

ITI0209: User Interfaces

11. Accessibility

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When UX doesn't consider ALL users, shouldn't it be known as "Some User Experience" or... SUX?"

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<https://twitter.com/thebillygregory/status/552466012713783297>

Accessibility is the practice of making your websites usable by as many people as possible. We usually think of this as being about people with disabilities. But making sites accessible also benefits others - those using mobile devices, or those with slow network connections.

Building accessible sites benefit everyone

- **Semantic HTML** improves accessibility, and also improves SEO, making your site more findable.
- **Caring** about accessibility demonstrates good ethics and morals, which improves your public image.
- Other **good practices** that improve accessibility also make your site more usable by others - such as mobile phone users on low network speed. In fact, everyone can benefit from many such improvements.
- Accessibility is also the **law** in EU and UK

Coping with Disabilities (15% world population)

- **Visual Impairments** - blindness, low-level vision, and color blindness. Use screen magnifiers or software zoom. Some users rely on screen readers.
- **Hearing Impairments** - low hearing levels or no hearing at all. No specific equipment exists for web use. There are, however, specific techniques for providing textual alternatives to audio content which range from simple text transcripts to video captions.
- **Mobility Impairments** - such users may not have a mouse The way this usually affects web development work is the requirement that controls be accessible by the keyboard

Coping With Cognitive Impairments

Cognitive impairment refers to a broad range of disabilities, from people with intellectual disabilities to everyone that has sometimes hard time thinking and remembering. A good foundation of accessibility for people with cognitive impairments includes:

- Easily understood content
- Focusing attention on important content.
- Consistent webpage layout and navigation.
- Dividing processes into logical, essential steps with progress indicators.
- Website authentication as easy as possible without compromising security.
- Making forms easy to complete, such as with clear error messages and simple error recovery.

Working Towards Accessibility

- By default, **HTML is accessible**, if used correctly. Web accessibility involves ensuring that content remains accessible, regardless of who and how the web is accessed.
- **Use common sense.** If you are working on a gallery website showing interesting 3D art, it would be unreasonable to expect every piece of art to be perfectly accessible to visually impaired people, given that it is an entirely visual medium.
- **Be realistic.** "100% accessibility" is an unobtainable ideal

Common-Sense Accessibility

Semantic structure

The most important quick win in semantic HTML is to use a structure of headings and paragraphs for your content; this is because screen reader users tend to use the headings of a document as signposts to find the content they need more quickly.

Using native keyboard accessibility

Certain HTML features can be selected using only the keyboard — this is default behavior, available since the early days of the web. The elements that have this capability are the common ones that allow user to interact with web pages, namely links, `<button>` s, and form elements like `<input>` .

Common-Sense Accessibility

Text Alternatives

Text alternatives are very important for accessibility. The simplest text alternative available is the humble `alt` attribute, which we should include on all images. This should contain a description of the image that successfully conveys its meaning and content on the page, to be picked up by a screenreader and read out to the user.

Element relationships and context

There are certain features and best practices in HTML designed to provide context and relationships between elements where none otherwise exists. The three most common examples are links, form labels, and data tables.

Common-Sense Accessibility

Color and color contrast

When choosing a color scheme for your website, you should make sure that the text (foreground) color contrasts well with the background color. Your design might look cool, but it is no good if people with visual impairments like color blindness can't read your content.

Simple functionality

Generally simple functionality should work with just the HTML in place — JavaScript should only be used to enhance functionality, not build it in entirely. Good uses of JavaScript include client-side form validation or custom controls for HTML5 `<video>`.

Common-Sense Accessibility

Using clear language

In general, you should use clear language that is not overly complex and doesn't use unnecessary jargon or slang terms. This not only benefits people with cognitive or other disabilities; it benefits everyone!

- Don't use dashes if you can avoid it. Instead of writing 5–7, write 5 to 7.
- Expand abbreviations: instead of writing Jan, write January.
- Expand acronyms (or at least once or twice). Instead of writing HTML in the first instance, write Hypertext Markup Language.

Common-Sense Accessibility

Meaningful Text Labels

UI control text labels are very useful to all users, but getting them right is particularly important to users with disabilities.

You should make sure that your button and link text labels are understandable and distinctive. Don't just use "Click here" for your labels, as screen reader users sometimes get up a list of buttons and form controls.

Make sure your labels make sense out of context, read on their own, as well as in the context of the paragraph they are in.

Extra Considerations for Mobile

There are some exceptions that need special consideration for mobile; the main ones are:

- **Control mechanisms** — Make sure interface controls such as buttons are accessible on mobiles (i.e., mainly touchscreen), as well as desktops/laptops (mainly mouse/keyboard).
- **User input** — Make user input requirements as painless as possible on mobile (e.g., in forms, keep typing to a minimum).
- **Responsive design** — Make sure layouts work on mobile, conserve image download sizes, and think about the provision of images for high-resolution screens.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are part of a series of web accessibility guidelines published by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium

<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/>

Levels of WAI Guidelines

A: Essential

If this isn't met, assistive technology may not be able to read, understand, or fully operate the page or view.

AA: Ideal Support

Required for multiple government and public body websites.

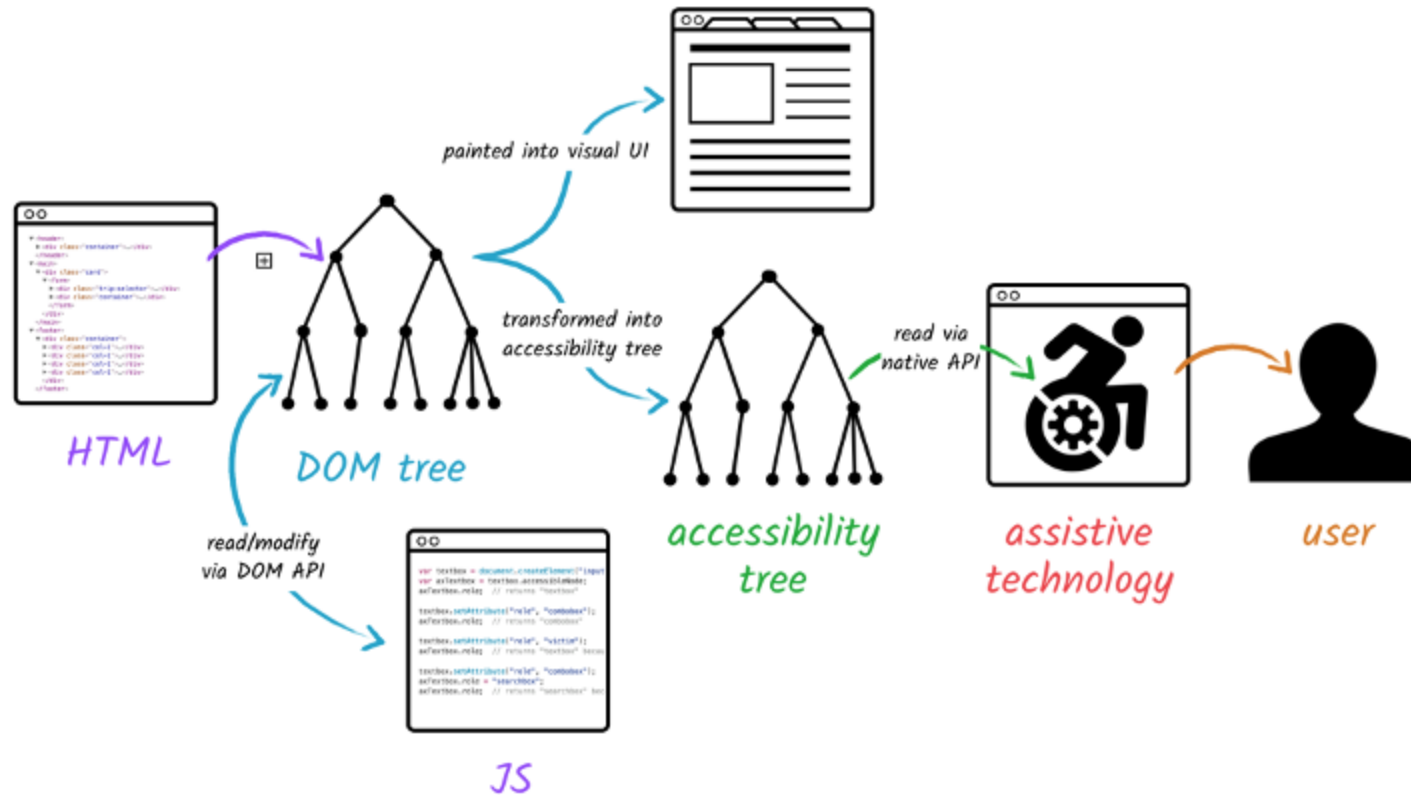
AAA: Specialized Support

Typically reserved for parts of websites and web apps that serve a specialized audience.

Going Further: WAI-ARIA

WAI-ARIA (Web Accessibility Initiative - Accessible Rich Internet Applications) is a set of attributes that define ways to make web content and web applications - especially those developed with JavaScript, more accessible.

See also: <https://www.davidmacd.com/blog/wai-aria-accessibility-for-average-web-developers.html>



Although ARIA allows us to modify the accessibility tree for any element on the page, that is the only thing it changes. ARIA **doesn't change** any of the element's inherent behavior.

Features WAI-ARIA

- **Roles** - Define what an element is or does. any of these are so-called landmark roles, which largely duplicate the semantic value of HTML5 structural elements e.g. `role="navigation"`
- **Properties** - These define properties of elements, which can be used to give them extra meaning or semantics. For example, `aria-required="true"` specifies that a form input needs to be filled in order to be valid. Properties do not change throughout the lifecycle of an app.
- **States** — Special properties that define the current conditions of elements, such as `aria-disabled="true"`, which specifies to a screenreader that a form input is currently disabled. States can change, generally programmatically via JavaScript.

When To Use

Only use when necessary, you should *always* use native HTML features. See:

<https://www.w3.org/TR/using-aria/#rule1>

1. **Signposts/Landmarks:** ARIA's role attribute values act as landmarks that either replicate the semantics of HTML5 elements (e.g. `<nav>`), or go beyond to provide signposts to different functional areas, e.g search, tabgroup, tab, listbox, etc.
2. **Dynamic content updates:** We can use `aria-live` to inform screenreader users when an area of content is updated via AJAX.
3. **Enhancing keyboard accessibility:** for JS generated elements (using `tabindex`).
4. **Accessibility of non-semantic controls:** for instance `role="button"` for JS generated non-semantic controls.

Common Mistakes

- Labelling mismatching elements ``
- Using An `aria-labelledby` attribute that references an ID that does not exist,
- Not moving the focus to modal when it opens.
- Adding roles that duplicate HTML, e.g. `<button role="button">`
- Adding `tabindex=0` to every element.
- Using `role="menu"` for navigation.

Validating Accessibility



<https://wave.webaim.org/>

Tools

- **Screen Reader** for your browser.
- **Colorblinding**. Extension that simulates the website as a color vision impaired person would see.
- **Web Developer Toolbar**. Universal developer utilities and checks.
- **Color Contrast Checker**. <https://colors.co/contrast-checker/>

A Quick Summary

Designing for users on the autistic spectrum	
Do...	Don't...
use simple colours	use bright contrasting colours
write in plain English	use figures of speech and idioms
use simple sentences and bullets	create a wall of text
make buttons descriptive	make buttons vague and unpredictable
build simple and consistent layouts	build complex and cluttered layouts

Designing for users of screen readers	
Do...	Don't...
describe images and provide transcripts for video	only show information in an image or video
follow a linear, logical layout	spread content all over a page
structure content using HTML5	rely on text size and placement for structure
build for keyboard use only	force mouse or screen use
write descriptive links and headings	write uninformative links and headings

Designing for users with low vision	
Do...	Don't...
use good colour contrasts and a readable font size	use low colour contrasts and small font size
publish all information on web pages	bury information in downloads
use a combination of colour, shapes and text	only use colour to convey meaning
follow a linear, logical layout	spread content all over a page
put buttons and notifications in context	separate actions from their context

Designing for users with physical or motor disabilities	
Do...	Don't...
make large clickable actions	demand precision
give form fields space	bunch interactions together
design for keyboard or speech only use	make dynamic content that requires a lot of mouse movement
design with mobile and touchscreen in mind	have short time out windows
provide shortcuts	use users with lots of typing and scrolling

Designing for users who are Deaf or hard of hearing	
Do...	Don't...
write in plain English	use complicated words or figures of speech
use subtitles or provide transcripts for videos	put content in audio or video only
use a linear, logical layout	make complex layouts and menus
break up content with sub-headings, images and videos	make users read long blocks of content
let users request an interpreter for appointments	don't make telephone the only means of contact with users

Designing for users with dyslexia	
Do...	Don't...
use images and diagrams to support text	use large blocks of heavy text
align text to the left and keep a consistent layout	underline words, use italics or write in capitals
consider producing materials in other formats (for example, audio or video)	force users to remember things from previous pages - give reminders and prompts
keep content short, clear and simple	rely on accurate spelling - use autocorrect or provide suggestions
let users change the contrast between background and text	put too much information in one place

Links

- What is Accessibility. https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Learn/Accessibility/What_is_accessibility
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/quickref/>
- A11Y Checklist. <https://www.a11yproject.com/checklist/>
- Bootstrap Accessibility. <https://getbootstrap.com/docs/5.0/getting-started/accessibility/>
- Making Sense Of WAI-ARIA: A Comprehensive Guide. <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2022/09/wai-aria-guide/>
- Näide riigiasutuste juurdepääsetavusest. <https://harno.ee/juurdepaasetavus>

Thank you!