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Your ADA Website Compliance Checklist

A Practical Evaluation Tool for 2026 Readiness

Is your website prepared for the 2026 and 2027 ADA compliance deadlines?

In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice formalized digital accessibility requirements under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), naming WCAG 2.1 Level AA as the technical standard for state and local government websites and mobile applications.

Even if your organization is not directly regulated, accessibility expectations across industries are rising quickly.

This checklist will help you:

- Identify compliance risks
- Uncover hidden accessibility gaps
- Determine whether you need remediation or redesign
- Prioritize next steps before the deadline.

Section 1:

Organizational Risk Assessment

1.1 Regulatory Exposure

- ☐ We are a state or local government entity
- ☐ We receive public funding
- ☐ We contract with government agencies
- ☐ We provide public services or community programs
- ☐ We are unsure whether we fall under Title II

If you checked one or more boxes, you should prioritize an accessibility audit within the next 6 to 12 months.

1.2 Timeline Awareness

- ☐ Leadership is aware of the April 2026 and April 2027 deadlines
- ☐ Accessibility has been discussed at the board or executive level
- ☐ Budget planning has accounted for potential compliance updates
- ☐ Accessibility ownership has been assigned to a specific role

If none of these are true, your first step is internal alignment and education.

Section 2:

Technical Accessibility Foundations (WCAG 2.1 AA)

EVALUATE THE FOLLOWING CORE AREAS OF ACCESSIBILITY:

Perceivable

- ☐ All images include descriptive alt text
- ☐ Videos include captions
- ☐ Audio files include transcripts
- ☐ Color contrast meets WCAG 2.1 AA standards
- ☐ Text can be resized without breaking the layout

If you are unsure about any of these, automated tools can help identify issues—but manual review is still necessary.

Operable

- ☐ All navigation works using a keyboard only
- ☐ Focus indicators are visible
- ☐ Forms are accessible through logical tab order
- ☐ Skip-to-content links are implemented
- ☐ Flashing or time-based content does not create barriers

Keyboard testing is one of the simplest ways to uncover hidden issues. If your site cannot be fully navigated without a mouse, compliance risk increases.

Understandable

- ☐ Heading structure follows a logical hierarchy (H1, H2, H3)
- ☐ Forms include clear instructions and error messages
- ☐ Navigation labels are consistent across pages
- ☐ Content avoids overly complex or unclear language

Accessibility overlaps with clarity. Poor structure can affect both usability and search performance.

Robust

- ☐ The site functions with screen readers
- ☐ ARIA labels are used correctly
- ☐ PDFs are accessible and properly tagged
- ☐ Third-party tools, such as donation or event platforms, have been evaluated for accessibility

Many organizations overlook third-party tools. If your donation form or registration software is inaccessible, your overall compliance posture is affected.

Section 3:

Platform and Infrastructure Review

- ☐ Our website is less than 3 years old
- ☐ Our CMS supports accessible templates
- ☐ Accessibility was considered during our last redesign
- ☐ We have documentation from our developer regarding WCAG compliance
- ☐ We have conducted a professional accessibility audit in the past 24 months

If your website is more than 4 to 5 years old and has never undergone an accessibility audit, remediation may be more complex.

Section 4:

Governance and Process

Accessibility is not just about code.
It is an ongoing practice.

- ☐ Staff are trained to write alt text
- ☐ Staff understand accessible PDF formatting
- ☐ Publishing guidelines include accessibility standards
- ☐ Accessibility is reviewed before new campaigns launch
- ☐ Annual accessibility reviews are scheduled

Organizations without governance processes often fall back into noncompliance even after updates are made.

Scoring and Interpretation

FOR EACH SECTION:



LOW RISK

80% to 100% checked
= maintain and monitor.



MODERATE RISK

50% to 79% checked
= prioritize a professional audit.



HIGH RISK

Below 50% checked
= an immediate audit is recommended.

If you are unsure about **more than 30%** of these questions, you likely do not have enough visibility to assess compliance confidently.

Uncertainty is a risk indicator too.

What Your Results Mean

If your score indicates high risk

You likely need a professional accessibility audit within the next 3 to 6 months. Waiting may compress your timeline and increase costs. Early evaluation makes phased remediation more manageable and helps you avoid a reactive overhaul.

If your score indicates moderate risk

You may be able to address many issues through structured remediation, but validation from a professional audit is still recommended. This is often the right time to evaluate whether incremental fixes or a more strategic modernization plan makes better sense.

If your score indicates low risk

Keep your governance process in place. Accessibility standards evolve, and continued monitoring helps protect your investment while reducing long-term liability.

Recommended Next Steps

- ✔ Conduct a professional WCAG 2.1 AA audit
- ✔ Determine whether remediation or redesign is needed
- ✔ Assign internal accessibility ownership
- ✔ Establish publishing standards and training
- ✔ Document progress toward compliance before the deadline

Final Reflection

Accessibility compliance is not about perfection. It is about measurable progress, documented effort and intentional design.

Organizations that begin now can move forward more calmly and strategically. Organizations that wait are more likely to face rushed decisions under deadline pressure.

A checklist gives you awareness.

An audit gives you clarity.

A plan gives you confidence.

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