

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT



ADA COMPLIANCE ONLINE

Just as you would with your brick-and-mortar location, building and maintaining an ADA-compliant website is not only the right thing to do, it's a mandatory requirement of doing business.

Here are Synchrony's answers to five questions you might have about ADA compliance online, including how it can help you increase your audience and build your small business.



WHAT IS THE ADA, AND ARE SMALL BUSINESSES REQUIRED TO COMPLY?

The Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA, is federal civil rights legislation that became law in 1990 and prohibits discrimination against those with disabilities. The ADA ensures equal opportunities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications for individuals with disabilities¹. Businesses — regardless of size — providing products or services to the public fall under Title III of the ADA and are required to make “reasonable modifications” to accommodate customers with disabilities. Synchrony has long been committed to implementing applicable accessibility standards and providing an accessible digital experience to our customers and the public, regardless of disability status. For small businesses, however, it can be a challenge to find the resources necessary to become compliant. To help offset costs associated with ADA compliance, there may be tax write-offs and credits available for small businesses².

WE HAVE WHEELCHAIR RAMPS AND ACCESSIBLE PARKING. WHAT DO STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE DESIGN HAVE TO DO WITH MY WEBSITE?

Since the ADA was passed in 1990, long before most people and businesses were concerned with websites, there are no specific mandates about what makes a website accessible. However, there have been an increasing number of lawsuits where plaintiffs alleged that websites are places of public accommodation, costing companies significant money to fight or settle the suits. In the absence of clear legal guidance, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) have become the standard for creating an accessible site. Synchrony follows these guidelines, developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), which consider a wide range of disabilities and offer guidance for making websites accessible to all of them.³ The W3C updates its guidelines as technology changes. The most current WCAG is version 2.1, although a working draft of WCAG 3.0 is available for review online.⁴



WHAT MAKES A WEBSITE ADA COMPLIANT?

The most recent guidelines, WCAG 2.1, call for your website to meet each of the four below standards.⁵ These are the standards Synchrony strives to meet on our websites and digital platforms, and our experts suggest your site should be:

- 1. PERCEIVABLE:** all information on the site must be presented in a way that can be perceived by all users
- 2. OPERABLE:** all users should be able to navigate and use all aspects of the site
- 3. UNDERSTANDABLE:** all content on the site should be easily read and understood
- 4. ROBUST:** the site can be used by various devices, including assistive technologies, to provide the same user experience for all

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE MY SITE COMPLIANT?

There are many tools and resources available — many of which are free — to help ensure your website is accessible to all. Sites like accessibilitychecker.org⁶ make it as simple as entering your website URL to get a detailed audit and report of your compliance status, as well as what to do to fix any issues. Synchrony also recommends Microsoft,⁷ which has a full suite of accessibility tools and technology available, along with free training to help you get and stay informed about accessibility and inclusivity.

Some initial steps you can take to make your website more accessible for all include:

- Add alt tags, captions, and/or text transcripts to all media on your site, allowing users to perceive your images, video, or audio content according to their abilities.
 - Organize your content by creating a headline hierarchy (the most important headline is ranked H1, followed by H2, and so on until the least important headline⁸) that helps enable assistive devices like screen readers to effectively navigate the site.
 - Ensure users can navigate your site with a keyboard, as not everyone can use a mouse.
 - Create a text vs. background (at least 4.5 to 1) color contrast for colorblind users.
 - Make flashing animations stoppable to avoid provoking seizures in susceptible users.
 - Optimize your site for mobile rendering so users can engage with it from any device.
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ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO CREATING AN ADA-COMPLIANT WEBSITE?

While avoiding a civil rights lawsuit and protecting the reputation of your small business is reason enough to get compliant, there's no downside to developing a website accessible to all possible users. According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in four American adults lives with a disability⁹ As the experts at Synchrony have learned, ensuring your website meets users of all abilities where they are increases the size of your audience, and lets prospective customers know you care enough to see from their point of view. As a bonus, an ADA-compliant website may be easier to navigate and engage with for all users, including those without disabilities, and can have better search engine optimization. From every angle, ADA compliance is a win/win.

For more information or to connect with an expert, contact us at synchronyconnect@synchrony.com.

Synchrony Connect is a value-added program that lets Synchrony partners tap into our expertise in areas beyond credit. It offers knowledge and tools that can help you grow, lead and operate your business.

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¹**What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?**, ADA National Network, 2022

²**ADA Guide for Small Businesses**, U.S. Small Business Administration, 2022

³**What are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ?**, Wuhcag.com, 2022 4WCAG 3 Introduction, WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative, 2022

⁴**WCAG 3 Introduction**, WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative, 2022

⁵**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1**, WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative, 2022

⁶**Free Online Web Accessibility Checker (WCAG & ADA)**, accessibilitychecker.org, 2022

⁷**Accessibility Technology & Tools**, Microsoft.com, 2022

⁸**Headings**, WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative, 2022

⁹**Disability Impacts All of Us**, Centers for Disease Control, 2022