

Digital Accessibility Guide



How to use this resource

Water touches everyone's lives, and that's why it's so important for water communications to be accessible to all people, regardless of their life experiences or abilities. We see this as an invitation to be creative and produce compelling content that makes people with different life experiences feel like they belong in our movement. That's why we created this guide with tips and accessibility best practices to help us reach more people and build narrative power for environmental and water justice.

General tips

- **Using high color contrast.** Prioritizing high contrast in design helps people with vision issues.
- **Size 14 font is best.** Smaller text can be hard to read on desktop devices and even more difficult to read on mobile.
- **Write in plain language.** Avoid jargon unless necessary, but always provide context.
- **All content should be optimized for mobile.** More and more people are using smartphones and tablets or might not own a desktop computer.
- **Screen readers touch all our digital channels.** This is software that reads text out loud or converts text to braille. Most who rely on this assistive technology (AT) are blind or have limited vision.
- **Avoid using all capital letters unless it's an acronym.** Screen readers will read each letter individually.

- **Add alternative text (alt text) to all images and graphics.** [Alt text describes what an image is](#) in the case that the image doesn't load properly or if a user is using a screen reader.
 - [Example:](#)



Multichannel best practices

Social media

Being in the flow of our social media feeds is one of our daily rituals. The assignment? Creating inclusive scroll-stopping content that people can easily interact with.

- Add alt text to describe any photos or graphics you share.
- Capitalize the first letter of each word (CamelCase) to make hashtags more legible.
- Limit using handles at the beginning of a post. It makes the caption hard to understand for people using screen readers.
- Resist the urge to go overboard with emojis. These can be read aloud and are tiresome when strung together.
- Include captions in your social media videos so everyone can follow along, including people who are hard of hearing.



Email

One of our most powerful digital tools to drive action is through our email lists. That's why it's important to practice intentional design and structure. Here are some best practices.

- Use clear subject lines that are easy to understand.
- Use line breaks between paragraphs, headings, and lists.
- Simple sans serif font types are easier to read. Avoid decorative or complex fonts.
- Use alt text in any images you embed.
- Be selective with GIF usage and make sure they add value. People with cognitive or neurological disabilities can find them overwhelming.

Graphics


Graphics help us share the impact of our issues and tell stories in a different way. Here's how we can make these assets more accessible and help them go further.

- Make logos easy to read and avoid overly complex designs.
- Use short, clear, and simple copy.
- Use vector design files (like AI and EPS files) when possible because they retain image quality even when resized.
- Always use alt text and when possible describe the graphic's gist in the body of your content.

Website and SEO

Inclusive website design helps people engage with our work and access resources, and here's how.

- Use focus indicators. These are elements like highlighted buttons and borders that help keyboard users navigate and take action on your site— be it a pledge or donation call to action.

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- Use responsive design to adapt your website to different screen sizes and devices.
 - Hyperlinks should make sense out of context, so we recommend being brief and descriptive. For example, instead of, “[see here](#) for more on water affordability,” try, “[more on water affordability.](#)” Different ATs will pull up a list of a page’s hyperlinks and sometimes people will tab from link to link skipping unlinked content.
 - Don’t use long URLs in your content because they are hard to read and screen readers will read them aloud.
 - Make your website more accessible for people who rely on keyboards to navigate websites by prioritizing:
 - Keyboard-friendly design with links and buttons that can be accessed using the tab button.
 - Form fields, checkboxes, and radio buttons that can be accessed using the tab button.
 - Use tables to display data. Screen readers will read the contents from left to right and top to bottom to present the information in a meaningful way.
 - Use QR codes, especially when in the field. These are barcode-like graphics that redirect people to a website when scanned with a phone camera. This can be an easier user experience compared to reading, typing, or writing website URLs by hand.
 - Internal linking mechanisms like HTML sitemaps, breadcrumbs, and compelling calls-to-action provide context for screen readers. It’s also a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) best practice.

- Don't jump ahead with your headers and subheads for the sake of style. This can cause screen readers to skip over content. Here's an example of how to structure your page headers:

H1: This is a header

Like a blog title

H2: This is a subhead

Using subheads helps people more easily scan your content and screen readers to help people navigate your website.

H3: This is a subtopic within a subhead

Then when you have more detail you want to break out within a section, you can use other headers like an H3 or H4, but don't skip ahead so assistive technology doesn't skip over your content.

Webinars

Hosting accessible webinars helps us reach and support a wider audience.

- Slow down. Conversations can be challenging to follow, especially when there are also slides to read.
- Share webinar recordings, slides, and other materials with participants for people to revisit.
- Describe images and graphs you might share. *Bonus points* if you describe how you self-identify and look at the beginning of a presentation for people to get a better picture.
- [Enable the closed captioning](#) or [transcript features on Zoom](#).
- Find out if interpreters are needed for your session by asking in the registration form or on the promotional materials. If so, invite interpreters as panelists and spotlight them in the session. [Learn how to feature interpreters on your webinar here](#).

Resources

- [Introduction to screen readers](#)
- Accessibility check tools:
 - [Microsoft for Word documents, Powerpoint, etc.](#)
 - [Adobe accessibility check for PDFs](#)
- [Accessibility for people with limited fine motor skills](#)
- [Accessibility & Search Engine Optimization \(SEO\)](#)
- [Writing good alt text](#)
- [Color contrast checker](#)
- [Descriptive link text](#)
- [Descriptive live videos](#)
- [How to use header tags \(SEO\)](#)
- [Making accessible infographics](#)
- [Mobile-friendly website checker](#)
- [Video caption generator](#)

Note: This isn't an exhaustive resource and we welcome additional feedback if folks have additional best practices to share.