

Section 508 & ADA website compliance checklist.

A plain-English checklist for making a government or public-sector website meet **Section 508** and the **ADA** — both point to the same technical standard, **WCAG 2.1 Level AA**. Work through the four principles below and confirm with a real screen-reader test. Print this page and check each box. Prepared by **Hey Aaron! Marketing**, a registered federal contractor (UEI JN2VF5LTSE83, CAGE 23U33).

1. Perceivable

Users must be able to perceive the information — nothing important is available only in a way some people can't access.

- ☐ Every meaningful image has a text alternative (alt text); decorative images are marked empty so screen readers skip them.
- ☐ Videos have accurate synchronized captions; audio-only content has a transcript.
- ☐ Color is never the only way information is conveyed (e.g., "required fields are red" also has a label or icon).
- ☐ Text contrast is at least 4.5:1 against its background (3:1 for large text and UI components).
- ☐ Text can be resized to 200% without loss of content or function, and content reflows on small screens without horizontal scrolling.
- ☐ Images of text are avoided except for logos — real, selectable text is used instead.

2. Operable

Every function has to work for people who don't use a mouse — keyboard, switch, and screen-reader users included.

- ☐ All functionality is available from the keyboard alone, with no keyboard traps.
- ☐ A visible focus indicator shows where you are as you tab through the page.
- ☐ A "skip to main content" link lets keyboard users bypass the navigation.
- ☐ Pages have unique, descriptive titles and a logical tab/reading order.
- ☐ Link text describes its destination ("Apply for a permit," not "click here").
- ☐ There are multiple ways to find pages (menu, search, or sitemap).
- ☐ No content flashes more than three times per second (seizure safety).
- ☐ Users get enough time to read and use content; any time limits can be turned off or extended.

3. Understandable

Content and interactions have to be predictable and clear — especially forms, where most government transactions happen.

- ☐ The page language is set in the HTML (lang attribute) so screen readers pronounce content correctly.
- ☐ Navigation and components are consistent from page to page.
- ☐ Every form field has a visible, programmatically associated label.
- ☐ Errors are identified in text, the specific field is named, and a correction is suggested.
- ☐ Instructions and required formats are given before the user submits, not only after an error.
- ☐ Behavior is predictable — nothing changes context automatically on focus or input without warning.

4. Robust

The code has to be clean enough that current and future assistive technologies can interpret it reliably.

- ☐ HTML is valid and well-formed, with correctly nested, properly used elements.
- ☐ Headings (H1–H6) and landmarks describe the page structure in order, not chosen for visual size.
- ☐ Custom controls expose a correct name, role, and value (proper ARIA where native HTML isn't enough).
- ☐ Status messages and dynamic updates are announced to assistive technology.
- ☐ The site is tested with an actual screen reader (NVDA, JAWS, or VoiceOver), not just an automated scanner.

One more thing that trips up most agencies: a site launches compliant, then drifts — every new page, PDF and form has to meet the same bar. Automated scanners catch only about a third of issues; the rest needs keyboard and screen-reader testing. If you'd rather not manage that in-house, Hey Aaron! Marketing builds fast, accessible government and municipal websites that are WCAG 2.1 AA from the first line of code — and stays accountable for keeping them that way.
Text Aaron: 713-384-8985.