

# Accessibility Isn't Optional: Tips for Inclusive Design

## Accessibility



### What It Is

Designing online content so that a person with an impairment can acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and access the same services in an equally effective matter as someone without an impairment.

### What It Looks Like

- Adding alt-text to images in an eLearning course
- Providing captions in an advertisement on Instagram
- Avoiding drag-and-drop assessment questions
- Incorporating text-to-speech functionality in an eBook
- Optimizing your web page for screen readers
- Using color contrast checkers and color blindness filters
- Responsive designs
- Designing for keyboard or speech navigation
- And much more

### Learn More

[Fundamentals of Accessibility](#)

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#)

[Section 508 Standards](#)

[Steven Lambert's Twelve Lenses of Accessibility](#)

## Impairments Can Be Permanent, Temporary, or Situational

 <p>Sight</p> <p>Permanent: Blindness Temporary: Scratched cornea Situational: Sunny day</p>	 <p>Hearing</p> <p>Permanent: Deafness Temporary: Ear Infection Situational: Loud setting</p>
 <p>Touch</p> <p>Permanent: Amputee Temporary: Broken wrist Situational: Carrying child</p>	 <p>Speech</p> <p>Permanent: Non-verbal Temporary: Sore throat Situational: Foreign language</p>

Impairments also include cognitive, learning, and neurological disorders:

ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Anxiety, Dyslexia, Dementia, Epilepsy (seizure-risk), and Mood disorders.

# Inclusive Design



## What It Is

Designing online content through a broad lens that incorporates all types of people, cultures, languages, ages, genders, and representations.

## What It Looks Like

- Offering content in a variety of languages
- Prioritizing diversity in media, like videos or images, or in text, like assessment questions or scenarios
- Using clear, concise language to improve readability
- Offering a space for feedback
- And much more

## Learn More

[Inclusive Design Principles](#)

[Microsoft's Inclusive Design Methodology](#)

[Ethical Design](#)

[Getting Started with Inclusive Design \(podcast\)](#)

*Accessibility and Inclusive Design are not optional  
because everyone deserves the chance to learn.*

## Where Do I Start?

*“Accessibility is solved in the design phase”*

*-Daniel Na*

Designing for all is not just about compliance or checking a box in an authoring tool. It begins with analysis and design. An inclusive design process helps you consider all audiences who might learn from your content. It also helps you design better experiences for all learners and meet accessibility standards. You cannot fix everything overnight, but you can commit to changing your design practice.

*To design for accessibility means to be inclusive to the needs of all possible users.*

## Tips for Accessibility and Inclusive Design

1. Don't expect your stakeholder to know anything about accessibility or inclusive design.
  - a. Educate your stakeholder about these topics. Point out examples of accessible design features on a web browser or cellphone, such as screen reading or high-contrast options. Frame accessibility and inclusive design as requirements.
2. Make accessibility and inclusive design a part of your process; not an add-on or afterthought.
  - a. Build it right the first time. It's easy to overlook accessibility and inclusive features if you wait until the end of the project. It may take a little more time to add in some features or locate inclusive media, but it will reduce the likelihood of rework.
3. Have a toolkit of resources to check for accessibility and inclusion.
  - a. Find tools that will help you improve accessibility and inclusion in your work. Learn about the accessibility features of your favorite applications, especially authoring tools. As needed, create checklists for accessibility and inclusive design.

*EVERY INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER NEEDS A TOOLKIT FOR ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE DESIGN.  
THE LEARNING NINJAS® ACCESSIBILITY PRIMER IS A GREAT PLACE TO START.*

## Audience Analysis

When starting an eLearning project, we must first understand our audience. This might be achieved by developing personas or conducting interviews. While effective, these practices may only provide insight about the general audience. Incorporate the following questions to gather a deeper understanding:

### WHO

Might any learners have permanent, temporary, or situational impairments that affect their mobility, hearing, vision, speech, attention, cognition, or ability to learn?

### WHERE

Could the learner be located somewhere that has poor or limited Internet? Somewhere rural or remote?  
Are they learning in a quiet or noisy location?

### WHAT

What types of devices will the learners be using to learn?  
Will the learner want to print the content?

### WHEN

When will the learner access this content? At home? At work? On their commute?  
What time of day is it? What kind of lighting will they have?

### HOW

Does the learner pay for Internet or data?  
Will the user need a login?

## Empathy Maps

Empathy maps are another design tool to analyze your audience. To create an empathy map, choose a persona and ask:

What is this person...  
thinking?  
feeling?  
seeing?  
hearing?  
saying?  
doing?

This activity aims to raise awareness of the learner's actions and reveal factors that we should be considering as we design. Refer to [this article](#) to learn more about empathy maps and download a blank template.

## Design Process

Think about all the ways you can access different floors of a building:  
stairs, elevators, ladders, or escalators.

**Which option is usable by everyone?**

Our job is to create learning experiences for diverse human beings with a spectrum of abilities. To do this effectively, accessibility and inclusive design need to be a part of the design process— not left until the end. Prioritize accessibility and inclusive design by doing the following:

- Add accessibility fields to storylines and outlines. Doing so reduces the likelihood of forgetting to add alt-text, test color contrast, or import a video transcript.
- Understand that authoring tools have flaws. The default settings might not be optimized for accessibility. Examine compliance documents to determine which features need to be turned on to improve usability. If a tool lacks something important for accessibility, send a feature request to the developers and ask peers for work-around solutions.
- Ask the following questions about each design element:
  1. Is It inclusive? Does it include representations of different types of people, cultures, and races? Can the design more inclusive by changing the writing or imagery?
  2. Is it necessary?
  3. Does the learner have control?
  4. Does the learner have a safe space to offer feedback, make requests, or ask questions?
  5. Are you sharing what you learned?

## Suggested Tools and Resources

Depending on the project, you might require different tools to ensure designs are accessible and inclusive. Here are some suggestions:

Animations and Effects

[Motion Sensitivity](#)

[Accessible Animations](#)

Audio and Video

[Video Captions](#)

[Transcripts](#)

[Avoid Autoplay](#)

Color and Fonts

[Color Contrast Checker](#)

[Color Blindness Simulator](#)

Controls and Keyboard

[Links and Buttons](#)

[Hover Effects](#)

[Keyboard Accessibility](#)

Images and Icons

[When to Use Alt-text](#)

[Writing Alt-text](#)

[Icon Usability](#)

Time

[Accessible Time Limits](#)

Layout and Structure

[Clear Layout and Design](#)

[Responsive Design](#)

[Developing Accessible HTML](#)

Readability

[Designing for Readability](#)

[Test Readability \(Hemingway App\)](#)

eLearning Applications and Tools

[Articulate 360](#)

[Adobe Captivate](#)

[Adapt Accessibility](#)

[Descript for Video and Audio](#)

Additional

[Do's and Don'ts of Accessibility](#)

[Presentation Best Practices](#)

[Designer's Guide to Accessibility](#)

[Getting Feedback with Forms](#)

[Inclusive Design](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#)

[Accessibility Considerations \(eBook\)](#)

[Material Design](#)