


What does it mean to make content accessible?

Everybody experiences the world, including content they access on the internet, in their own way. How someone experiences content on the internet can be vastly different depending on the computer or device and size of the screen on which they view it, and how they interact with it.

For example, while some people read text and interpret images they view, others use assistive technology to listen to content using a screen reader. Meanwhile, some people click on links using a mouse or similar device, while others navigate using a keyboard, by tapping on a touch screen, or controlling their computer with voice activation.

Improving the **accessibility** of content is about reducing basic barriers to comprehension, such as providing **text alternatives** for images, so that those who cannot see the images can grasp their meaning. Similarly, making captions available for a video file can make it **accessible** to someone who cannot hear audio.

 Making content accessible is **ethical** and promotes **equity** and **inclusion**. It is also a **legal** requirement.

What does an example of inaccessible content look like?



Above is a photograph of the title page of a book, which was published in 1682. The image has no **Alternative Text (Alt Text)** and a detailed description would be needed to convey the content shown in the image to someone who cannot see it.

For an example of a meaningful description that **would** make the image accessible, open the link below.

Read a description of the image.

The book in the picture contains a play, titled *Le Menteur*, a French comedy written by Pierre Corneille. At the top of the page in the photograph is a frontispiece, a picture of a scene from the play. In this frontispiece:

- There are four young people, two women and two men, in a park.
- The two men are positioned to the right of a fountain (the reader's left), and the two women to the left (the reader's right).
- One woman has tripped and nearly fallen. The other woman stands behind her. The woman in back is holding up her right hand, but it's not clear what gesture she's making; maybe she's motioning to stop her friend from falling. The standing woman holds a pair of gloves near her waist in her left hand.
- One man has caught the falling woman by her right hand, and is helping her up. In his left hand, he has taken off his hat and is holding it up, as if to greet the women. He is dressed in nice clothing.

- The other man, who is more plainly dressed, stands demurely behind the man who is helping the woman to stand.
- Behind the people and fountain are some bystanders. The faces of the people in the background cannot be seen, so it is not clear if they are watching what the other four are doing.

Underneath the frontispiece is a decorative border that surrounds text. The text indicates the title of the play, that it is a comedy, and that it was written by Pierre Corneille: "Le Menteur / Comedie / Par le Sr. / P. Corneille."

Why is the image inaccessible with no description?

Below are just some of the reasons why the image above might be inaccessible.

- All of the text included in the description above regarding what the photograph contains is necessary for someone using a screen reader to get similar meaning out of it to what someone else might be able to interpret by looking at the image.
- There is no meaningful **Alternative Text (Alt Text)** on the image. Someone using a screen reader or someone who has difficulty loading images on their device or internet connection might be presented with the image's file name, or nothing at all.
- There is text on the page of the book, which must be typed out so someone using a screen reader or text-to-speech software can read it.
- The image is small. It is in a format that does not allow you to zoom in on it to see it very well, so someone with visual impairment may have greater difficulty seeing or understanding it than someone else.
- The quality of the image is relatively poor. On a high-resolution screen, it may appear grainy or blurry.
- The image does not have very good color contrast, which may also make it hard for some people to see or read.

What types of content are inaccessible?

Certain types of content tend to be more inaccessible than others. Below are a few of the worst offenders that cause barriers to comprehension when they are not marked up for assistive technology to present them adequately or when they lack critical contextual information.

- Page structure that isn't clearly defined,
- Links (links that commonly cause issues include "click here" and "here"),
- Images (as demonstrated in the example above).

To learn about designing your content to avoid issues with the items listed above and more, see [How do I create an accessible document?](#)