

⇒ Accessibility Audits

Why and when

Conducting an accessibility audit is an essential part of evaluating the accessibility of your site. When carried out in combination with usability testing with disabled users, it forms a comprehensive accessibility evaluation of your site, as recommended by the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative.

The testing reveals the technical issues that are likely to prevent or hinder disabled users in accessing your site. Improving the technical accessibility for disabled users increases accessibility for all users and:

- Helps you comply with your obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (part III) and the Disability Equality Duty
- Increases your audience. Accessible sites can be used by more people - people with disabilities, older people, people with low literacy, people who are not fluent in the language of the site, people with low bandwidth connections to the Internet, people with older technologies, and new and infrequent web users
- Improves the visibility and reputation of your site to search engines such as Google
- Improves the performance of your site on newer technologies such as mobile phone browsers
- An accessibility audit can be conducted at the templating stage of a new website, or on a working site as part of an improvements cycle. It is most effective when combined with usability testing with disabled users.

Our approach

We approach accessibility from a standpoint of practicality of implementation. The solutions recommended are assessed in terms of priority and effort of implementation. We have designed our audit

to give you worked solutions to any problems found, and a context within which to apply them.

How we do accessibility audits

A representative selection of pages from your site is identified and is then subjected to a series of tests:

- Each page is first checked for compliance with the 65 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAGv2.0, as laid down by the W3C). The testing does not rely on automated checking - each page is evaluated 'by hand', as the W3C recommends.
- Further best practice checks are conducted as appropriate to the client. These might include:
 - Best practice guidelines for accessible PDF documents
 - Best practice guidelines for accessible Macromedia Flash content
 - Best practice guidelines for multi-language (e.g. where information is presented in English, Bengali, Urdu for UK audiences) or bilingual sites
 - UK Government Guidance for public sector websites
 - Assistance with PAS78 requirements is also available
 - Practical and aesthetic performance tests across a range of browsers (e.g. Internet Explorer, Opera, Mozilla) and assistive technologies (e.g. JAWS, HomePage Reader, Lynx)
 - A formal readability test is conducted on the site with results given according to the Flesch Reading Ease scale. Clients may also request a Plain English Review, a service from the Plain English Campaign, and apply for an Internet Crystal Mark.

Outputs

A report is produced that sets out:

- A summary of the key issues, with graphs showing the progress made to each of the three levels of accessibility: A, AA and AAA
- A table setting out a prioritised list of issues to be addressed that indicates the severity of the issue and an estimate of the resource required to address this
- For each page reviewed, a detailed description of the accessibility issue, why it isn't compliant with the WCAG1.0 checkpoints, illustrated with screenshots where appropriate, with recommendations of how the issue should be addressed including examples of revised coding where appropriate. (NB where issues are generic to a number of pages the issues and their solutions will be identified once and a reference made on each page where this occurs).
- The Browser testing report would include a set of screen grabs, details of the cross browser issues and recommendations about how these should be addressed.

We also recommend a half day meeting, where we would present the outputs of the audit and discuss how best the changes can be implemented in light of the constraints faced by the client. This helps develop practical solutions to the accessibility issues identified so the client can more easily implement the required changes.

Additional Service - Template build

As an additional service, once the evaluations are complete, our designers will take an existing page from the site and rebuild it from the ground up, incorporating all recommendations from the report documents, and commenting the code extensively:

- Template visually reproduces the existing page.
- Fully separates style from content

- Tested across a range of browsers, including:
 - Internet Explorer 5.01
 - Internet Explorer 5.5
 - Internet Explorer 6.0
 - Internet Explorer 7.0
 - Firefox (latest version)
 - Opera (latest version)
 - Safari for Mac (latest version)
 - JAWS screen reader (various versions)
 - Window Eyes screen reader (various versions)
 - Any others as specified by the client e.g. Mobile phone browsers

Client examples

Client	Project	Date
Forestry Commission	Accessibility audit Main site	April 2008
STFC	Accessibility training course	Nov 2007
STFC	Je-S accessibility audit	Oct 2007
Eduserve	Accessibility training	Oct 2007
London South bank University	Main site Accessibility audit	July 2007
Wiltshire County Council	Accessibility audit - Main site	Feb 2007
North Wiltshire District Council	Accessibility audit – main site	Feb 2007

Fees

Pricing is based on our day rates and is dependent on the number of page types to be assessed but is typically between 10 and 25 pages i.e. between £3,000-5,000 plus VAT.