

# ADA Accessibility Basics

What WCAG 2.1 actually requires — and the most common issues we see on small-business sites.

---

Accessibility is required by law for many organizations and good practice for everyone else. This sheet explains the core WCAG 2.1 AA principles and the issues Directive most often finds in real-world audits.

## The four WCAG principles (POUR)

- Perceivable: users can see or hear the content (alt text, captions, sufficient contrast).
- Operable: users can navigate without a mouse (keyboard access, no time traps).
- Understandable: content reads clearly and forms behave predictably.
- Robust: code works with current and future assistive technology (clean, semantic HTML).

## The 10 issues we find most often

- Images without alt text (or alt text that just says "image").
- Color contrast below 4.5:1 for body text and 3:1 for large text.
- Form fields without visible labels or programmatically associated labels.
- Buttons styled as DIVs that keyboards and screen readers cannot reach.
- PDFs that are scanned images with no underlying text layer.
- Pop-ups and modals that trap keyboard focus.
- Videos without captions or transcripts.
- Skip-to-content links that are missing or hidden incorrectly.
- Page titles and H1s that do not describe the page content.
- Auto-playing media that cannot be paused.

## A 30-minute starter audit

- Tab through your homepage. Can you reach every interactive element with the keyboard?
- Run the Lighthouse "Accessibility" audit in Chrome DevTools and read every flagged item.
- Resize your browser to 200% zoom — does the content still work?
- Try the page with a free screen reader (NVDA on Windows, VoiceOver on macOS).

*Need help putting any of this in motion? Call Directive Technology at (607) 433-2200 or visit [directive.com](https://directive.com) to schedule a free consultation.*