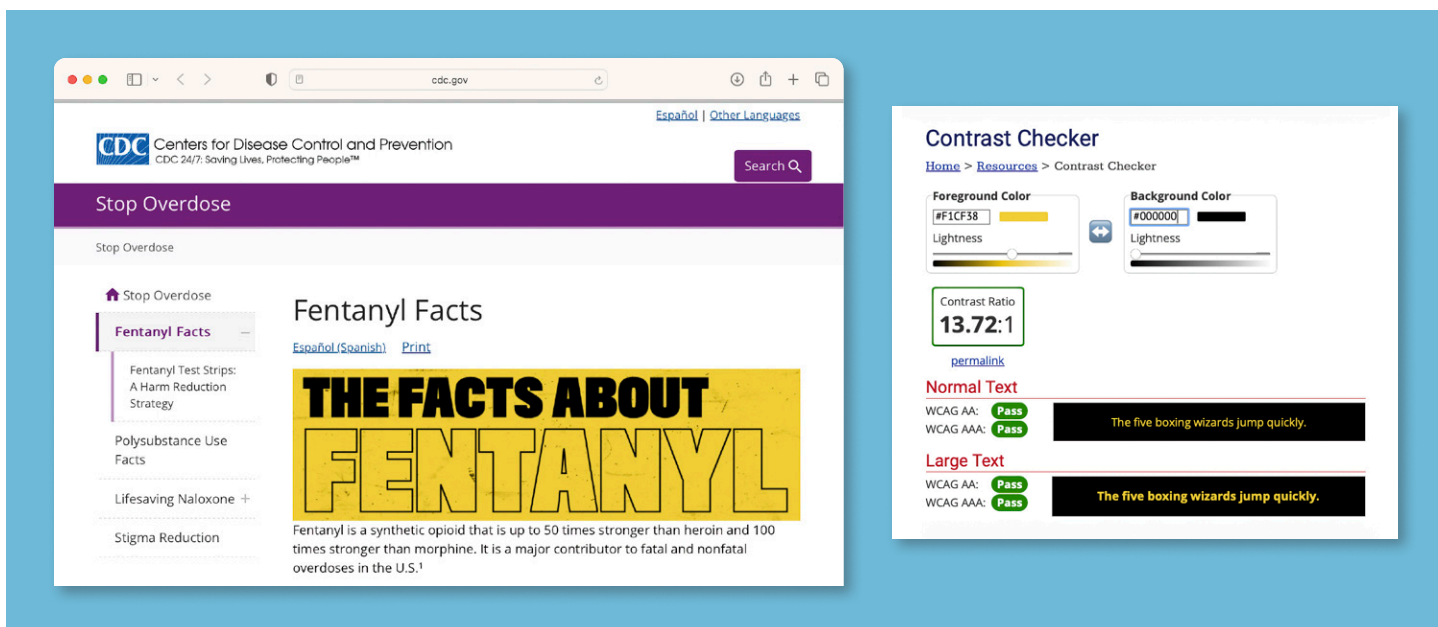
- Use clear and descriptive labels for form fields.
- Provide instructions and error messages in a clear and accessible manner.

Website Best Practices

When creating a website or materials for website placement, consider:

Color Contrast

- To improve readability, ensure there is sufficient color contrast between text and background colors.
- Use a color contrast checker such as WebAIM Contrast Checker. This digital tool (linked below) allows you to enter foreground and background colors to determine whether they meet the WCAG requirements for contrast.



The image shows two side-by-side screenshots. The left screenshot is a browser window displaying the CDC website's 'Stop Overdose' page. The main content area features a section titled 'Fentanyl Facts' with a large yellow banner that reads 'THE FACTS ABOUT FENTANYL'. Below the banner, there is a paragraph of text: 'Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. It is a major contributor to fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the U.S.' The right screenshot is a 'Contrast Checker' tool. It shows two color pickers: 'Foreground Color' set to #F1CF38 and 'Background Color' set to #000000. The 'Contrast Ratio' is displayed as 13.72:1. Below this, there are two sections: 'Normal Text' and 'Large Text'. Both sections show 'WCAG AA: Pass' and 'WCAG AAA: Pass' with corresponding green checkmarks. The text 'The five boxing wizards jump quickly.' is shown on a black background for both sizes.

Alternative Text

- Draft and apply descriptive alt text for meaningful digital images and graphics. If the graphic is decorative, it can have an empty alt attribute.
- To add alt text to digital images, use HTML markup or specific content management systems (CMS) or website builders.



Headings

- Use clear and properly structured headings that accurately reflect the information beneath them.

Tab Order

- Ensure a logical tab order for interactive elements to facilitate keyboard navigation.
 - Users should be able to easily move through your digital materials using the tab key.

Visible Focus

- Use a visible focus indicator for interactive elements to help users who navigate with keyboards or assistive technologies.

Link Text

- Use descriptive and meaningful link text to provide clarity and context for users with disabilities.
- Avoid generic terms like “click here,” and instead use concise phrases that accurately describe the linked content.

Forms

- Ensure accessibility of website forms by providing clear labels, concise instructions, and informative error messages.
 - Users with disabilities should be able to complete the forms accurately and independently.

Captions

- Ensure that captions accurately represent the spoken content and synchronize with the audio or visual elements.
- Include captions or subtitles for website videos and multimedia content.

Audio Descriptions

- For people with a visual disability, provide additional narration that describes the visual context and details.
- Include audio descriptions for website visual elements in videos or multimedia content.



Social Media Best Practices

When creating content for social media, consider:

- Alt text for images
- Adequate color contrast
- Limited use of emojis and emoticons
- Camel case hashtags
 - Capitalize the first letter of each word when writing compound words or phrases so screen readers can recognize individual words. Example: #StopOverdose
- Captions and audio descriptions for multimedia

Electronic Documents

Microsoft Word

- Use the built-in Accessibility Checker tool to evaluate accessibility. It identifies potential accessibility issues, such as missing alternative text for images or improper heading structure, and provides recommendations for improvement.
- Use the Readability Statistics feature to assess the readability of your content. It provides information on average sentence length, word count, and other readability metrics, allowing you to ensure that your materials are accessible and understandable to a diverse audience.

Adobe PDF

- Use the Accessibility Checker to evaluate your PDF's accessibility, which scans for issues and offers suggestions.
- Use the Tags pane to add structure to your PDFs by applying tags in the Tags pane, ensuring a logical reading order for assistive technologies.
- Use the Reading Order Adjustment to modify content elements and improve accessibility for individuals using assistive technologies.

Adobe Online Resources

- Visit the Adobe accessibility website to find guidelines, tutorials, and best practices for ensuring accessibility in PDFs.
- Engage the Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Community to discover valuable insights, tips, and discussions on creating accessible PDF documents.

Resources

- [Section 508](#): Training and resources
- WCAG 2.0: [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0 \(w3.org\)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/)
- WebAIM Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Checklist: <https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/checklist>
- Color Contrast Analyzer: <https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/>
- Web Accessibility Initiative: [Tools and Techniques](#) – How People With Disabilities Use the Web