

USF–Minimum Electronic and Web Accessibility Standards (MEWAS)

The creation and dissemination of knowledge is a defining characteristic of universities and is fundamental to the University of South Florida’s mission. As articulated in **USF System Policy 0–108 Disability and Accommodations (Public /Employees / Students)** (<http://generalcounsel.usf.edu/policies-and-procedures/pdfs/policy-0-108.pdf>) the University of South Florida is committed to creating websites, electronic course content, or on–line learning environments that are inclusive and accessible to all users. This explicitly includes users with disabilities who employ assistive technologies or other alternative means to access our electronic or web information. Besides having a philosophical commitment to full inclusion of persons with disabilities, USF also has a legal obligation not to discriminate against people on the basis of disability. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that all public institutions be accessible to persons with disabilities. In accordance with the State University System of Florida, Board of Governors **Accessibility Statement**, USF has assured compliance with both Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (<http://www.access-board.gov/>). In order to be _____ eligible to receive nearly one hundred million dollars in National Institute of Health (NIH) grant funding, Section 508 requires that the University make its websites accessible to users with visual, hearing, mobility and cognitive disabilities.

Accessibility

All USF Systems electronic medium and websites should strive to give disabled users an experience comparable to other students, staff or visitors. Nothing in the design or programming should impede the ability of disabled users to navigate and access content.

While creating websites, electronic course content, or on–line learning environments developers throughout the USF System shall adopt and seek to exceed the web standards established by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C) “Web Content Accessibility Guidelines” (WCAG 2.0, Level AA) for all electronic on–line content of websites (<http://www.w3.org/standards>). For the creation of online content, specifically consult the W3C’s Accessibility Guidelines (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/>).

Best Practices to Address the Needs of Persons with Disabilities:

Auditory Limitations or Deafness:

- Provide transcripts of audio content and Closed Captioned or Full Text transcripts for video materials where applicable.
- 3Play Media (<http://www.3playmedia.com/>): cost effective technique for Captioning video content.

Cognitive Limitations:

- Do not use flashing or strobe content.
- Provide easy-to-use controls and navigation schemes.
- Employ consistency in labeling and navigation, where possible.
- Use the clearest, simplest language appropriate to the content.
- Provide control over all time-based media (i.e., slideshows).

Visual Limitations or Blindness:

- Use well-structured and semantic HTML.
- Use meaningful ALT attributes on images.
- Do not use tables for layout purposes.
- Properly linearize content, especially forms.
- Provide sufficient contrast between foreground and background elements.
- Avoid using pop-up windows.
- Label all form elements.
- Do not use Flash™ for navigation and avoid using it in other places, where possible.
- Provide access keys and “skip to content” links.
- Use WAI-ARIA landmarks where possible.
- Position hidden content off-screen instead of using “display:none.”
- Provide additional guidance and controls using off-screen content (i.e. descriptions of the page layout and available access keys).
- Provide transcripts of audio content and Full-Text transcripts or Captioning for video materials where applicable.
- Do not use flashing or strobe content.
- Provide easy-to-use controls and navigation schemes.
- Employ consistency in labeling and navigation, where possible.
- Use the clearest, simplest language appropriate to the content.

- Provide control over all time-based media (i.e., slideshows).

Development tools

While creating websites, developers throughout the USF -System should adopt and exceed the web standards established by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C) for the creation of online content. Specifically consult the W3C's page on accessibility (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/>)

Web applications and tools for developers include:

- **Functional Accessibility Evaluator 1.1 from UIUC (FAE)** (<http://fae.cita.uiuc.edu/>): Easy to use and provides clear, actionable results.
- **Vischeck** (<http://www.vischeck.com/>): Simulates colorblind vision.
- **Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE)** (<http://wave.webaim.org>): Accessibility evaluator.

A number of plugins are available for the Firefox web browser (<http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/?from=getfirefox>) in testing your website's compliance with accessibility guidelines:

- **WAVE Toolbar** (<http://www.addon.mozilla.org/en-us/firefox/addon/wave-toolbar/>): Overlays a page with embedded icons and indicators that reveal the accessibility of that page.
- **Fangs Screen Reader Emulator** (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-us/firefox/addon/fangs-screen-reader-emulator/>): Displays a text version of the page similar to what a screen reader would output.
- **WCAG Contrast Checker** (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-us/firefox/addon/wcag-contrast-checker/>): Tests to see if elements on the page provide enough contrast to be visible to those with impaired vision.

Additional Resources

- W3C Accessibility (<http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility.html>)

- Designing for Screen Reader Compatibility (<http://webaim.org/techniques/screenreader/>)
- Screen Reader Usability Tips (<http://www.sitepoint.com/screen-reader-usability-tips/>).

For more information on best practices for websites, electronic course content, on-line learning environments and electronic web accessibility resources, please consult with:

- **ADA Coordinator**–Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity 813-974-8616
- **Coordinator of Assistive Technologies** – Students with Disabilities Services 813-974-5772
- **USF CMS User Guide for Uniform Web design**– USF Brand (<http://usfweb4.usf.edu/brand/>).