ACADiA®

acadia-software.com

Make your content accessible to all

Our team members come from many backgrounds and with different abilities. Your Acadia documents should be helpful and usable for all of them – regardless of their ability to see, hear, move, or learn.

In many ways, Acadia automatically delivers optimization for people of all abilities. It is designed to support Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and to be compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). And while these guidelines are designed to support people with disabilities, they actually help make things easier for everyone to use.

As you build content in Acadia, it's important not to add elements or styling that would impede your disabled team members. Here are a few best practices to help.
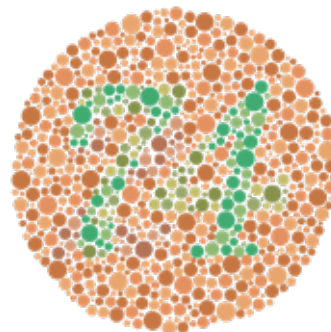
Color and font sizes

Color is an effective way to convey meaning and functionality, but it shouldn't be the only way. People who are color blind or have low vision may have difficulty reading your content depending on color contrast ratios and font size.

In general, accessibility guidelines require you to use more than just color to indicate meaning or functionality. You don't have to avoid using color altogether; in fact you should continue to use color to reinforce meaning and functionality. But don't rely on color alone.

Fortunately, Acadia's design already takes these points into consideration and limits the highlighting options and font sizes available, setting your content creators up for success.

Combining certain colors makes it difficult for some to read content, as indicated by the Ishihara test – a color vision test for people with red-green color blindness.

Avoid text as images

Use an image to enhance your text, not to be your text. It's helpful to include arrows and call out text to images to help indicate activity. But screen capturing large portions of text from another document will prevent some team members from getting the message.

Screen readers typically won't read images.

Text added to Acadia will automatically adjust for different screen sizes, the text on an image will not. The text in an image won't be "searchable," either.

Images and Videos

Step-By-Step Procedure

Rube Goldberg illustration of a complex process for a simple task

Provide text alternatives for images

Include descriptive alternative text for images. Because screen readers won't read text on an image, the alternative text or description appears as an attribute of the image that a screen reader can read in place of the image.

Provide captions for videos

Team members who are blind or have low vision, and those who are deaf or hard of hearing are not able to access or experience videos unless they are made accessible. Include captions in video content to ensure they can be used by all.

Most major video services like YouTube and Vimeo provide captioning options. Many even create automatic captions that you can edit for clarity. Do a manual review to correct mistakes, add punctuation, etc.

In your captions, be sure to include all spoken dialogue and important sounds (like a warning siren or a confirmation sound a machine makes). When more than one person is speaking on screen, indicate who is talking.

Present content in different ways without losing meaning.

Content Structure

Structure helps create meaning. This is true for all users, as well as non-human agents like screen readers and search engines. In Acadia documents like policies, one of the main building blocks for structuring your content is the use of headings.

- Headings create visual structure
- When someone glances at a page, they should get a general sense of how it's organized just by sight alone

- You know your headings are working if you put them in a list and they read like an outline of the information covered on that page

Sighted users visually scan headings and links on a page before actually reading paragraphs. People using screen readers do the same thing. Listening to a wall of text is just as tedious as reading it. So breaking up pages with logical headings lets people who are using screen readers jump from heading to heading to get a sense of the content on the page.

Do this 👍

Not this 👎

When in doubt

Use clarity, conciseness, and consistency

There is a huge overlap between best practices for accessibility and best practices for content development in general. All people benefit from writing that is clear, concise, and consistent.

One of the WCAG - AAA requirements is to meet a middle school reading level for content. Many people bristle at the idea of "dumbing down" their content to a middle school reading level. However, when it comes to readability, reading level does not correspond to the actual education level of your audience.

Research indicates that people better comprehend and retain content when it is presented in simple terms. Even if your team members have advanced degrees, they shouldn't need one to read your content.

You're not alone! Contact your Client Success Manager for support on any of the concepts you've read about in this quick guide.