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New Version of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Released



The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are an international standard used to assess the accessibility of web content for people with disabilities.

WCAG 2.1, which was adopted on June 5, 2018, has been the prevailing version of the guidelines relied on by courts, regulators, and industry professionals. On October 5, 2023, the nonprofit standards organization that publishes WCAG released WCAG 2.2, which will likely be seen as the presumptive version of choice in the coming months and years.

WCAG 2.2 adds nine success criteria to the existing WCAG 2.1 guidelines and removes one redundant success criterion (4.1.1 Parsing) for parsing markup and content. This latter change was also reflected in a September 2023 update to WCAG 2.1. The new success criteria seek to help users better navigate webpages, implement alternate inputs for webpage functionality, maintain a consistent and predictable website appearance, and make it easier for users to avoid or correct mistakes. Below is a summary of the new success criteria for conformance levels A, AA, and AAA; complying with levels A and AA is usually recommended:

Guideline 2.4 Navigable

- **2.4.11 Focus Not Obscured (Minimum) (AA); 2.4.12 Focus Not Obscured (Enhanced) (AAA).** Ensure that webpage content (such as a sticky footer that always runs across the bottom of the page) does not hide interface elements that have keyboard focus.
- **2.4.13 Focus Appearance (AAA).** Make it easier for users to see the keyboard focus indicator when navigating a website.

Guideline 2.5 Input Modalities

- **2.5.7 Dragging Movements (AA).** Provide alternatives to a dragging movement unless dragging is essential or it cannot be changed by the webpage author.
- **2.5.8 Target Size (Minimum) (AA).** Implement a minimum size for the target of pointer inputs.

Guideline 3.2 Predictable

- **3.2.6 Consistent Help (A).** Have webpages provide help mechanisms (such as a "Contact Us" link or self-help options) in a consistent order so that they appear in the same relative positions across a website.

Guideline 3.3 Input Assistance

- **3.3.7 Redundant Entry (A).** Make it easier for users to re-enter information that is required to be entered again as part of the same process.
- **3.3.8 Accessible Authentication (Minimum) (AA); 3.3.9 Accessible Authentication (Enhanced) (AAA).** Provide alternatives to traditional cognitive function tests used for authentication (such as solving puzzles or remembering a password).

The WCAG 2.2 guidelines will likely be viewed as the prevailing standard for website accessibility and start being incorporated into settlement agreements and corporate accessibility statements. Accordingly, companies should start thinking now about how and when to transition to WCAG 2.2.

Authors

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