

WEBSITES AND ACCESSIBILITY

A Supplement to Heritage BC's
Accessibility for Historic Places

Websites often rely on images and rich, colour-based design. However, this type of design is inaccessible to people with visual impairments or those with cognitive disabilities who experience sensory overstimulation or have difficulty processing certain types of information. People with disabilities may use screen readers or text-only programs, which often miss or misinterpret image links or infographics, for example.

People with disabilities are also likely to research places before they visit, and they rely on accurate and complete information to make a decision about their ability to visit a place. Providing complete, accurate and updated information for all types of disability (wheelchair users, ambulant, vision, hearing, dexterity, cognitive) is important to accessibility.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR WEBSITE ACCESSIBLE

1) Run your website through an accessibility checker

A free accessibility checker such as wave.webaim.org will show you where your website is inaccessible and how to fix it. You type in the URL of the page you want to check, and it will return a list of errors. It will also show you where these errors are occurring on your webpage using icons which are matched up with the type of error in the error list. This list includes information on how to correct these errors.

2) Anytime you add information, images or pages to your website make sure they are accessible

While the precise method for ensuring accessibility depends on a number of factors, generally speaking ensuring accessibility comes down to making sure there is alternative text for all images, buttons and icons. The alternative text is what the screen reader reads out or what is shown to the user in a text-only format. W3 Schools has a free tutorial on [HTML accessibility](#), which includes how to code alternative text.



3) Provide accessibility information for all types of disability

The types of disabilities are: wheelchair users, ambulant (individuals with physical impairments who do not/are not currently using a wheelchair), visual, hearing, dexterity, and cognitive. Accessibility information on your website should address all types. Include this information in the “plan your visit”, “location”, “about us” or equivalent pages. Below are some examples of what to include. Make sure to cover what is accessible and what is inaccessible.

- Two accessible parking stalls are provided in front of the entrance.
- The accessible entrance and accessible parking are provided off Side Street.
- The first floor is entirely wheelchair accessible, though there is no lift to the second floor. Copies of all interpretive signs on the second floor and images of the displays are available in a binder at the admissions desk.
- Tactile alternatives are provided to all signage on site.
- There is a tactile model of the building in the foyer.
- Audio versions of all text are available at reception.
- Audio-visual displays are equipped with ASL interpretation and described video.
- The site is large, with uneven ground and wooden boardwalks which can be slippery or uneven.
- Wheelchairs are available at the visitor centre on a first come, first serve basis.
- We offer ‘turned down’ events every month for people who experience sensory overload.
- As an urban site, there can be loud, sustained noise at unpredictable times during the day.
- All washrooms are accessible.

A note on language: do not use the terms ‘handicap’ or ‘handicapped’. These are outdated and considered paternalistic and even derogatory. ‘Disabled’ is also not used, the proper term is ‘persons with disabilities’. This type of language is called ‘people first’, as it emphasizes the person and not the disability or impairment. Some individuals prefer to be identified as, for example, autistic as opposed to a person with autism, however, when talking about a group of people, in general, or about an individual who has not expressed a preference, always use people first language.

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