

How to...

Achieve accessibility



An inaccessible e-learning course risks non compliance, frustration, anxiety and lost productivity. Our top ten tips will help you avoid all that and build something accessible, usable and ultimately more effective.

1 **Revise your definition of ‘accessibility’**

Yes, accessibility is about catering for users with disabilities. But it pays to take a broader view: accessibility is about usability. Everyone benefits from easy to use interactions, intuitive navigation, clear language and a considered design.

2 **Build accessibility into your plans**

A lot of people believe an accessible course is an expensive course, but this doesn't have to be the case. Consider accessibility from the outset, plan how you'll build it into your design, and you'll find that the investment pays off.

3 **Aim for accessibility, not perfection**

It's worth finding some guidelines, like the W3C standards. They apply to websites rather than e-learning, so create your own test plans that tick as many of the boxes as possible and find alternatives if you can't meet a particular requirement.

4 **Don't be tempted to build two versions**

Creating a separate version of an e-learning course isn't inclusive, so it opens you up to equivalence issues. It also adds to your workload, which impacts on the timescales and bottom line, and it can compromise testing procedures.

5 **Be aware of the common mistakes**

Don't create interactions that require intricate mouse control. Don't design a course that relies on an awareness of the visual layout. Don't use descriptions that will be lost on visually impaired users ('click on the green box on the right...').

6 **Offer alternatives to multimedia elements**

Audio and video are commonplace in e-learning these days, but not everyone can benefit from them (and not everybody wants to). Give your users options, such as audio they can turn on or off, or captions and transcripts of videos.

7 **Create a user friendly design**

When designing your course, think about font size, scroll bars (and how to avoid them) and colour blind users. Summarise graphs, charts and tables so nobody loses out, and make sure your design is consistent and intuitive.

8 **Speak in plain English**

Accessibility isn't all about technical features; the language used is equally important. Content that is complex, full of jargon or out of context can put off any user, regardless of disability – including those whose first language isn't English.

9 **Don't assume ‘accessible’ means ‘limited’**

As designers, we're creative within the parameters of brand guidelines, corporate voice and technical constraints every day. Accessibility's no different – a good designer can create something attractive, exciting and accessible.

10 **Test, test and test some more**

By all means make use of the accessibility testing tools available, but don't exclude human intervention. Ask a diverse pilot group to test thoroughly for accessibility and usability and, if possible, build more than one test into development.