Distance learning designers make courses accessible to students with disabilities:

- Accessible design is good design, and often benefits all users.
- Accessible design ensures that content is reaching the largest possible audience.
- Web users are diverse. They include people using phones, tablets, and a wide variety of other devices. People with disabilities are part of this diverse mix.
- An accessible website makes people with disabilities feel welcome.
- Accessibility is required by law.

Mainstream technology is inaccessible to some people.

- People who are blind may use screen reader software or Braille devices to access a website; they can only access content that is text-based.
- People who are deaf cannot access audio content unless it is captioned or transcribed.
- Some individuals may not be able to use a mouse; they need to be able to navigate a webpage and access all content with the keyboard alone.
- Some people with low vision, dyslexia, attention deficit, or cognitive disabilities have difficulty processing long lines of text and/or cluttered screens, and depend on white space, simple screen images, and good color contrast.

Design websites to be:

**PERCEIVABLE**
- Provide text alternatives for non-text content.
- Caption multimedia.
- Present content in different ways.

**OPERABLE**
- Make all functionality available from keyboard alone.
- Allow enough time to read content.
- Help users navigate and find content.

**UNDERSTANDABLE**
- Make content appear and operate predictably.
- Help users avoid and correct errors.

**ROBUST**
- Maximize compatibility with current and future user tools.

Explore ten indicators of distance learning program accessibility at uw.edu/doit/Resources/dip_access.html

In an iterative process, the Indicators were shared with and refined with formative feedback from disabled student service and distance learning staff at sixteen postsecondary institutions as part of a DO-IT project.

Each Indicator relates to one of four key stakeholders in the delivery of distance learning courses:

- students and potential students,
- distance learning designers,
- distance learning faculty, and
- distance learning program evaluators.
Making courses accessible to students with disabilities benefits society by:

- enhancing academic and career fields with the expertise and perspectives of people with disabilities.
- making learning opportunities available to more citizens.
- providing more and better structured data for indexing and searching websites, documents, and media.

The following resources can help you get started in designing inclusive distance learning programs.

**STANDARDS & GUIDELINES**
- W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0
  [w3.org/TR/WCAG20](http://w3.org/TR/WCAG20)
- Section 508 Standards
  [section508.gov](http://section508.gov)

**FURTHER GUIDANCE**
- AccessDL
  [uw.edu/doit/Resources/accessdl.html](http://uw.edu/doit/Resources/accessdl.html)
- Web Accessibility in Mind (WebAIM)
  [webaim.org](http://webaim.org)
- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative
  [w3.org/WAI/train.htm](http://w3.org/WAI/train.htm)
- UW Accessible IT Tools and Resources
  [uw.edu/accessibility/tools.html](http://uw.edu/accessibility/tools.html)

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