

Why Web Accessibility?

People who use the web have a growing variety of abilities and needs. As content creators, we cannot assume that all users are accessing our content using the same web browser or operating system as we are, nor can we assume they're using a traditional monitor for output, or keyboard and mouse for input. Consider these individual characteristics:

1. **Unable to see.** Individuals who are blind use either audible output (products called *screen readers* that read web content using synthesized speech) or tactile output (a refreshable Braille device).
2. **Has a Learning Disability.** Individuals with learning disabilities such as dyslexia may also use audible output, along with software that highlights words or phrases as they're read aloud using synthesized speech.
3. **Has low vision.** Individuals with low vision may use screen magnification software that allows them to zoom into all or a portion of the visual screen. Many others with less-than-perfect eyesight may enlarge the font on websites using standard browser functions, such as Ctrl + in Windows browsers or Command + in Mac browsers.
4. **Has a physical disability.** Individuals with physical disabilities that effect their hand mobility may be unable to use a mouse, and instead rely exclusively on keyboard or use assistive technologies such as speech recognition, head pointers, mouth sticks, or eye-gaze tracking systems.
5. **Unable to hear.** Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, or are unable to access audio content due to their surroundings, need audio/video to be properly captioned and transcribed.
6. **Using a mobile device.** Individuals who are accessing the web using a compact mobile device such as a phone face accessibility barriers, just like individuals with disabilities do. They're using a small screen and may need to zoom in or increase the font size, and they are likely to be using a touch interface rather than a mouse. Also, Apple's iPhone and iPad do not support Adobe Flash. Some students may only have a mobile device available to access course materials.
7. **Limited bandwidth.** Individuals may be on slow Internet connections if they're located in a rural area or lack the financial resources to access high-speed Internet. These users benefit from pages that load quickly (use graphics sparingly) and transcripts for video.
8. **Limited time.** Very busy individuals may have too little time to watch an entire video or audio recording, but can quickly access its content if a transcript is available.