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WCAG 3.0 ACCESSIBILITY  
GUIDELINES: EVERYTHING YOU NEED  
TO KNOW

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INCLUSION

# Introduction

Website accessibility is an important topic for audiences of all types. Whether you're a professional web developer or an independent media creator, making sure your content is accessible to those with visual, auditory, and cognitive disabilities has major benefits for audience reach, ROI, and content engagement.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an organization that works to develop and publish web accessibility guidelines to make the internet accessible to all. As technology continues to advance, it's important that web accessibility laws and guidelines keep up. For this reason, the W3C has been working diligently to develop the most up-to-date guidelines, known as WCAG 3.0.

The most recent version of WCAG 2.2 was published on Nov. 30, 2020, and is the current web accessibility standard. It was the final revision of the WCAG 2 Series, as WCAG 3.0 is under development. This resource dives into the changes from WCAG 2.0 to 3.0 from goals to implementation.

## THIS EBOOK COVERS:

- Outline of the new changes in WCAG 3.0
- Comparison of WCAG 2.0 and 3.0
- Glossary of key web accessibility terms
- Relevant User Needs and Experiences
- How to Implement a Robust Captioning and Transcription Strategy
- Testing and scoring changes: Atomic vs Holistic Tests
- Conformance levels explained





# WCAG 3.0 Overview

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international group with the aim of developing strategies, standards, and resources to make the Web accessible to people with disabilities through their Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI).

Their previous work includes the implementation of WCAG 2.0, the current web accessibility standard. Over the years, the group updates and expands on existing standards as the internet and technology evolve, including WCAG 2.1 and 2.2 and now WCAG 3.0.

However, while WCAG 3.0 is a successor of WCAG 2.2, it has a different scoring mechanism. It should be viewed and treated as an alternative set of guidelines, rather than an expansion of the WCAG 2.0 series.

## INTRODUCTION

WCAG 3.0 applies to all web content, apps, tools, publishing, and emerging technologies on the web. It is currently a working draft that is intended to develop into an official W3C Standard after 2022.

### Goals for WCAG 3 include:

- To be easier to understand
- Cover more user needs, including the needs of people with cognitive disabilities
- To be flexible to address different types of web content, apps, tools, and organizations

### It is similar to previous versions in that:

- The goal of providing guidance on making web content accessible
- Fundamental and specific accessibility requirements

### But, it is different in that it has:

- Different structure
- Different conformance model
- Broader scope, beyond just web content

“ The goal of WCAG 3.0 and supporting documents is to make digital products including web, ePub, PDF, applications, mobile apps, and other emerging technologies more accessible and usable to people with disabilities.

# Comparison of WCAG 2.0 to 3.0

While the two standards are different in structure, they have similar elements, and both attempt to make the internet more accessible to those with disabilities.

## WCAG 2.0

- ✓ Compliance levels include Level A, AA, and AAA
- ✓ Utilizing "Success Criteria" as the testable statements
- ✓ Guidelines are more broad and less granular
- ✓ WCAG 2.0 stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- ✓ Developed to be technology neutral
- ✓ True/false evaluation method for success criterion

## WCAG 3.0

- ✓ Compliance levels include Bronze, Silver, and Gold with Bronze being similar to Level AA in WCAG 2.0
- ✓ "Outcomes" serve as the testable statements and includes critical errors and a rating scale
- ✓ Guidelines are more granular and specific
- ✓ WCAG 3.0 stands for W3C Accessibility Guidelines
- ✓ Includes technology-specific methods & tests
- ✓ Numerical scoring method

# WCAG 3.0 Glossary

## CONFORMANCE

Satisfying all the requirements of the guidelines. Conformance is an important part of following the guidelines even when not making a formal Conformance Claim.

## CRITICAL ERROR

An accessibility problem that will stop a user from being able to complete a process. Critical errors include:

- Items that will stop a user from being able to complete the task if it exists anywhere on the view (examples: flashing, keyboard trap, audio with no pause);
- Errors that when located within a process means the process cannot be completed (example: submit button not in tab order);
- Errors that when aggregated within a view or across a process cause failure (example: a large amount of confusing, ambiguous language).

## FUNCTIONAL NEED

A statement that describes a specific gap in one's ability, or a specific mismatch between ability and the designed environment or context.

## GUIDELINE

High-level, plain-language content used to organize [outcomes](#). See [Guidelines](#) in the Explainer.

## OUTCOME

Result of practices that reduce or eliminate barriers that people with disabilities experience, [Outcomes](#).

## SUCCESS CRITERION

Testable statements that compose the normative aspects of WCAG 2. The closest counterpart to success criteria in WCAG 3 are outcomes.

## TEST

Mechanism to evaluate the implementation of a method, including true/false or rating scales.

## TEXT ALTERNATIVE

Text that is programmatically associated with non-text content or referred to from text that is programmatically associated with non-text content. Programmatically associated text is text whose location can be programmatically determined from the non-text content.

## VIEW

All content is visually and programmatically available without a substantive change.

Views vary based on the technology being tested. While these guidelines provide guidance on scoping a view, the tester will determine what constitutes a view, and describe it. Views will often vary by technology. Views typically include state permutations that are based on that view such as dialogs and alerts, but some states may deserve to be treated as separate views.

## VISUAL CONTRAST

The combination of foreground and background colors along with font-weight and size that make text readable.



# User Needs and Experiences

To fully comprehend the significance of accessibility, it is important to first understand the user experiences of people with disabilities. Then you'll know the "why" behind the media accessibility requirements in this resource.

- Many people who are deaf can read the text well. They get the audio information from transcripts or captions. Some people prefer sign language.
- Some people who are hard of hearing like to listen to the audio to hear what they can, and have captions to fill in what they can't hear adequately.
- Some people who have difficulty processing auditory information also use captions. Many use transcripts so they can read at their own pace.
- Some people who are blind or have low vision can't see videos well. They use audio-description of visual information to understand what's going on visually.



- Some people who are deaf-blind use a screen reader and braille to read descriptive transcripts that include audio and visual information as text.
- When changing visuals exist, some people need help to focus and comprehend auditory or visual information. Most videos also need descriptive transcripts.
- Some people use multiple accessibility features simultaneously. For example, someone might want captions, descriptions of visual information as text, and descriptions in audio.

# A Robust Video Captioning and Audio Transcription Strategy

Video is not exactly a new task. It's already used for many purposes in all types of different industries. Schools use video as learning tools and ways to attract and engage their student bodies. Companies use video for employee training and product marketing. Government agencies use video for public service announcements and dissemination of critical policy material.

When you add captioning and transcription into the mix, it can all feel a little overwhelming. We understand that and work with hundreds of clients to launch their best video captioning and transcription strategy. Despite all the many ways video is used in our daily lives, for any organization, knowing where to begin building a video library can still be challenging. On top of the tools needed to record the video, library storage and management, a strategy for effectively using video content and accessibility concerns.



## HOW TO IMPLEMENT A VIDEO CAPTIONING AND AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION STRATEGY WITH CIELO24

If you have a small library of videos, you can begin with our free Self Serve account. The benefit of this route is that you can test-drive captioning and transcription content with zero investment.



## CIELO24 SELF-SERVE ACCOUNT

Follow these simple steps to start a self-serve account with us. Without any prior investment, you will be able to try out our services to see if they are a fit for you and your needs.

- Create a free Self Serve account with an email and password
- Upload a video or audio file
- Download your transcription
- Open it up in NotePad or another Text app on your computer
- Tinker around with editing the file, understanding the caption timing, looking for keyword insights, and get the feel for the file

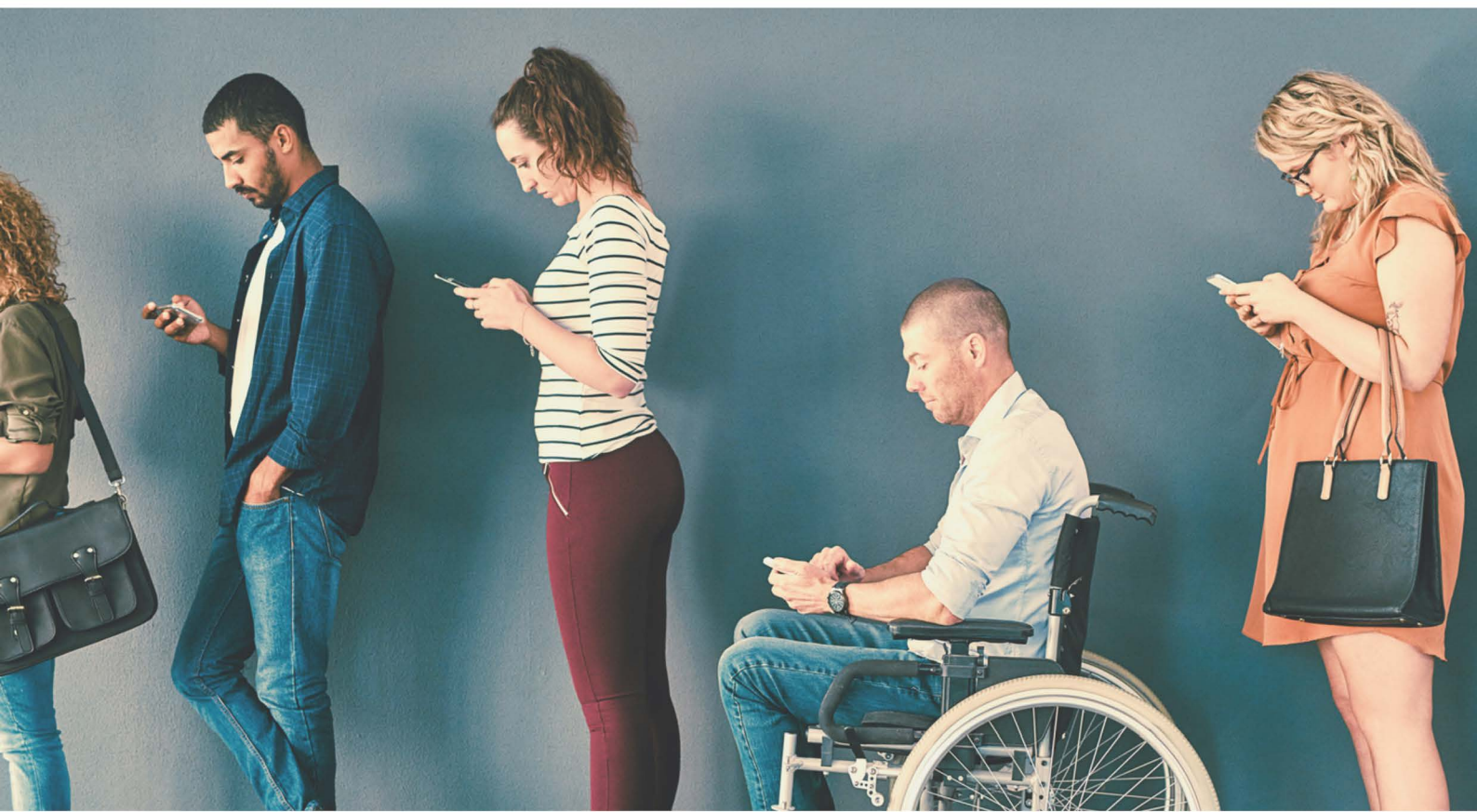
## HOW TO ADD CAPTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS TO YOUR WEBSITE

- Upload your video to your video player platform of choice
- Copy the code of your captioned video file
- Paste it into your WordPress or other site manager editor

This will help you get started with captions and the process for adding them to your website. It's also critical to remember to add your video or audio transcript to your site HTML, as well, so that search engines can crawl, rank, and index your video or audio content. We cover more on how to use transcripts for SEO in this post.



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# Summary of Guidelines

The WCAG 3.0 guidelines are to focus on the following five major components of web accessibility.

1

TEXT ALTERNATIVES

**Guideline: Provide text alternative for non-text content**

*Provides text alternatives for non-text content for user agents and assistive technologies. This allows users who are unable to perceive and/or understand the non-text content to determine its meaning.*

**Critical Error: Any image of text without an appropriate text alternative needed to complete the process**

RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	Less than 60% of all images have appropriate text alternatives OR there is a <u>critical error</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 1	60% - 69% of all images have appropriate text alternatives AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 2	70%-79% of all images have appropriate text alternatives AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 3	80%-94% of all images have appropriate text alternatives AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 4	95% to 100% of all images have appropriate text alternatives AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>



## 2

## CLEAR WORDS

### Guideline: Use common clear words

*Uses common words to reduce confusion and improve understanding, including using common words, define words, using simple tense, literal language, avoid double negatives, nested clauses, and diacritical marks (such as è, ñ, ç).*

**Critical Error: None.**

RATING	CRITERIA
Not Applicable	If this outcome does not apply to the technology or content being scored, do not score it.
Rating 0	Average score below 1
Rating 1	Not used in this outcome
Rating 2	Average score of 1-1.6 rounded to one decimal place (significant figure)
Rating 3	Not used in this outcome
Rating 4	Average score of 1.7 or above rounded to one decimal place (significant figure)

## 3

## CAPTIONS

### Guideline #1: Provide captions and associated metadata for audio content.

*Translates speech and non-speech audio into alternative formats (e.g. captions) so media can be understood when sound is unavailable or limited. User agents and APIs support the display and control of captions.*

**Critical Error: Any video without captioning that is needed to complete a process. For example, an education site with a video that a student will be tested on or a shopping experience of previewing movies. If they do not have captioning (closed or open captioning), they fail.**



RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	A critical error or an average score 0-0.7 rounded to one decimal place (significant figure)
Rating 1	Not applicable
Rating 2	A critical error or an average score 0.8-1.5 rounded to one decimal place (significant figure)
Rating 3	Not applicable
Rating 4	A critical error or an average score 1.6 - 2 rounded to one decimal place (significant figure)

### Guideline #2: Conveys information about the sound

*Conveys information about the sound in addition to the text of the sound (for example, sound source, duration, and direction) so users know the necessary information about the context of the sound in relation to the environment it is situated in.*

**Critical Error: None.**

- Is metadata directionality essential to this experience?
- Can a user orientate themselves to the sound with/without any additional inference?

RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	No meta-data
Rating 1	Sound visually indicates the direction of origin in 2D space
Rating 2	Not applicable
Rating 3	Meta-data includes the location the sound originates in 3D space
Rating 4	Meta-data includes the location the sound originates, Meta-data includes the direction of the sound.

## 4

## STRUCTURED CONTENT

**Guideline #1: Use sections, headings, and sub-headings to organize content.**

*Organizes content into logical blocks with headings relevant to the subsequent content. This makes locating and navigating information easier and faster.*

**Critical Error: One or more headings necessary to locate the content needed to complete a process are missing.**

RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	25% or less of expected headings are present and describe the content contained in the section OR there is a <u>critical error</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 1	26-50% or less of expected headings are present and describe the content contained in the section AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 2	51-80% or less of expected headings are present and describe the content contained in the section AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 3	81-95% or less of expected headings are present and describe the content contained in the section AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 4	96-100% or less of expected headings are present and describe the content contained in the section AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>

**Guideline #2: Uses visually distinct headings.**

*Uses visually distinct headings so sighted readers can determine the structure.*

**Critical Error: One or more headings necessary to locate the content needed to complete a process are not visually distinct.**



RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	25% or less of headings are visually distinct OR there is a <u>critical error</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 1	26-50% of headings are visually distinct AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 2	51-75% of headings are visually distinct AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 3	76-95% of headings are visually distinct AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 4	96-100% of headings are visually distinct AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>

### Guideline #3: Conveys hierarchy with semantic structure

*Provides semantic structure that conveys the hierarchy to help explore and navigate the content.*

**Critical Error: One or more headings necessary to locate the content needed to complete a process are not visually distinct.**

RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	25% or less are correctly semantically coded (including level) OR there is a <u>critical error</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 1	26-50% or less of the visual headings are correctly semantically coded (including level) AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 2	51-80% or less of the visual headings are correctly semantically coded (including level) AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 3	81-95% or less of the visual headings are correctly semantically coded (including level) AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>
Rating 4	96-100% or less of the visual headings are correctly semantically coded (including level) AND no <u>critical errors</u> in the <u>process</u>

## 5

## VISUAL CONTRAST OF TEXT

**Guideline #1: Provide sufficient contrast between foreground text and its background.**

*Provides adequate luminance contrast between background and text colors to make the text easy to read.*

**Critical Error: None.**

RATING	CRITERIA
Rating 0	Any failures on the Advanced Perceptual Contrast Algorithm (APCA) lookup table or the lowest APCA value is more than 15% below the values on the APCA lookup table
Rating 1	The lowest APCA value is 10-15% below the values on the APCA lookup table
Rating 2	The lowest APCA value is 5-9% below the values on the APCA lookup table
Rating 3	The lowest APCA value is 1-4% below the values on the APCA lookup table
Rating 4	All reading text meets or exceeds the values on the APCA lookup table



I N C L U S I O N



# WCAG 3.0 Testing: Atomic vs Holistic Tests

The testing of accessibility guidelines for WCAG 3.0 is different from previous versions, in that it involves both automated and human evaluation. The two types of tests are **atomic tests** and **holistic tests**.

Although content may satisfy all outcomes using the atomic tests, the content may not always be usable by people with a wide variety of disabilities. The holistic tests address this gap by evaluating more of the user experience than atomic testing.

## ATOMIC TESTS

Atomic tests evaluate content's accessibility often at an object level. They can be manual or automatic and look to see whether or not a web page has fulfilled accessibility requirements.

Atomic tests include the existing tests that support A, AA, and AAA success criteria, as well as additional tests beyond WCAG 2.0 standards.

## HOLISTIC TESTS

Holistic tests are used in addition to atomic tests to evaluate the overall user experience. Automatic atomic do not understand the user-end of accessibility requirements, making the human evaluation component incredibly important.

Holistic tests include assistive technology testing, user-centered design methods, and both user and expert usability testing.



# Conformance Levels Explained

WCAG 2.0 used conformance levels A, AA, and AAA to evaluate the degree of accessibility for websites and web content. Instead, WCAG 3.0 utilizes a new system that encourages teams to continuously improve. Bronze level is the closest equivalent to Level AA.

## ✓ Bronze

Bronze is the minimum conformance level, meaning that content that does not meet the requirements of the bronze level does not conform to WCAG 3.0. The bronze level can be verified using [atomic tests](#).

For content to conform to the bronze level:

- The total score and score within each of the functional categories **MUST** be at least 3.5; and
- Views and processes **MUST NOT** have critical errors.

Conformance to this specification at the bronze level does not mean every requirement in every guideline is fully met.

## ✓ Silver

Silver is a higher conformance level that addresses additional outcomes. Some [holistic testing](#) is necessary to verify conformance to this level.

For content that conforms to the silver level:

- All views **MUST** satisfy the Bronze criteria; and
- Use of holistic tests to meet this level will be further explored in future drafts

## ✓ Gold

Gold is the highest conformance level that addresses the remaining outcomes described in the guidelines. Additional [holistic testing](#) is necessary to verify conformance to this level.

For content that conforms to the gold level:

- All views **MUST** satisfy the Silver criteria; and
- Use of holistic tests to meet this level will be further explored in future drafts







# Summary

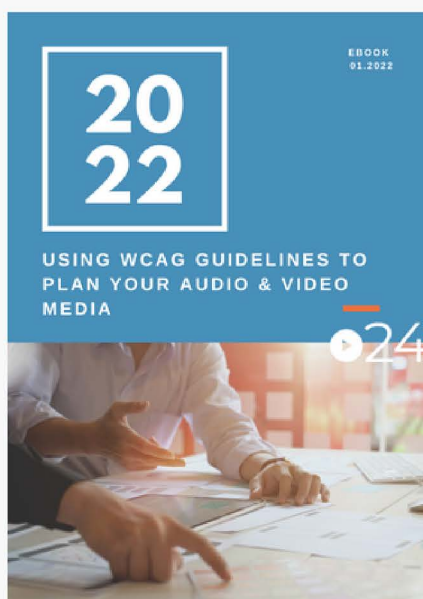
While WCAG 3.0 won't officially become a required accessibility standard for a couple more years, it's important to understand the upcoming changes so your organization isn't scrambling at the last minute. On top of that, accessible content increases engagement rates, audience reach, and overall ROI.

If you're developing a new website, app, or other web content, keep WCAG 3.0 in mind to avoid retroactively adapting your content. This will help you maximize your time, energy, and resources, as well as create equal internet access for those with visual, auditory, or cognitive disabilities.

For the full, official accessibility guidelines see [WCAG 3.0 Working Draft](#).

Additionally, take a look at our other our accessibility-focused resources here:

## YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN...



### [Using WCAG Guidelines to Plan Your Audio & Video Media](#)

Taking WCAG 3.0 Guidelines into consideration is a vital component of ensuring your audio and video media content is compliant. Not only does it expand your reach to a greater number of audiences, but it also keeps your organization in compliance with legal requirements.

Take a look at our in-depth guide to using WCAG guidelines for your online content

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

# THANK YOU

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