**Common Digital Accessibility Terms and Why They Are Important**

Below please find a list of terms often used when talking about digital accessibility. These terms will help increase understanding of accessibility for webpages, electronic documents, and captioning.

Please use this list together with Accessibility Checklist for Digital Events at UCI. If you have any questions, please contact Andrew Berk, ADA Coordinator, at anberk@uci.edu.

**CODES AND STANDARDS**

[**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/) **2.0 AA (WCAG 2.0 AA):** Industry standards for digital accessibility. [UCOP policy](https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/7000611) requires all UC technology to be WCAG 2.0 AA compliant.

WHY COMPLIANCE WITH WCAG 2.0 AA IS IMPORTANT: WCAG 2.0 AA guidelines represent a baseline standard for accessibility. If your event platform and content adhere to WCAG 2.0 guidelines, most people with disabilities will be able to equally access, benefit from, and contribute to your event.

BEST PRACTICE: WCAG 2.0 AA came out in 2008 and does not address some of the technology we use today. [WCAG 2.1](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/), the latest version of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, adds standards for modern technologies such as mobile apps. [WCAG 2.2](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/new-in-22/) is in the drafting process. Follow the latest version of WCAG whenever possible to maximize accessibility.

RESOURCE: The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), which publishes and updates WCAG, created a [quick reference page](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/quickref/) to look up individual WCAG 2.0 requirements. UCI has a subscription to [SiteImprove, which is a tool to monitor websites for accessibility issues.](https://www.oit.uci.edu/help/siteimprove/)

RESOURCE: [UCI’s Accessibility Training Website](https://accessibility.uci.edu/information-technology/training.php) has a series of short tutorials about designing documents, webpages, and apps to be compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA.

**Reasonable Accommodations:** Adapting a policy, practice, or procedure that would otherwise exclude a person with a disability. It is the person with the disability’s responsibility to make the initial request. The request triggers an interactive process to find an accommodation that meets the person's needs and is not an undue burden or fundamental alteration for the university. While the interactive process is about collaborative problem-solving, the law requires first considering if UCI can provide the accommodation that the person wants.

WHY REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS ARE IMPORTANT: Reasonable accommodations provide people with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in your event. Event staff working with people with disabilities to identify a reasonable accommodation is the essence of the interactive process.

BEST PRACTICE: Assign responsibility for handling all accommodations to specific staff. Typically, one person is enough. Providing this contact information makes the reasonable accommodation request process easier for everyone. Also, displaying this information shows awareness of people with disabilities.

**FONTS**

**Sans Serif Font:** Fonts that “[do not have the flared extensions, strokes, or other kinds of ornamentation](https://webaim.org/techniques/fonts/#readability).”

WHY SANS SERIF FONT IS IMPORTANT: Screen readers have an easier time processing text written in a sans serif font. Also, accessible fonts are easier for people without disabilities to read.

BEST PRACTICE: Use sans serif fonts for all written materials. When in doubt, use Arial.

RESOURCE: [WebAIM](https://webaim.org/) has a good [guide on how to make digital text accessible](https://webaim.org/techniques/fonts/), including a description of sans serif fonts.

**Contrast:** The contrast ratio either between text and a document’s background, a hyperlink and a document's background, or a hyperlink and surrounding text. WCAG 2.0 have required contrast ratios for each

WHY HIGH CONTRAST IS IMPORTANT: People with visual disabilities who are not completely blind may have difficulty seeing the outlines of text. High contrast text is also easier for people without disabilities to read.

Resource: Use WebAIM's [Link Contrast Checker](https://webaim.org/resources/linkcontrastchecker/) to see if links on webpages comply with WCAG 2.0‘s contrast requirements. Use WebAIM’s [Contrast Checker](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/?fcolor=000000&bcolor=FFFFFF) for all other types of documents.

RESOURCE: The UCI TechPrep website includes [a section on how to implement all features described in the Accessibility Checklist for Digital Events at UCI’s Zoom section](https://techprep.oit.uci.edu/teaching/#zoom).

**CAPTIONS**

**Real Time Captioning:** This type of captioning occurs in real time as a person is speaking.

WHY REAL TIME CAPTIONING IS IMPORTANT: Real time captions print what a speaker says in real time. These captions allow people who are deaf or hard of hearing to participate in live events.

BEST PRACTICE: Arrange for live captioning of all digital events, even when no one requests this service as a reasonable accommodation.

**Pre or Post Recorded Captioning:** This type of captioning occurs before or after a recorded event, such as a lecture. Pre or post recoded captioning is more accurate than real time but takes longer to create.

**Machine Captioning:** Captions created by a machine or piece of software.

**Human Captioning:** Captions created by a human being. Human captioning is more time and labor consuming than machine captioning, but more accurate.

WHY CAPTIONS ARE IMPORTANT: People who are deaf or hard of hearing need captions to understand what people are saying on a video.

RESOURCE: University staff have access to [YuJa](https://yuja.replay.uci.edu/#analytics), which allows people to add captions after recording a video. YouTube has a captioning feature. Other [closed](http://accessibility.uci.edu/information-technology/closed-captioning-vendors.php) captioning tools and services are listed on the [Accessibility website](http://accessibility.uci.edu/).

BEST PRACTICE: Review the accuracy of captions prior to making the video(s) public.

**DIGITAL DOCUMENT FORMATTING**

**Styles and Headings:** A feature in many document creation, email, and web design tools that allows users to apply a predefined set of formatting choices (front, text size, text color, numbering, etc.) consistently to selected text.

WHY STYLES AND HEADINGS ARE IMPORTANT: Styles and headings make documents and websites more accessible for people with disabilities. For example, properly formatted headings allow people who use screen readers to understand the meaning of images, navigate lists, and jump to different sections of a document. Without properly formatted headings or tables of contents, a person using a screen reader and wanting to view information on the 60th page of a document would have to read everything from pages 1 to 60.

Headings and styles are useful both to all readers and document creators. For example, readers can use headings to quickly scan a document and jump to specific content areas of interest, whether using visual markers such as relative text size or a screenreader to recite a list of headings. Content creators benefit from styles by being able to quickly change the appearance of headings and styles in every instance throughout a document simply by redefining a style’s attributes.

BEST PRACTICE: All digital content should have an accompanying digital audio or text-only version. Text or audio only files are more likely to be accessible because they lack complex features, such as imbedded images and colored font, which can create barriers.

RESOURCE: WebAIM has a good [guide on how to make digital text accessible](https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/).

BEST PRACTICE: When making a PDF, first create the document in Microsoft Word and add accessible features there. It is much more difficult to add these features once the file becomes a PDF.

BEST PRACTICE: While it is extremely difficult to make PDFs accessible for everyone, it is best to follow the tasks listed in the W3C’s [PDF Techniques for WCAG 2.0](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20-TECHS/pdf). While following these techniques is the best method for making PDFs compliant with UC Policy, [PDF Techniques for WCAG 2.1](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Techniques/) has stronger accessibility requirements.

RESOURCE: In addition to the tutorials on UCI’s IT Accessibility Training Website, the United States Department of Health and Human Services has a page explaining [how to make PDFs accessible](https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/making-files-accessible/create-accessible-pdfs/index.html).

**Alt Text:** Written description of an image on a webpage or digital document. Alt text should describe the details of the image that are relevant to the content around it. For example, a webpage discussing vehicle tires would have images of vehicles with alt text describing the make and model of the tires.

WHY ALT TEXT IS IMPORTANT: Alt text makes images accessible to people who have visual disabilities. Screen readers tell a user that an image exists but cannot explain its content. The screen reader user will not be able to read any of the text that is a part of the image. Alt text also helps developers better understand HTML code by describing image links.

**LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION**

**American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation:** American Sign Language, typically called ASL, is a complete language that some people who are deaf or hard of hearing use to communicate. Hand gestures are the words of ASL. ASL interpreters facilitate communication between people who speak ASL and people who speak other languages.

WHY ASL INTERPRETATION IS IMPORTANT: People who are deaf or hard of hearing and use ASL as their primary language will not understand a speaker’s verbal statements. Without ASL interpretation, these individuals cannot effectively access any event where spoken English is the primary form of communication.

BEST PRACTICE: Have an ASL interpreter at an event whenever possible, even when nobody requests one as a reasonable accommodation. The presence of an ASL interpreter tells people who are deaf or head of hearing that UCI welcomes them. Though UCI has no legal obligation to provide ASL interpretation absent a reasonable accommodation request, events should provide ASL interpreters whenever financially feasible.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EACH PERSON TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES BY NAME WHEN SPEAKING: Verbal identification makes it easier for people with visual disabilities to distinguish between speakers.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CLEARLY SEE EACH SPEAKER’S FACE: Some people use lip reading to understand what speakers are saying. Lip reading only works when speakers’ faces are clearly visible and well-lit.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE AUDIENCE TO SEE THE INTERPRETER: People who are deaf or hard of hearing must have constant visual contact with the ASL interpreter to understand speakers.

BEST PRACTICE: People providing ASL interpretation for a live performance should practice interpretation when the performers rehearse. Practice means more accurate ASL interpretation.

RESOURCE: The following companies are UCI approved vendors that provide ASL interpretation:

LIFESIGNS, Inc.

Phone: (888) 930-7776 (8:30 AM to 5 PM)

Phone: (800)633-8883 (After Hours)

Email: lifesigns@lifesignsinc.org

www.lifesignsinc.org

DPI/Goodwill

Contact: Debbie Barber

Phone: (714)547-6308  x357

Email: Deaf@ocgoodwill.org