

Overview of guidelines



Section 508 guidelines exist so that users with disabilities such as diminished eyesight or hearing can still access the information on your website.

Microsoft Windows and Mac OS computers incorporate accessibility features into their operating systems, but specific pieces of information must be made available to these tools before they can assist the user. For this reason, Section 508 standards were established to develop guidelines for website creators and maintain consistency across websites.

In order to keep your website Section 508 compliant, you will need to be aware of the following rules as you add and edit content using the Vision CMS:

1. All images require "alt" tags

You must enter alternative text, called an "alt tag" or "alternative tag," for every image you place on your website. This text should be a short description of the image.

The "alt tag" is required for every image uploaded. The tag you use will automatically be applied to the image when you place it in a web page.

Note: Any image that is a link should have "alt tag" that is descriptive of the link action (for example, a "Go" button next to the search field could have alt text that reads something like "Click here to begin search").

If you hand-code an image map, you must insert "alt" text for each image map hot-spot that describes the link action.

2. Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color.

This means you should not use color alone to convey information. For example, if you have a series of colored graphics indicating levels of security threat, you must use "alt" text to describe the level of the threat so that someone who cannot distinguish certain colors can understand the graphic.

In general, refrain from using red, green or light-blue text, as these are the most difficult colors to see for someone who is color blind.

3. Multimedia must have alternate content

For example, if you are placing video clips on your site, you will also need to include closed caption text. If you are placing audio files on your site, you need to include a written transcription along with it.

4. Do not use any animation

Do not place any rapid-flashing or moving animated GIF files or Flash animations on your website.

5. All pages that require plug-ins require a link to download the plug-in.

If you are including a link to any file in Document Central, you should check the "Download Message" checkbox on the content form so that links to the helper applications such as Adobe Acrobat for PDF files appear on the page.

6. Define Row and Columns for data tables.

If you create a data table, you must use the "Set Table Properties" functionality in the Editor Tool to configure the table to be Section 508 compliant. You'll need to right-click on your table and select "Set Table Properties," then choose "Accessibility." Note if your table has a heading row and/or column and enter a summary of your table in the Summary box. Then select "Associate cells with headers" if you have a heading row or column. This feature automatically generates code for accessibility readers so they can associate data in a column with the overlying header (i.e. if you have a table with a heading called "Department" and a listing under that heading called "City Clerk," that association is made).

7. Enter content into all "Answer" fields when creating Forms & Surveys

When creating forms and surveys make sure to add informative text into the answer area of the questions you create. If left empty this will be flagged as non-complaint due due an empty tag that will cause potential issues with screen readers.