

# Five Steps to Better Web Accessibility

1. Provide good **image descriptions**
2. Use descriptive **link text**
3. Use **headings**
4. Write & edit text so it is **easy to read**
5. Add **captions** to videos

## 1. Provide good image descriptions

People with visual impairment may not be able to see the images you place on your site. Because being accessible means that all communications — textual or visual — can be understood by all visitors, we need to provide a textual description of every image on our sites. This is called "alternative text" or "alt text".

### Images must have alt text

As long as you upload your image to Reason and then embed it using the standard tools Reason provides, your images should already all have alternative text. However, there are other methods of embedding images (such as copying and pasting from another source) where the alt text may not exist.

#### How do I fix this?

Click on the image, then click on the image button in the editor, and enter a description into the description field

### Alt text must describe the image

Sometimes we give images alternative text that is not helpful for screen readers.

Examples of poor alternative text include:

- Photo
- Event poster
- img\_12345.jpg

None of these provide a user with enough information to know what the image depicts.

Instead, we should provide informative alternative text, such as:

- Students playing Ultimate on the bald spot
- Laird Hall
- Group photo of the 2017-18 RAs

#### How do I fix this?

1. Edit the content of the page
2. Select the photo and click the photo button
3. Edit the image description

## 2. Use descriptive link text

Helping users understand the destination of links is an important step towards increasing the usability and accessibility of your content.

### URLs as links

It's common for people to create links like this:

Learn more at <https://apps.carleton.edu/diseaseupdates/flu/>

This is an accessibility no-no because screen reader users often have all the links on the page read out to them, out of context. In this case the screen reader user has no way of knowing what this link is.

In addition, it uses lots of words. People know that clicking on a link will take them to a website; we don't have to tell them that for every link on every page.

### How do I fix this?

The correct way to link to a website is by making the name of the page or site the link text:

- See Carleton's [Influenza Information resources](#).

### Ambiguous link text

Links that look like this are also common:

[Click here](#) to visit the Web Services website.

This is problematic for the same reason as the URL as a link — the text in the link isn't enough to understand where the link goes. A screen reader user will just hear "Click here Click here Click here" when the links on the page are read to them.

### How do I fix this?

The solution is to rewrite the link, removing the extra words and making the name of the page or site the link text:

- [Web Services](#)

### Missing Link text

A link that doesn't have any content is invisible. However, a screen reader will still tell users about it. It's very easy to accidentally create empty links in a visual editor by deleting the content of the link without deleting the link itself.

For example, if we have text that looks like this:

Here's a link!

The HTML looks like this:

```
<a href="http://example.com">Here's a link!</a>
```

If we select this text and delete it, it may look like the link is gone. But under the hood we have:

```
<a href="http://example.com"></a>
```

Unfortunately, this is still read by screen readers as a link.

#### How do I fix this?

The easiest way to fix this is by editing the HTML itself. If you have the ability to edit the HTML directly, just select and delete the link text; if you don't, contact someone in Web Services for assistance.

### 3. Use headings

Users of screen readers rely on the ability to hear a list of all headings on the page.

It's common to highlight an entire line of text and bold it to draw the eye and to indicate a distinct section of content. This does not help screen readers — they don't announce bolding.

Using proper headings has two benefits: for sighted users, headings provide larger text that is also a different color than other text on the page; and for screen reader users, the text is announced as a heading.

#### How do I fix this?

How you insert proper headings depends on which editor your site uses.

- If you see an "H" button, this creates a heading. Select the line and click the "H" button.
- If you see a dropdown with the words "Paragraph", click on this and choose "Header 1".

### 4. Write & edit text so it is easy to read

Users with disabilities that make it difficult to decode words and sentences are likely to have trouble reading and understanding complex text.

Complex text may be appropriate for most members of your intended audience. But there are people with disabilities, including reading disabilities, even among highly educated users. You may be able to accommodate these users by making the text more readable, preferably written to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.

If the text cannot be made more readable (such as specifically-worded policies or technical language), then a plain-language summary of the more advanced text should be provided.

#### 10 ways to reduce the complexity of text:

1. Use a single topic or idea per paragraph.
2. Write short sentences (15–20 words).
3. Break up long paragraphs (three sentences or less).
4. Use bulleted or numbered lists instead of paragraphs that contain a series of words or phrases separated by commas.
5. Use sentences that contain no more than two conjunctions.
6. Replace long or unfamiliar words with shorter, more common terms.

7. Remove redundant words. A word is redundant when a sentence has the same meaning with or without the word.
8. Remove complex words or phrases that could be replaced with more commonly used words without changing the meaning of the sentence.
9. Avoid professional jargon, slang, and other terms with a specialized meaning that may not be clear to all your readers.
10. Use the active voice whenever possible. Sentences in the active voice are often shorter and easier to understand than those in the passive voice.

#### **Tools for fixing complex text:**

Reason now has a reading level score built into the editing interface. The score changes as you edit the text.

Another helpful tool is the Hemingway Editor, an online tool for analyzing text:  
[hemingwayapp.com](http://hemingwayapp.com)

## **5. Add captions to videos**

Captions allow people with hearing-related challenges to understand videos. They are also helpful for people with cognitive impairments and English language learners.

All public videos should have captions added, whether published on Reason, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, or any other service.

Carleton subscribes to a video captioning service, and we have created a form where you can request transcripts for your videos. If you produce a lot of videos, we can give you direct access to the service.

#### **Video caption request form:**

[go.carleton.edu/captionreq](http://go.carleton.edu/captionreq)

## **Web Accessibility Resources**

Find more information on web accessibility at [go.carleton.edu/accessible](http://go.carleton.edu/accessible)