

Website Accessibility



The Internet Is For All

Website Accessibility

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You (And Your Business)

Table of Contents

What Is Website Accessibility? (And Why Should You Care?)

WCAG, in Plain English

Accessibility Myths That Get People Sued

Why 'Accessible' Website Themes Aren't a Free Pass

Common Website Accessibility Myths

Why Plugins Like UserWay Don't Actually Fix Accessibility

Understanding Levels A, AA, and AAA

What Is P.O.U.R.?

How Accessibility and SEO Work Together

All Industries Need to Comply

Tools to Check Your Site (That Won't Break the Bank)

How to Use These Tools Without Being a Developer

Issues You May See in a Website Accessibility Issues Report

What Is Website Accessibility? (And Why Should You Care?)

Website accessibility means making sure everyone can use your site, including people with disabilities. That includes those who use screen readers, can't use a mouse, or need captions to follow a video.

And here's the kicker: if your website isn't accessible, you could get sued. Thousands of business owners do every year.

According to a 2024 report from UsableNet, over 4,600 website accessibility lawsuits were filed in the U.S., and that number keeps rising.

More importantly, you could be locking out customers who want to buy from you but literally can't use your site.

And it's not just the cost of fixing your website after the fact. In states like California and New York, the fines themselves can be steep.

Under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act, for example, you can be fined \$4,000 per violation—and that's just the state penalty.

Federal lawsuits can stack on top of that, leading to settlements or judgments that total tens of thousands of dollars, especially if legal fees are involved.



71% of disabled customers with access needs will click away from a website that they find difficult to use.

ClickAwayPound.com

WCAG, in Plain English

WCAG stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These are the rules that help website builders and owners make sure their websites, social media content, and mobile apps work for everyone.

They started in May 1999, and they get updated every few years.

The current standard is WCAG 2.2, and it has three levels:

- Level A (bare minimum)
- Level AA (industry standard)
- Level AAA (extra credit)

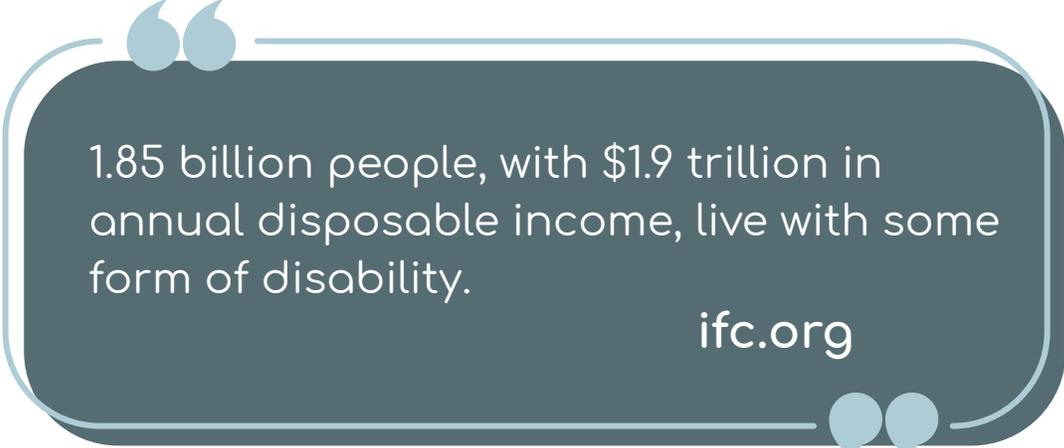
Most businesses aim for Level AA, but the right level depends on your industry (more on that below).

Accessibility Myths That Get People Sued

Why 'Accessible' Website Themes Aren't a Free Pass

There are website builders and theme marketplaces that advertise their themes as “accessible.” But here’s the catch: once you install that theme and start customizing it—changing colors, adding images, editing headers or font sizes—you may be unknowingly breaking accessibility standards.

Even something as simple as using a light gray font on a white background or uploading images without alt text can undo the accessibility work built into the original theme.



1.85 billion people, with \$1.9 trillion in annual disposable income, live with some form of disability.

[ifc.org](https://www.ifc.org)

So, even though website builders and platforms may offer themes or templates labeled as “accessible,” they cannot guarantee full compliance for your website due to:

- **Content Customization:** Once you add your own content, images, and functionality, you may inadvertently introduce accessibility barriers.
- **Third-Party Plugins:** Many sites use plugins or apps that may not be fully accessible, compromising overall site accessibility.
- **Regular Updates:** Web accessibility standards evolve, and older themes may not keep pace with the latest requirements.
- **User-Generated Content:** If your site allows user submissions, this content may not meet accessibility standards.

Remember, an accessible theme is only a starting point. It’s your ongoing choices—during design, development, and content creation—that determine whether your site stays compliant. So don’t assume that “accessible theme” means “set it and forget it.”

Common Website Accessibility Myths

One of the most common misconceptions we hear is that if you don't have a physical location, you don't need to have an accessible website.

Website accessibility applies to every single website on the internet, regardless of whether you have a physical location or not.

Other misconceptions we hear way too often:

- "My business is too small to worry about accessibility."
- "I installed a widget that says I'm compliant."
- "Nobody with a disability visits my site."
- "I don't have a physical location."
- "I'm not selling anything on my website."

All false. Accessibility lawsuits have hit businesses of every size across all industries. Overlays (plugins) and widgets aren't full solutions. And if your site's public, people with disabilities are visiting it—or trying to.

Why Plugins Like UserWay Don't Actually Fix Accessibility

There's a popular idea out there that you can just install a plugin or overlay—like UserWay—and call it a day. But here's the truth: these tools don't make your site accessible. They just sit on top of it like a Band-Aid.

UserWay and similar tools often:

- Miss deeper code-level accessibility issues
- Interfere with actual assistive technology
- Give a false sense of compliance

In fact, UserWay is currently facing a class action lawsuit for claiming to make websites accessible without fully delivering on that promise. According to a 2024 report published by UsableNet, 25% of website accessibility lawsuits were against websites that had the 'accessible' plugins.

The better approach? Build accessibility into the site itself—in the code, in the content, and in how people navigate and interact with it.

Understanding Levels A, AA, and AAA

There are three levels to website accessibility, with Level A being the bare minimum requirement for most websites to be compliant.

Level A

Basic stuff like making sure all images have alt text or links can be clicked with a keyboard.

Level AA

Adds things like color contrast and consistent navigation. This is the sweet spot for most businesses and what the DOJ considers the 'industry standard' when reviewing lawsuits.

If you are a state or government website or receive any type of state or federal funding, you would then be required to meet Level AA standards.

Level AAA

For government and education, or brands that want to go above and beyond. It includes things like sign language for videos and extended time on forms.

What Is P.O.U.R.?

These four principles are used to evaluate whether a website truly supports accessibility—not just for today, but for future users and technologies.

In other words, P.O.U.R. is the backbone of WCAG.

Perceivable

Can people see or hear your content? This includes alt text for images, captions for videos, and text that can be resized.

Operable

Can they use all the buttons and menus? Keyboard navigation, focus indicators, and avoiding time-based interactions would be included here.

Understandable

Is the language clear and predictable? Use plain language, consistent layouts, and helpful error messages.

Robust

Does it work with current and future assistive tech? Code should be clean and follow modern standards so it works across devices and screen readers.

How Accessibility and SEO Work Together

Making your site more accessible often means making it easier for all users to find and understand your content.

Good accessibility is good SEO.

Here are just a few ways they overlap:

Headings

A clear heading hierarchy (H1, H2, H3...) helps screen readers navigate content and helps search engines understand structure.

Alt Text

Descriptive image alt text improves image SEO and helps users and search engines who can't see the image.

Descriptive Links

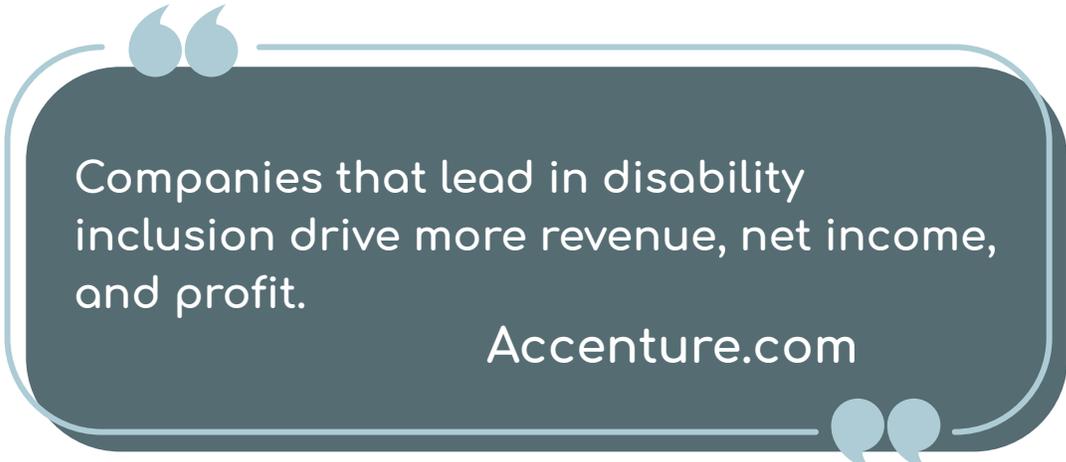
“Click here” isn't helpful. Links should describe where they go—good for users and search rankings.

Page Speed and Mobile-Friendliness

Accessibility work often overlaps with performance and responsive design—both Google ranking factors.

Clean HTML

Accessible websites rely on semantic HTML and well-structured code, which makes it easier for search engine crawlers to accurately interpret and index your content.



Companies that lead in disability inclusion drive more revenue, net income, and profit.

Accenture.com

All Industries Need to Comply

Right Now

- All websites, regardless of industry, need to comply with **Level A standards**.
- State & government, healthcare, and education usually must meet at least **Level AA**.
- E-commerce, hospitality, and finance are frequently sued and should aim for AA, too.

Coming Soon

- **April 2026:** More industries may be required to meet WCAG 2.1 AA under new DOJ rules.
- **April 2027:** Federal contractors and recipients of federal funding may face stricter enforcement.

73% of websites showed an increase in organic traffic after implementing web accessibility optimizations. ... And 66% of those websites increased their organic traffic by over 50%.

Lumar.io

Tools to Check Your Site (That Won't Break the Bank)

There are both free and paid tools available to help you check whether your website meets accessibility standards. Some scan individual pages, while others audit your entire site.

Be the Page SEO recommends the following:

Accessibility Insights for Web

A free Chrome/Edge extension developed by Microsoft that gives quick, visual feedback on accessibility issues.

PowerMapper (SortSite)

A paid tool that scans full websites for WCAG, SEO, and usability problems.

Below are other free and paid options available to you.

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

Free Tools to Check Website Accessibility

Tool	Pricing	Format	Examples
AAardvark	FREE	Browser Extension	Chrome extension performing single-page WCAG checks.
Alnspctor WCAG	FREE	Firefox Extension	Firefox extension testing WCAG compliance with reports.
ANDI	FREE	Browser Tool	U.S. government-built tool for detailed automated/manual testing.
ARC Toolkit	FREE	Browser Extension / Platform	Extension offering quick tests and detailed issue views.
Accessibility Checker	FREE	Online Tool	Free website scan with clear, actionable results.
Accessibility Insights for Web	FREE	Browser Extension	Chrome/Edge extension for fast WCAG checks with visual guidance.
Sa11y	FREE	Bookmarklet	Bookmarklet highlighting content-level accessibility issues.
WAVE (WebAIM)	FREE	Browser Extension / Online Tool	Browser tool showing accessibility issues inline over web content.

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

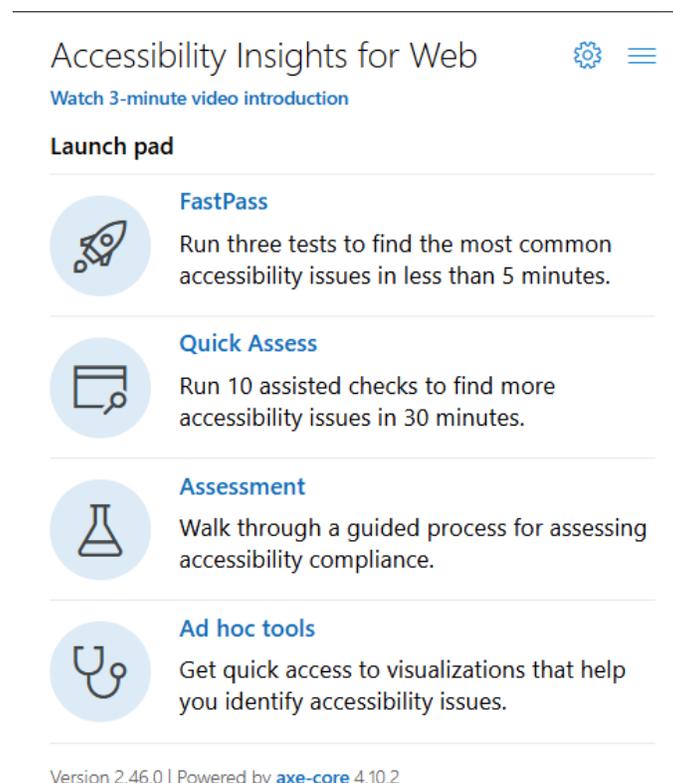
Paid Tools to Check Website Accessibility

Tool	Pricing	Format	Examples
AccessiBuddy	PAID	Web Platform	Full site scanner with monitoring/reporting, based on axe-core.
BrowserStack Accessibility Tools	PAID	Web Platform	Browser-based workflow tools for accessibility testing.
Intopia	PAID	Web Platform	Platform for digital accessibility monitoring and manual services.
Level Access	PAID	Web Platform	Enterprise compliance solution with testing and services.
Monsido	PAID	Web Platform	Real-time accessibility scanning and issue reporting.
PowerMapper's SortSite	PAID	Standalone Program	Scans your full site for WCAG A/AA/AAA and SEO issues.
Siteimprove	PAID	Web Platform	Enterprise tool for accessibility and content quality management.
TPGi ARC Platform	PAID	Web Platform	Offers ongoing accessibility compliance tools.

How to Use These Tools Without Being a Developer

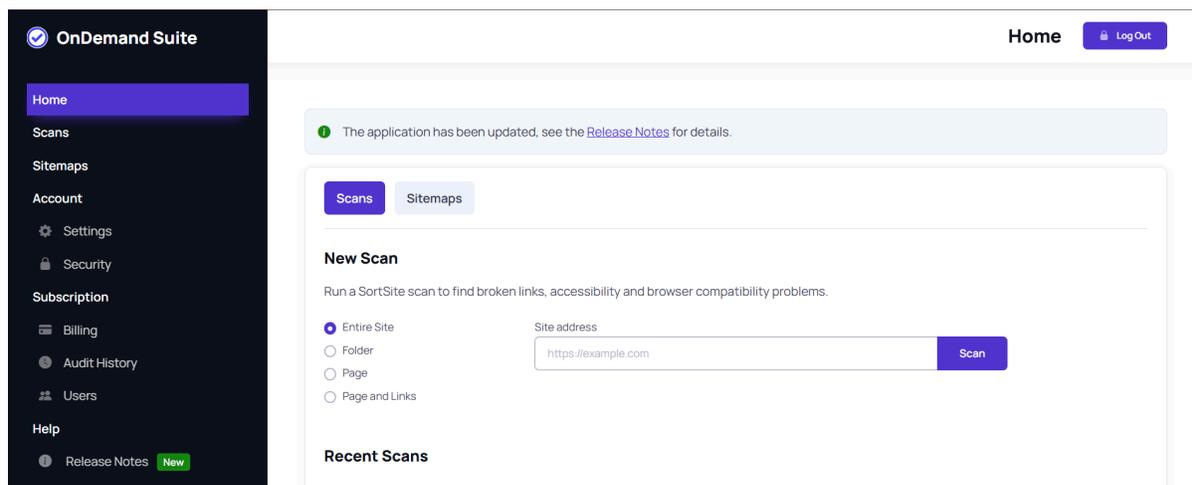
Accessibility Insights for Web

1. Install the browser extension (Chrome or Edge).
2. Navigate to your website.
3. Open the extension and run a FastPass scan.
4. You'll see a list of issues with in-page callouts showing where and why they occur.
5. Follow the built-in guidance to learn what the issue means and how to fix it.



SortSite (PowerMapper)

1. Sign up for the free trial.
2. Enter your website URL.
3. Run the scan. This will crawl multiple pages, not just one.
4. Review the report, which includes issues organized by WCAG level and type.
5. Share the results with your developer or use them to guide your own updates.



Issues You May See in a Website Accessibility Issues Report

With any tool you use, you typically get a comprehensive breakdown of issues found with explanations of what's wrong and how to fix it.

You don't need a tech degree to remediate issues, but it does help if you know a few basics about how websites are built, and a bit about HTML, including where to find things like image tags or heading levels, can make a big difference.



Every dollar invested in web accessibility and user experience improvements brings back \$100, which gives a return on investment, or ROI, of 99%.

Forrester.com

For example, you might get a warning about a missing "alt attribute." This usually means your image tag looks like this:

```

```

Instead, it should look more like this:

```

```



Accessible websites provide a seamless user experience for everyone, leading to lower bounce rates and higher conversions.

w3.org

Alt text (also called an "alt attribute") describes what the image shows. Note that this is not the place for stuffing keywords.

This is what screen readers use for users who can't see the image, and it is also used by search engines and AI crawlers to 'see' the image and understand how it relates to the content on the page.

It's not the same as:

- **Title:** What you call your image (also the place to use your keywords for SEO)
- **Description:** A longer, more detailed version of the alt text
- **Filename:** The name of the file (not shown to users or used for accessibility, but is visible to search and AI crawlers)



82% of customers with access needs would spend more if websites were more accessible.

[ClickAwayPound.com](https://www.clickawaypound.com)

“ Website accessibility isn't just good for business—it's about bringing humanity to the internet, one accessible feature at a time.

BeThePageSEO.com”



BE THE PAGE SEO

honest. human. enough.

www.BethePageSEO.com

Be the Page SEO works in partnership with Little Red Writing to create powerful, ADA-compliant websites that compel your customers to act.

CONTACT US

info@bethepageseo.com

www.bethepageseo.com