

# WCAG 2.1 Basics in Plain English

Facebook Group: [PDF Accessibility training@accessibilityunraveled.com](#)

**1.1 Text Alternatives (A)** - If it isn't character selectable text provide a text alternative. No images of text.

**1.1.1 Non-Text Content (A)** - If there is an image, chart or graph, your alt-text must tell the same story or provide the same info or equivalent meaning except when the image is decorative. Then you mark it as an artifact.

**1.2 Time-based media (A)** - If you have a video in your PDF you must provide Captions, a transcript or audio descriptions depending on the content and presentation.

**1.3 Adaptable** - Do not create content that limits a user to interpreting it in only one way or method.

**1.3.1 Info and Relationships (A)** - If it is a heading on the page, it must be identified as a heading in the tags tree. This goes for all basic structural elements list headings, lists, paragraphs, figures, tables, etc.

**1.3.2 Meaningful Sequence (A)** - Set your tag order and your read order. Yes, I said it. Read order too! Set the read order first to avoid pulling out your hair. Note: The PDF/UA-1 standard does not require setting the Order (read order) to be compliant. It mandates the tags tree is the only source for considering read order. This is controversial since some screen readers do not read the tags but only consider the Order (read order) sequence.

**1.3.3 Sensory Characteristics (A)** - Do not use a attribute that cannot be interpreted by a screen reader as the ONLY way to differentiate it from other objects like color, orientation, size, etc. Example: Items in red are 50% off.

**1.3.4 Orientation (AA)** - Make sure your content doesn't lose read order or structure if the user decides to reflow the document or change the orientation when possible.

**1.4.1 Use of Color** - Do not use color as the only way to tell the difference between two or more objects. This happens mostly on maps and charts. Add shapes, labels or text markers as a secondary identifier.

**1.4.3 Contrast Minimum (AA)** - Text must be dark enough to be read against whatever color your background is. 4.5 to 1 for regular text (14pt and below) and 3:1 for large text (14pt and Bold or 18pt and above). Logotype and incidental (background) text are excluded from this requirement.

**1.4.4. Resize Text (AA)** - If your document is a typical text-based document, this is almost never an issue. However, if you have low-res images of text and they are so blurry at 200% you cannot read them you fail this criteria.

**1.4.10 Reflow (AA)** - Content must maintain structure and info even if document is put in reflow (Acrobat: View > Zoom > Reflow or Control+4) This new requirement is what supports setting the Order (Read Order).

**1.4.11 Non-text Contrast (AA)** - Objects that have visual meaning (graphical objects) containing a fill color or stroke color must have enough contrast (3:1) to be individually identifiable. This does not mean that all objects in a graphic must have this contrast. Only items that are the focus of the content.

**1.4.12 Text Spacing (AA)** - Your text must be able to reformat based on the users wishes. This criteria does not mean that you must set your text to the criteria sample heights, spacing, tracking. It just means that if a user wants to or has the technology to resize or reformat your text, they can.

**2.1.1 Keyboard (A)** - Your document must allow a user access to all the meaningful information via keyboard controls without the need of a mouse.

**2.1.2 No Keyboard Trap (A)** - Avoid pop ups and other dynamic content that can cause a user to be "stuck" in a window they cannot get out of or that does not allow them back to where they were. This rule mostly applies to web pages but can apply to PDFs with interactive content. Always test your documents for usability with a screen reader when using dynamic content.

**2.4.2 Page Titled (A)** - Make sure your document has a meaningful, descriptive title. "022020\_Minutes" is not meaningful. "February 20,2020 Board Meeting Minutes" is a much better title. This is different than file name, but your file name should be descriptive/useful too. Set your document title in Acrobat File > Properties > Description.

**Note: You cannot set your document properties if your view is in Reflow mode.**

**2.4.3 Focus Order (A)** - This is a companion to 1.3.2 Meaningful sequence. I site both of these when I get push-back from a client or supervisor when they tell me not to set the Order (read order).

**2.4.4 Link Purpose in Context (A)** - Make your links descriptive. This goes for hyperlinked vanity text or with text that precedes a full url if you must put the file name in because your document might be printed. "Click Here" is not descriptive. Neither is Get a quote. "Click Here" when "Click Here" is still the only hyperlink. "Get a Quote" or "Get Quote. Click Here" are compliant.

**See PDF 11 and PDF 13 for more examples in this document under the section titled Techniques for WCAG 2.1.**

**2.4.6. Headings and Labels (AA)** - Headings should be sufficiently descriptive. A Heading titled "Chapter 1" would not be sufficient. "Chapter 1 - Introduction" would be better.

**3.1.1 Language of a Page (A)** - The default language should be set for your document.  
File > Properties > Advanced > Language.

**3.1.2 Language of Parts** - If your document contains paragraphs or phrases that are in a different language you need to set the properties of that tag to the correct language. Exceptions are proper names, technical terms, words of indeterminate language and common vernacular like burrito or croissant.

**4.1 Compatible** - Your document must be able to be read by current and future programs. This is another one that i use for backup when someone tells me not to set the Order (read order). Programs like Read & Write which is commonly found in academic settings still doesn't read the tags tree. So if you are to be compliant with 4.1 your document should be compatible with current programs (user agents).

**4.1.1 Parsing (A)** - Your tag structure and your formatting should be correct. This is particularly important for things like TOC, Lists, annotations and other items that require a specific nesting order (one tag or structure inside another).

**4.1.2 Name, Role, Value (A)** - Form fields, links and other interactive elements can be properly identified. If you use the form feature within Acrobat or InDesign properly, this should not be a problem. For links, however, remember that a PDF will automatically generate a mouse-over link action for anything it thinks is a link. Therefore you should make sure all your text links are active links so that keyboard users are not denied the ability to activate the link just like a mouse-user would be able to. I find that many people delete links to avoid unmarked annotation errors even though the text is still mouse-over active. While this eliminates the error, it is not a same-user experience and therefore technically violates WCAG.