

Best Practice

for Publishers, Educational Institutions, and Educators

**second
avenue**
reimagine learning

Accessibility

From alt-text to virtual labs, let us show you what to consider to make interactive content accessible for all learners.

Strategies for Publishing Leadership

Little Progress

Over the five year span between 2012 and 2017, the overall average accessibility scores for online courses barely budged from 27.5% to 30.6%. This finding was released in a Blackboard Ally 2017 study which compared more than 700,000 online courses at North American higher education institutions against WCAG 2.0 guidelines.

Blackboard Ally Interview, 2017

Prioritize accessibility from the onset of your product development strategy.

To prioritize accessibility within your organization, create an accessibility team (or dedicate a team member) to drive guidance, leadership, and accountability. Do this before you launch into developing content, design, or the technology itself.

Remember that accessibility impacts all learners not just those enrolled in special education programs.

Accessibility impacts learners of diverse backgrounds with diverse needs. Educate (or re-educate) your teams to consider accessibility as an inclusive strategy to support all learners, and align your strategy to the concepts within the Universal Design for Learning framework.

Prioritize user research to gather clear feedback on the accessibility of products before you launch into product design.

Educate your sales, marketing, and UI/UX teams on the types of questions they should ask to provide actionable feedback to your product development team. Once you have collected user feedback, incorporate it into your accessibility strategy across all programs.

Collect data on usage rates and churn.

Ask probing questions of your customers to uncover if accessibility is a leading factor in low usage rates or high churn. Implement changes when applicable.

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Develop a clear accessibility policy with a documented a roadmap and timeline for retiring or updating inaccessible content and products.

Work with all departments to gain consensus on best practices and implementation strategies and policies.

Implement a proactive strategy to audit existing technology.

Out of date technology can impact the overall accessibility of your products. Budget for Flash to HTML5 technology migrations. Test for accessibility gaps and prioritize updates or rework of features based on target-user needs.

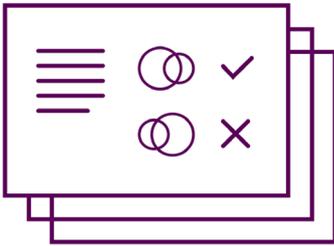
Encourage your teams to create clear technical, visual, and content accessibility guidelines.

Train your teams to implement accessibility initiatives before launching into a new product or product update plan. Design to the standards that you outline. Use an accessibility checklist to help you keep track of your goals. Do not rely on the checklist alone.

SAMPLE CHECKLIST

- All images are described within the text or have appropriate ALT Text.
- Font face and size meet legibility standards.
- Color schemes have sufficient color contrast.
- Data tables, charts, diagrams, and maps are coded to be natively accessible or are properly labeled, and content is supplemented by ALT Text.
- Video and animation speeds are appropriate and controllable.
- HTML content includes titles and headings to support screen reader technology.
- Video and audio files are captioned/transcribed for those who cannot hear the content.
- All interactive buttons are properly labeled.
- Proper semantic markup is used for HTML text.

Strategies for Editorial Teams



Design to your accessibility guidelines.

Create style guides which clearly outline the accessibility requirements for your content and train your teams on your standards.

Clearly articulate the information you are presenting to users.

Place a high value on your content's clarity. Make the content succinct and digestible.

Add audio and text to support ideas that are expressed via visual representation.

Create transcripts, captions, and ALT Text to give hearing- and vision-impaired users access to the content. Remove non-critical content so that text-to-speech tools will read only what is relevant. When creating audio content, be sure to choose readers who clearly articulate your content. When applicable provide pronunciation and enunciation guides for content readers.

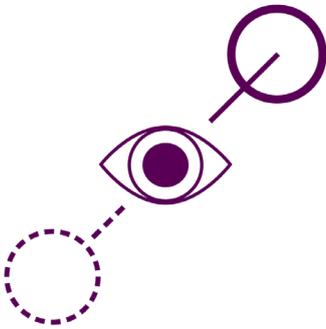
Label all UI/UX elements to enable users of assistive technology to interact with the content.

Buttons, icons, links, and images need to include text so that screen readers can identify these features to users.

Create age- and grade-appropriate content.

Choose language based on a user's educational level.

Strategies for Art & Design Teams



Design to the visual standards in your accessibility guidelines.

Use an accessibility checklist but do not rely on the checklist alone.

Present information to your users in a variety of formats.

Remember that your users will have different learning styles and needs. Whenever possible, showcase your content in different formats to offer your students the opportunity to engage with your content in different ways. If you choose images, make sure they can be easily described in one or two sentences with alt-text.

Remember to factor the needs of users with vision impairment into your design process.

COLOR & CONTRAST

Not all learners can see the same colors. Select colors with sufficient contrast and avoid colors that cannot be seen by those with vision impairment or colorblindness.

TYPE STYLE AND SIZE

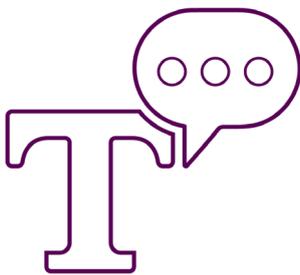
Some learners struggle with font which is too small and font styles which are difficult to see. Select font styles and sizes which can be seen by all learners.

IMAGERY

Some learners use assistive technology to increase image size. Ensure that the resolution of content will not degrade when using zoom technology.

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Strategies for Technical Development Teams



Consider order as you code.

Screen readers will read a page in the order that code is organized. This may impact the read order when using screen readers. Test with JAWS or VoiceOver technology.

Check to make sure that screen reader will stop at the end of a page and move onto the next page.

Make sure that content is not re-read.

Prompt you user to move on to the next page or piece of content with properly labeled buttons.

Utilize language such as “Click the continue (next) button” to prevent users from thinking there is a technical problem with their screen reader.

During your QA process, test whether JAWS or VoiceOver technology is able to read all interactive elements.

Ensure that elements are labeled and tagged appropriately.

During product development and periodically after a product’s market release, test with users of different backgrounds.

Capture the feedback. Proactively implement accessibility changes.

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Strategies for Educators and Institutions



Train adopters on accessibility features.

Train users across all departments. Incorporate ongoing accessibility training and support for students, teachers, and administrators.

Capture feedback during your training programs to incorporate into your product updates.

If your trainers receive low satisfaction scores, ask probing questions to uncover if the feedback stems from the quality of the training, the accessibility of the training, or from the accessibility of the product itself.

To support accessibility initiatives and ensure compliance with federal standards, educational institutions must evaluate their content and the content and technology supplied by their vendor partners.

Train educators and administrators on accessibility. Include training that goes beyond the 508 Compliance standards. Dedicate time to test content created by your on-site educators.

Ask your educators and your vendor partners to explain their process for ensuring accessibility compliance.

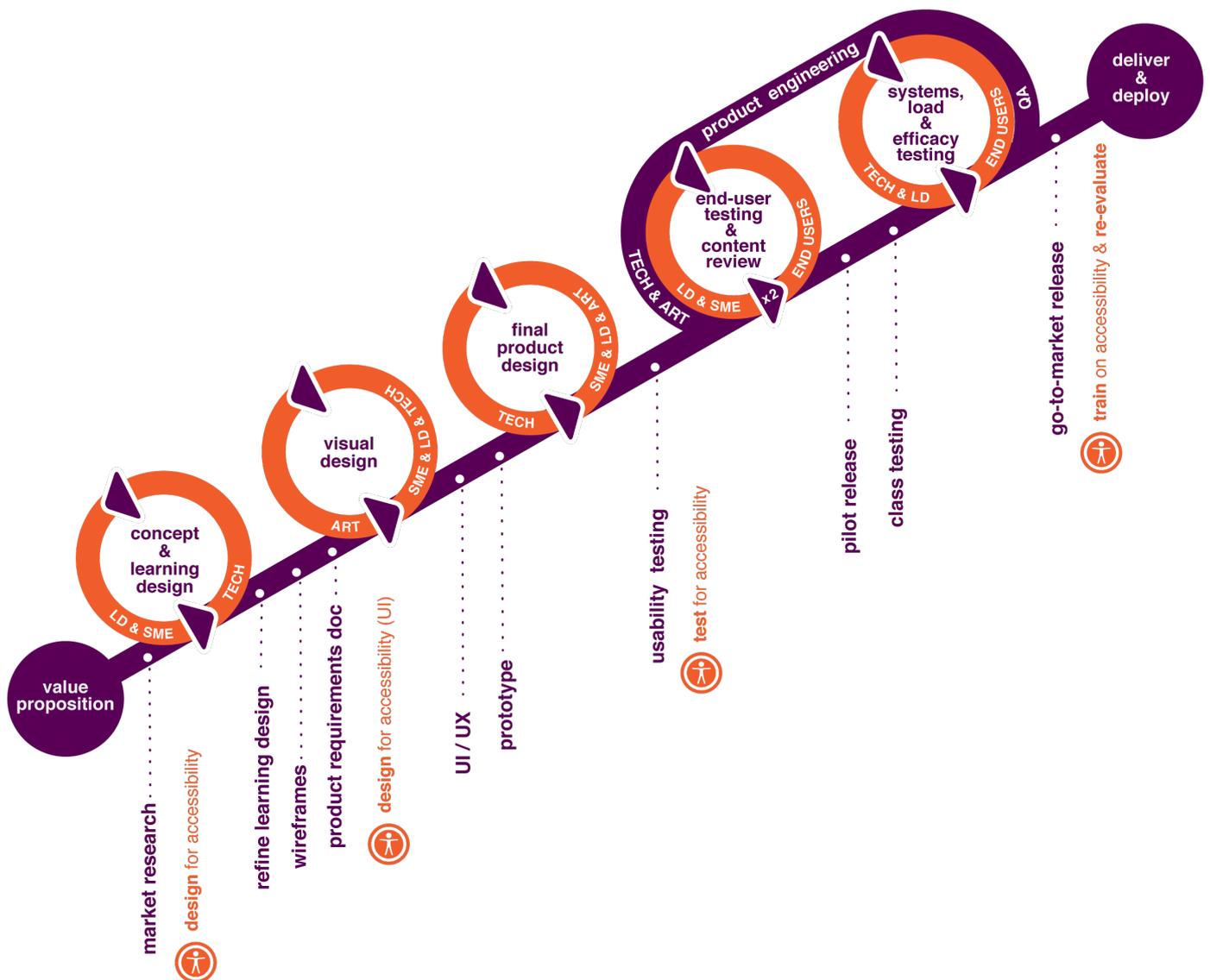
Work with your vendor's dedicated team or other resources focused on accessibility. Internally, dedicate resources to support your educators in meeting accessibility standards.

Before purchasing vendor products, consider pilot programs to gather learner feedback on the accessibility of those products.

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Accessibility Testing in the Product Design Process

Test for accessibility at multiple points in the design process. Incorporate accessibility checkpoints before, during, and after product design. Implement user testing, with a specific focus on accessibility, as part of an iterative design process.





Founded in 2006 by Victoria Van Voorhis, Second Avenue produces educational games for learners of all ages. Driven by research, the company is focused on making learning playful and fun, opening pathways to success for all students to become innovators. The company's rich portfolio encompasses custom software design and development for the K-12, Higher Ed, and corporate markets, as well as direct-to-consumer apps and games.

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