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[What is ADA Compliance?](#)

[How does being compliant help people?](#)

[What are the risks of not being compliant?](#)

[How do I make my designs compliant?](#)

What is ADA Compliance?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design were passed in 2010. These standards establish the guidelines to make all electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities.

While it is not proactively enforced by any governing body, the Department of Justice (DOJ) is currently determining specific regulations for goods and services provided on the web.

How does being compliant help people?

There are a wide range of disabilities that can impact a visitors usage, such as:

- Impaired vision, color blindness, and blindness
- Reduced hearing or deafness
- Motor-function or mobility issues (Such as Parkinson's or muscular dystrophy)

While most people think of websites in context of using a keyboard, mouse, or touchscreen to navigate, people with disabilities often cannot these same input methods. There are a wide range of assistive input devices, computers, and software that can help those with disabilities still access the same information as everyone else. These devices can include:

- Screen reading (Text-to-speech) software
- Speech-to-text software
- Eye tracking software
- Mouth-stylus
- Trackballs and trackpads
- iPhone (Voice Over, Voice Control, High Contrast, and more)

What are the risks of not being compliant?

By not being compliant, you are making your digital communications more challenging, ineffective, and possibly unusable for upwards of 20% of your audience.

From a legal standpoint, an organization could be sued for ignoring the needs of those with disabilities. There have been many successful lawsuits as of late, which is why more organizations are beginning to ramp up efforts to become compliant.

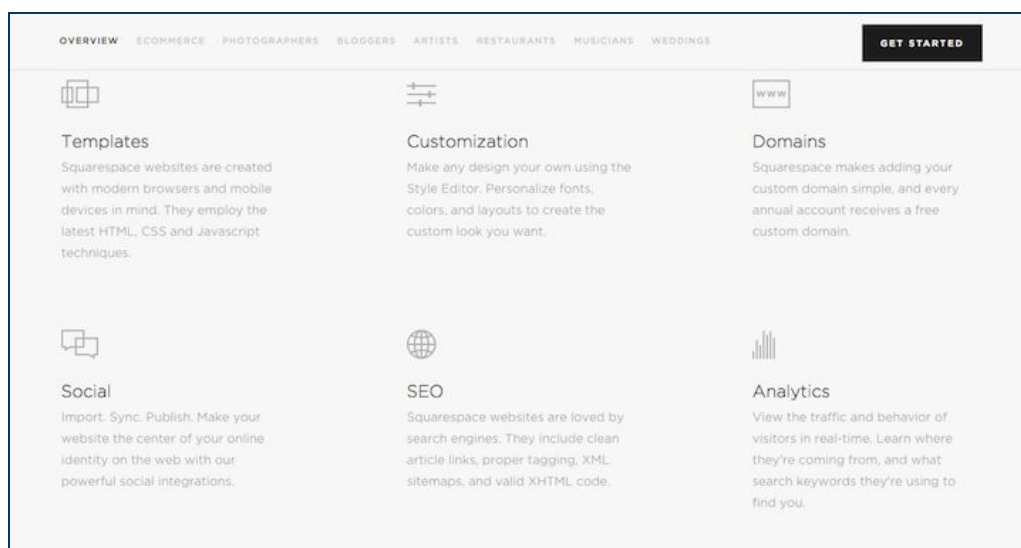
How do I make my designs compliant?

1. Ensure your design has appropriate contrast

For those with any form of color blindness or impairment, poor contrast is often the cause of many inaccessible designs. Choosing colors that have the appropriate contrast ensures that people who have any form of vision impairment will be able to read the content we create.

Based on the [WCAG guidelines](#), we should be aiming for a 4.5:1 contrast level for normal text and 3:1 for headline text in comparison with the background color they rest on. There are some assistive tools in Photoshop to measure contrast ratio, however we've found using 3rd party tools a little easier.

Resource: Measure contrast of two hex values - [Contrast Ratio](#) (Orange or Green = Good to go!)



Example of poor contrast on Squarespace.com

2. Don't rely on color to differentiate things on the page

Consider how someone with color blindness may view your design - If you combine certain colors elements of your design or content may appear “invisible” or be very difficult to recognize the difference.

If there are two actions someone can take on a page (ex: Save and Cancel), and you use color as the primary way to differentiate the two buttons, this can make them indistinguishable to many of your visitors. Alternatively, an alert that is indicating some form of danger with a red color might not get the point across as clearly for someone who has red-green color blindness.

Ensure you have enough differentiation in your design using elements such as copy, textures, and iconography to better differentiate on-screen elements.

Here's a list of color combinations that you should avoid using in your interface designs wherever possible:

- green-red
- green-blue
- green-brown
- green-black
- green-grey
- blue-grey
- light green-yellow
- blue-purple

Resource: Test different types of color blindness in Chrome: [Colorblinding - Chrome Web Store](#)



The image shows a Facebook 'Sign Up' form. On the left, there is an illustration of a large white thumbs-up icon with a red heart above it, held by a group of stylized people. Below the illustration, it says 'Thanks for stopping by!'. The form itself is titled 'Sign Up' and has the text 'It's free and always will be.' Below this, there are several input fields: 'First name' and 'Surname' (both with red borders and red exclamation mark icons), 'Mobile number or email address' (with a red border and red exclamation mark icon), 'Re-enter mobile number or email address' (with a red border and red exclamation mark icon), and 'New password' (with a red border and red exclamation mark icon). There is also a 'Birthday' section with 'Day', 'Month', and 'Year' dropdowns, and radio buttons for 'Female' and 'Male'. At the bottom, there is a green 'Sign Up' button. A red box with the text 'What's your name?' points to the 'First name' and 'Surname' fields. Small text at the bottom of the form states: 'By clicking Sign Up, you agree to our Terms and confirm that you have read our Data Policy, including our Cookie Use Policy. You may receive SMS message notifications from Facebook and can opt out at any time.'

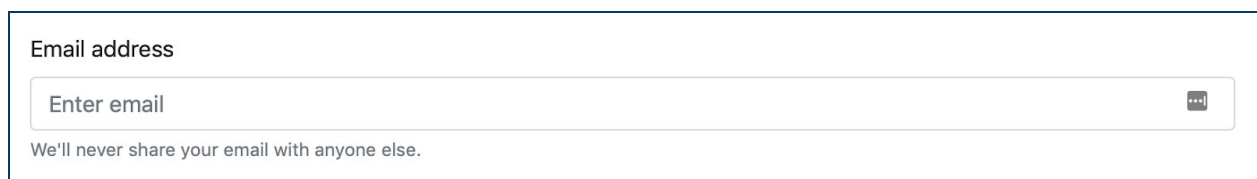
Example where Facebook uses not only a red border, but also a (!) icon to differentiate an error, ensuring those with red color blindness can still know what errors they need to correct.

3. Use visible, clear text labels and provide instructions

Forms are not really all that “fun” when it comes to design and there have been plenty of trends to minimize the amount of information displayed to make designs cleaner.

For those using assistive devices, forms can be quite complex and difficult to navigate. Hiding form labels (The copy at the top) and using “placeholder” text (The greyed out copy in the text field) makes it difficult to quickly understand what you need to enter, and once you start typing your instructions are gone.

When possible, keep the labels above the form field to properly instruct visitors about what information you want to collect (Ex: Instead of making the label “Full Name” change it to “What is your name?”). It will make your forms more usable for those using screen readers and makes the form more personable. It’s always better to provide a little more context to make sure your visitors have as much information as possible (Such as in the example below).



The image shows a form field for an email address. It is enclosed in a light gray border. At the top left, the text "Email address" is displayed. Below this, there is a text input field with the placeholder text "Enter email" in a light gray font. To the right of the input field, there is a small icon of three dots. Below the input field, the text "We'll never share your email with anyone else." is displayed.

An example of a form field that includes the label “Email Address,” a placeholder “Enter Email,” and instructions “We’ll never share...”. Since “Enter Email” will disappear once something is typed it’s not necessarily redundant.

If the photo is not relevant to the content on the page it may be confusing not only to those with assistive devices but also your non-disabled visitors as well. If a photo doesn't provide value, consider removing it all together.

Example of alt text for an image on Amazon.com. The text highlighted in yellow describes what is happening in the image

5. Consider how visitors interact with links and buttons

Often time designers want to customize how on-page links and buttons look. On a web page, links and buttons have several “states” they can be in:

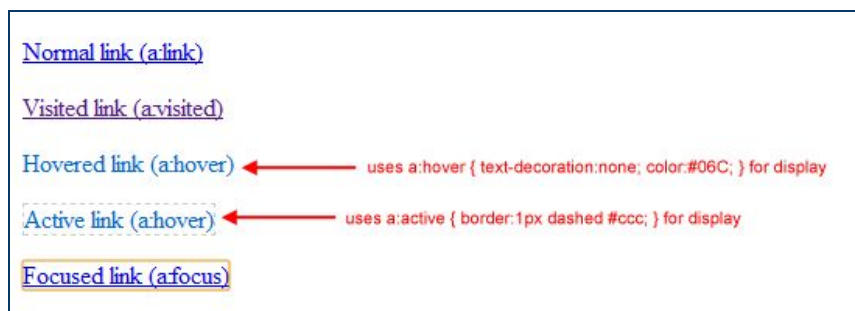
- **Normal/Unvisited** - A link that you’ve never been to
- **Visited** - A link you have been to before
- **Hover State** - A link your mouse is currently over
- **Active State** - When your mouse is clicked down on the link
- **Focus State** - When a link has been tabbed over (Or, selected before a click)
- **Disabled state** - When a link or button is no longer clickable

By default web browsers have styles for each of these states (Ex: Links have an underline and are blue, when visited they change color).

These states provide important information to all visitors about not only how they *can* interact with the page, but also how they *have* interacted with links and buttons in the past. The underline beneath links is very important as visitors who are color blind may not be able to tell that your links are red within a paragraph of black text.

If you don’t provide explicit states for your links or buttons, developers often fill in the gaps by using alternate colors / saturations to differentiate between them all.

If you’re going to make your links or buttons customized, ensure there is enough contrast and differentiation from the content on the rest of the page to make them usable to those with vision impairment.



Example of the different states and link styles

6. Make buttons & interactive elements large enough to tap

To help ensure it is easy to interact with your phone apps, Google and Apple have established specific guidelines. This ensures all buttons & interactive elements are the right size to make them easily tappable.

Based on these guidelines we recommend any “tappable” element should be *no smaller than* 48 x 48px, and each tappable element should be spaced at least 16px apart. Remember that this is a minimum recommendation and more important calls to action should be scaled up accordingly.

Note: Links within content can stay their natural size, just make sure they can be easily identified as a link.


Resource: [Touch Target Size @ Nielsen Norman Group](#)

7. Space and group your content that is related

To improve overall readability we recommend you group like content using the appropriate header and paragraph sizes to indicate when a section begins and ends. This not only helps all users more easily scan the page and understand the flow, screen readers can use this hierarchy to better dictate information on screen to help access it more quickly.

STEP 2: Audience Selection & Keyword Research (10 min)

SEO is all about improving your site to be the best resource for what people are looking for. In this step, we'll zero in on who we want to target and what content we think will resonate with them.



Audience Selection

Think of your current sales process and who the key decision makers are. Use the following questions to hone in on one specific target.

1. Which **decision maker** is most likely to be seeking answers or information online?
2. What **specific problems** do you know they have during the day-to-day of your business? (Think about problems directly and indirectly related to your product or service)
3. What **knowledge** do you have that could help them solve these problems?

Keyword Research

Now that you've identified your audience and what problems you can help them with, it's

Example of a blog post that includes a hierarchy of headers and body content making this page more accessible.

8. Audio and video content needs a text alternative

Whether you provide closed captioning or a transcript, any audio-based multimedia must provide an alternative method to consume that information. This allows those with hearing impairment and deafness to properly engage with the content.

Resource: [Online Transcription Service Rev.com](https://www.rev.com)

9. All text should be readable/searchable, including images and downloadable PDFs

Screen readers can't detect text if it's not "live" on the page. Any rasterized text (Such as copy embedded in an image or a scanned PDF) is not easily readable and therefore inaccessible to those utilizing screen readers.

Review any complex text treatments with the development team before proceeding, and where possible avoid text embedded on photographs. For any PDFs you're exporting, ensure they are text-searchable so they will work correctly with screen readers.

Resource: [Video - Creating More Accessible PDFs In InDesign](#)