

AODA & WCAG 2.1 Compliance Overview

The AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) has set standards to ensure business within Ontario becomes accessible. This includes a set of guidelines to help make websites more accessible. Through these standards, a more personalized experience is created, which simultaneously expedites ease of access to electronic information for all.

As of January 1, 2014, all organizations with 50 or more employees that create new internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A. A “new” website means:

- a site with a new domain name (i.e. a brand new website address, and not a new page or link on the existing site); or
- a site with an existing domain name undergoing a significant refresh. Significant refresh may include, but is not limited to, a new look and feel, changes to navigability, or the majority of content are being updated or changed.

By January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live) and success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

What are the AODA & WCAG 2.1?

AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act):

- The AODA is a measure enacted in 2005 by the Legislative assembly of Ontario to improve accessibility standards for Ontarians before January 1st, 2025. This extends into the digital sphere and includes online accessibility for those living with disabilities.

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.1:

- The WCAG is a series of web accessibility guidelines, which were updated to their 2.1 version on June 5th, 2018. These guidelines are set out and recommended by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).
- The WCAG 2.1 guidelines build upon the previous WCAG 2.0 version, and WCAG 2.1 compliance covers all aspects of WCAG 2.0.
- The WCAG defines three levels of compliance (A, AA, AAA), with AAA representing the highest level of accessibility.

Top 3 Reasons to be AODA & WCAG Compliant

1. Improve the lives of those living with disabilities by allowing open access to information on the web.
2. To avoid potential corporate fines of up to \$100,000 per day.
3. To improve the experience of all web users via more effective communication through design.



Overview of Selected AODA & WCAG 2.1 Benefits

Accessibility for those with visual disabilities:

- Solutions for users with disabilities of different levels are put to use from those with minor visual difficulties to those with complete visual impairment.
- For difficulties discerning colour and contrast, minimum contrast levels are introduced as well as a requirement that page elements are distinguishable by means other than colour alone.
- Users have an option to increase font size by zooming by up to 200% without affecting content, and options for large print and recorded audio may also be offered.
- For those who require further assistance, sites will have compatibility with screen readers as well as speech input systems.

Accessibility for those with auditory disabilities:

- Sound must be easily distinguishable with a difference of at least 20dB between foreground and background volume.
- Users have the ability to adjust the volume via audio controls of the different elements, if applicable.
- Text alternatives offered for non-text content, including TTY (Text Telephone) compatibility for deaf users (on conference calls, for example).

Somatosensory & Other Physical


Users benefit from any combination of the above to acquire full accessibility due to difficulties with psychically manipulating keyboards, tablets, or mobile devices. Sufficient time will be given for those who require it to navigate through pages and elsewhere. Consistency of essential function regardless of time elapsed is applied.

Accessibility for those with disabilities of disorientation and risk of seizure

Disorientation & Seizure Risk:

- Any flashing item or other elements, which may induce seizures is required to flash no more than three times per second and remain in a safe range of tolerance to mitigate risk.
- Unwarned changes of context are to be avoided, and the user must be able to grasp their current location within the pages to avoid becoming disoriented.

Accessibility for those with learning disabilities :

- Pages must have the option to be simplified if the reading level required is above that of lower secondary to allow ease of access.
 - Abbreviations, unusual words in context and jargon should come with additional explanation.
 - Any word whose meaning is ambiguous without knowing the pronunciation should include pronunciation assistance.
- 

Levels of web accessibility

Each guideline has three levels of accessibility: A, AA and AAA. Newly created or refreshed websites must meet level A. Later, your website will need to meet Level AA. **Meeting Level AAA is not required at this time.**

WCAG 2.0 checklist Level A (Beginner)

- **1.1.1** – Non-text Content - Provide text alternatives for non-text content
- **1.2.1** – Audio-only and Video-only (Pre-recorded) - Provide an alternative to video-only and audio-only content
- **1.2.2** – Captions (Pre-recorded) - Provide captions for videos with audio
- **1.2.3** – Audio Description or Media Alternative (Pre-recorded) - Video with audio has a second alternative, captions or descriptions.
- **1.3.1** – Info and Relationships - Logical structure
 - Break up content with subheadings for new sections, mark those headings with HTML header tags, Use the correct HTML for all structural elements, use valid HTML everywhere else, and Use clear labels on forms.
- **1.3.2** – Meaningful Sequence - Present content in a meaningful order
- **1.3.3** – Sensory Characteristics - Use more than one sense for instructions
 - Sensory characteristics are an important but ridiculous-sounding phrase in web accessibility. It's actually far less complicated than it sounds. The sensory characteristics of your website are things like shape, sound, position and size.
 - Use more than one sense for instructions and avoid instructions that rely on sound
- **1.4.1** – Use of Colour - Don't use a presentation that relies solely on the colour
- **1.4.2** – Audio Control - Don't play audio automatically
- **2.1.1** – Keyboard - Accessible by keyboard only
- **2.1.2** – No Keyboard Trap - Don't trap keyboard users
- **2.2.1** – Timing Adjustable - Time limits have user controls
- **2.2.2** – Pause, Stop, Hide - Provide user controls for moving content
- **2.3.1** – Three Flashes or Below - No content flashes more than three times per second
 - This is important for users that may experience seizures
- **2.4.1** – Bypass Blocks - Provide a 'Skip to Content' link
- **2.4.2** – Page Titled - Use helpful and clear page titles to explain where users are
- **2.4.3** – Focus Order - Logical order
 - Your users need to find their way around your website in sequential and meaningful order. You can control this with the 'focus order' of your website
 - 'Focus order' is the sequence in which a user accesses elements on your website. For example, some users can't use a mouse and will 'tab' through your website
 - Use the TAB key to navigate the website instead of a mouse to ensure proper function
- **2.4.4** – Link Purpose (In Context) - Every link's purpose is clear from its context

- **3.1.1 – Language of Page** - Page has a language assigned
 - Kind of obvious, right? But, be sure to set your language in your template and you'll be set. HTML language codes match the ISO language codes standard
 - W3Schools has a [full list of language codes](#).
- **3.2.1 – On Focus** - Elements do not change when they receive focus
 - Once an element receives focus from users, whether with a mouse or keyboard, the element must not automatically change. This can disorientate users
 - A change of focus is especially troublesome for users who navigate by keyboard
 - Ensure no element changes by receiving the focus and avoid behavioural/visual modifications
 - Ensure that links don't open automatically on focus
 - Forms don't submit without the user taking action (such as clicking the 'Submit')
 - No automatic pop-ups and focus never jumps to another element automatically
- **3.2.2 – On Input** - Elements do not change when they receive input
 - Forms must not auto-submit when all fields are filled – this prevents your users from checking and editing what they have written
- **3.3.1 – Error Identification** Clearly identify input errors
- **3.3.2 – Labels or Instructions** - Label all input fields clearly and helpfully
 - Labels for forms: first name, email, your-message are fine
- **4.1.1 – Parsing** - No major code errors (this is more for your web designer)
 - Ensure HTML elements have complete start (< >) and end (</ >) tags
 - Nest all HTML elements correctly and use unique Ids
 - Check that HTML elements don't contain duplicate attributes
- **4.1.2 – Name, Role, Value** Build all elements for accessibility
 - A good – though not foolproof – way to test your website is an HTML validator tool
 - A validator gives you an idea of how well technology can parse your website. Use it to create a list of priorities

WCAG 2.0 checklist Level AA (Intermediate)

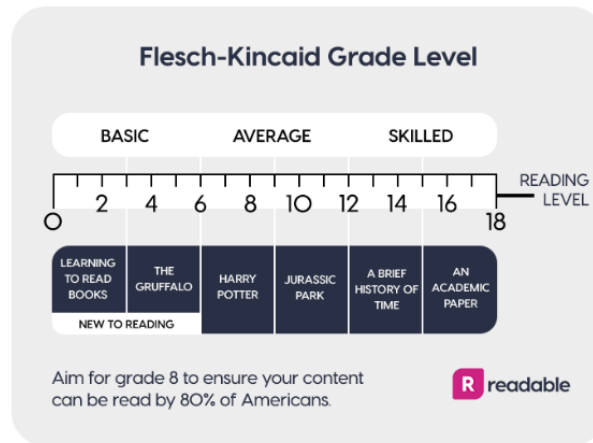
WCAG 2.1 is an extension of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 guidelines. They were updated on June 15, 2018. The following guidelines were revised:

- **1.2.4** – Captions (Live) - Live videos have captions
- **1.2.5** – Audio Description (Pre-recorded) - Users have access to audio description for video content
- **1.4.3** – Contrast (Minimum) - Contrast ratio between text and background is at least 4.5:1
 - Large Text: Large-scale text and images of LST have a contrast ratio of at least 3:1;
 - Logotypes: Text that is part of a logo or brand name has no contrast requirement.
- **1.4.4** – Resize Text - Text can be resized to 200% without loss of content or function
- **1.4.5** – Images of Text - Don't use images of text (Bad, very bad!)
 - Place text over images
- **2.4.5** – Multiple Ways - Offer several ways to find pages on a site
 - Search function, header and footer links, as well as page links
- **2.4.6** – Headings and Labels - Use clear headings and labels to describe topics
- **2.4.7** – Focus Visible - Ensure keyboard focus is visible and clear
 - Such as using the Tab key to scroll through all available links and arrow keys to move up and down on the webpage.
- **3.1.2** – Language of Parts - Tell users when the language on a page changes
- **3.2.3** – Consistent Navigation - Use menus consistently
- **3.2.4** – Consistent Identification - Use icons and buttons consistently
- **3.3.3** – Error Suggestion - Suggest fixes when users make errors
- **3.3.4** – Error Prevention (Legal, Financial, Data) - Reduce the risk of input errors for sensitive data
 - Reversible: Submissions are reversible
 - Checked: Data entered by the user is checked for input errors, and the user is provided with an opportunity to correct them
 - Confirmed: A mechanism is available for reviewing, verifying, and correcting information before finalizing the submission. (i.e. captcha, or confirmation submission button, etc.)

WCAG 2.0 checklist Level AAA (Advanced)

- **1.2.6** – Sign Language (Pre-recorded) - Provide sign language translations for videos
- **1.2.7** – Extended Audio description (Pre-recorded) - Provide audio description for videos
- **1.2.8** – Media Alternative (Pre-recorded) - Provide a text alternative to videos
- **1.2.9** – Audio Only (Live) - Provide alternatives for live audio
- **1.4.6** – Contrast (Enhanced) - Contrast ratio between text and background is at least 7:1
- **1.4.7** – Low or No Background Audio - Audio is clear for listeners to hear
- **1.4.8** – Visual Presentation - Offer users a range of presentation options
 - Some of your users will have difficulty viewing your website with the same clarity as others. There's no way to know every combination of colours and sizes users prefer
 - Allowing your users to select from a range of visual presentation options will help them to get the best from your website
 - The following 5 features must be in place to pass Guideline 1.4.8:
 1. Enable customers to select from a number of background and foreground colours
 2. Text blocks must be no wider than 80 characters
 3. Text is not justified to both sides of the webpage
 4. Enable users to select from a number of line and paragraph spacing options – one of the options must give line spacing that is at least 1.5
 5. Text can be resized in a browser up to 200% without requiring the user to scroll horizontally
- **1.4.9** – Images of Text (No Exception) - Don't use images of text (Needed for AA)
- **2.1.3** – Keyboard (No Exception) - Accessible by keyboard only, without exception
- **2.2.3** – No Timing - No time limits
- **2.2.4** – Interruptions - Don't interrupt users
 - Don't use an automatic redirect or refresh function based on a time delay.
- **2.2.5** – Re-authenticating - Save user data when re-authenticating
- **2.3.2** – Three Flashes - No content flashes more than three times per second
 - This is intended to reduce the chance of seizures.
- **2.4.8** – Location - Let users know where they are
- **2.4.9** – Link Purpose (Link Only) - Every link's purpose is clear from its text
- **2.4.10** – Section Headings - Break up content with headings

- **3.1.3 – Unusual words - Explain any strange words**
 - W3C states that web content should be written between a level of grade 4 – 6
 - Businesses should aim to write at a level of 8 – 10.
 - For reference, here is a small Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level chart



- **3.1.4 – Abbreviations - Explain any abbreviations**
- **3.1.5 – Reading Level - Users with nine years of school can read your content**
- **3.1.6 – Pronunciation - Explain any words that are hard to pronounce**
- **3.2.5 – Change on Request - Don't change elements on your website until users ask**
 - Some of your users find automatic changes hard to deal with
 - To pass this guideline, you need to ensure the following five statements are true:
 1. If you have an element that updates automatically (like a live news ticker), there is an option to pause this and update only when requested
 2. All links open in the same window unless it's essential to open to a new window
 3. If a link does open in a new window, the user is aware of this via anchor text
 4. Forms do not auto-submit when fields are filled
 5. Any redirect from one page to another is immediate
- **3.3.5 – Help - Provide detailed help and instructions**
 - Labelling input buttons with the nature of the input (for example, 'Subscribe' or 'Buy')
 - Where an input field needs more information than a label provides, add a link to that information near the field (for example 'Help with this answer')
- **3.3.6 – Error Prevention (All) - Reduce the risk of all input errors**
 - All data input submissions are reversible; or
 - All data input submissions are checked for input errors



What if I can't comply?

Sometimes it may not be possible to meet the WCAG 2.0 requirements. For example, you may have used software and other tools that predate WCAG 2.0 to develop your website.

You may be able to update or repair the products you used to support accessibility. If this is not possible, make sure you use software that supports accessibility the next time you refresh your site.

It may not be possible to post some content in a way that complies with WCAG 2.0. For example, it may be impossible to make some online maps and complex diagrams accessible to people with visual disabilities. In such cases, you may still post the content, but you must provide it in an accessible format upon request.

Tips for testing websites for accessibility

There are a number of ways to know if your new or refreshed website is accessible:

- 1. Automatic assessment and assistive technology**

Do a final evaluation of your site using an automated evaluation to flag any issues that may not have been resolved. For example, you can review your site using assistive technology such as a screen reader to make sure the design and technical aspects of the site are accessible.

- 2. User testing and feedback**

If possible, ask people with disabilities to test your new or refreshed site before you launch. Get feedback from customers and other site users to find out if there are any improvements needed.

- 3. Review key milestones and changes**

Keep a record of the accessibility issues that have been repaired, or ask your web developer to maintain such a record. This will show you the completed work and the new level of accessibility. It will also be helpful if your organization is asked to confirm that your website is WCAG 2.0 compliant.

- 4. Online accessibility checker**

You can use an online tool to check if your website is accessible. Using online accessibility, the checker does not guarantee that you will find all accessibility issues with your website. It is important to have a person review the site as well.

This is an example of an online accessibility checker that can help you find accessibility issues with your new or refreshed website: [**AChecker**](#)





Before you file a compliance report

To complete the form, you need your organization's:

- legal name
- business number (BN9 – found in your federal or provincial tax return)
- number of employees
- name and contact information of your certifier (a senior officer with legal authority to say that the report is complete and accurate)

If you think your organization may be in the public sector category, check the lists to confirm:

- [designated public sector](#)
- [public bodies](#)
- [broader public sector](#)
- If your organization is in the more general public sector category and you don't have a BN9, contact the AODA at 416-849-8276, (toll-free) 1-866-515-2025, or accessibility@ontario.ca and they will give you an AODA identifier number.

Download the [compliance report here](#)

How to fill out your report

- Select your organization's category.
- Enter your organization's information.
- Answer the yes or no questions.
 - Make sure you select the correct organization category, or you may see questions that do not apply to you.
 - Each question has links to the related section of the regulation resources to help you understand and meet the requirements
- For each question, click **Yes** (if you are in compliance) or **No** (if you are not in agreement).
 - You may add comments in the comment box below each question.
 - Once you have answered all of the questions, click **Save form** before clicking **Next**.
- Review the form and share with others.
 - You can move from page to page by clicking on the **Next** or **Previous**.
- Include information on the primary contact and complete certification. The certifier must
 - Make sure all information on the form is complete and accurate.
 - Check the three boxes to show they have authority to certify your organization
- The form has an automated **Submit** button. You will be prompted to save the form on your computer first and then it will be submitted to us automatically.

You would receive a message that will confirm your submission or inform you if there was an error.





File for up to 20 organizations at once

You can use one form to file a report for up to 20 organizations if they all have the same:

- Organization category
- Number of employees range
- Certifier
- Answers to all of the accessibility compliance questions

If the above information differs, you must **complete a separate form for each organization with different details.**

After submitting the report

Once we receive the report, a confirmation email will go to the certifier and the primary contact listed.

This email will include:

- A confirmation number
- An accessible PDF copy of your report

Notify us of changes

You must notify us if your organization has a change in:

- Address
- Primary contact information
- Number of employees
- Status (for example is no longer in business or has fewer than 20 employees)

Use this form to update your organization's profile.



The Law

You must submit an accessibility compliance report if you are:

- a business or non-profit organization with 20 or more employees
- a public-sector organization

The compliance report confirms that you have met your current accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

- A person and unincorporated organizations that are guilty of a significant offence under this Act can be fined up to \$50,000 dollars for each day the violation continues
- A corporation that is guilty can be fined up to \$100,000 per day
- Directors and officers of a corporation with fiduciary responsibility who are guilty are liable to a fine of up to \$50,000 a day


Individuals or Unincorporated Organizations

Impact of Contravention	Major (priority requirement)	Moderate (organizational preparedness)	Minor (administrative/ operational)
Major compliance history (6 previous contraventions)	\$2,000 (can be issued per day)	\$1000.00	\$500.00
Moderate compliance history (2–5 previous contraventions)	\$1000.00	\$500.00	\$250.00
Minor (first contravention)	\$500.00	\$250.00	\$200.00

Administrative Penalties for Corporations

Impact of Contravention	Major (priority requirement)	Moderate (organizational preparedness)	Minor (administrative/ operational)
Major compliance history (6 previous contraventions)	\$15,000 (can be issued per day)	\$10,000.00	\$5000.00
Moderate compliance history (2–5 previous contraventions)	\$10000.00	\$5000.00	\$2500.00
Minor (first contravention)	\$2000.00	\$1000.00	\$500.00

Read the full details of the law [HERE](#)



The requirements and deadlines you need to follow depend on the type and size of your organization:

- businesses or non-profits
 - public sector organizations
 - municipalities
 - educational institutions (for example, boards, colleges, universities and schools)
 - producers of educational material (for example, textbooks)
 - library boards
- 