Making eLearning Accessible
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Acknowledgements

While following accessibility guidelines and requirements may have you focusing on features and functionality that you need; there's no reason that an accessible course can't also be engaging and interactive. We know that it is our duty to ensure knowledge is delivered clearly, concisely to, and for everyone.

The challenge for some developers is that they want Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to be more than a guideline, wanting something to spell out specifically what must be done. Rather we (as developers) should appreciate the WCAG guidelines as they enable us to be creative and find the most appropriate solution for our individual situation, without being lost. With this in mind, this book will focus on preparing your content for accessibility testing.

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Preface

A well-known saying proclaims, “Knowledge is power.” An eLearning professional’s job is all about delivering that knowledge. While technology brings the world together in many ways and enables content delivery on a much broader scale than ever before, challenges to content accessibility can still arise. It’s up to you to ensure that you’re designing your content for as many people as possible, including those with physical, sensory, or cognitive limitations or disabilities. We call this concept “accessibility” or “accessible eLearning.”

In this eBook, we’ll ask:

- What Is Accessibility and why is it important?
- What is WCAG and why is it important?
- What Best Practices should be followed for Creating Accessible Content?

This is a guide on accessibility, for the specific standards and guidelines, see the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) at w3.org.

> *The most important thing a Lectora developer can do is* ***design with accessibility in mind****. Knowing how to use the tools in your toolbox will be essential to your success. Lectora is a very powerful authoring tool. With that power comes the ability of more than one way to do something. Not every approach will be accessible and as the designer/developer it is up to you to know the outcome of your actions for your specific project. Remember—just because you can, doesn’t mean you should!*
>
> ***– Christine O’Malley,*** *President of e-Learning Designs, Inc., & Founder of the Lectora Accessibility User Group*

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What is Accessibility & Why is it Important?

Accessibility in eLearning involves the creation of an online learning experience within which as many people as possible can participate. In the United States, government agencies and those with government contracts, along with educational institutions are the ones who focus the most intently on accessibility because they are required by law to follow Section 508, an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

> *Accessibility is the right thing to do. And not just the right thing; it's profoundly the right thing to do, because the one argument for accessibility that doesn't get made nearly often enough is how extraordinarily better it makes some people's lives. How many opportunities do we have to dramatically improve people's lives just by doing our job a little better?*
>
> ***– Steve Krug,** author "Don't make me think: 20 Thoughts on Usability"*

Section 508 is a set of 50 guidelines for making electronic resources and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. These standards are based on guidelines originally developed by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), known as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). WCAG is a global set of guidelines followed around the world.

While many countries have laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities, they vary on if the law applies to public sectors, private sectors, and the government. No matter what it is called around the world, e.g., in Canada it's known as Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or Canadian Human Rights Act, in Europe, the European Accessibility Act (EAA), In Ireland, the Discrimination Disability Act (DDA), in

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What is WCAG & Why is it Important?

When building accessible eLearning, you want to create an online learning experience that includes as many people as possible regardless of their limitations—whether physical, sensory, or cognitive.

According to the United Nations **Aging and Disability** report, there are "higher disability rates among older persons, as a result of an accumulation of health risks across a lifespan of disease, injury, and chronic illness."

What type of disabilities are we talking about? Here are a few examples:

Visual

» Blindness
» Low vision
» Color blindness
» Glaucoma
» Farsightedness, Nearsightedness, Astigmatism

Hearing

» Deafness
» Hard of hearing
» Hearing loss

Motor*

» Loss or damage of limbs
» Arthritis

Everyone sees color a little differently—even people who aren't color blind. One in 12 men are color blind.

– National Eye Institute

In the United States, approximately 20% of Americans have at least one disability.

– Centers for Disease Control

*While this references physical impairments, as eLearning developers, we are concerned with dexterity issues affecting the learners' ability to interact with technology. These issues include a mouse, keyboard, touchpad, or computer screen.

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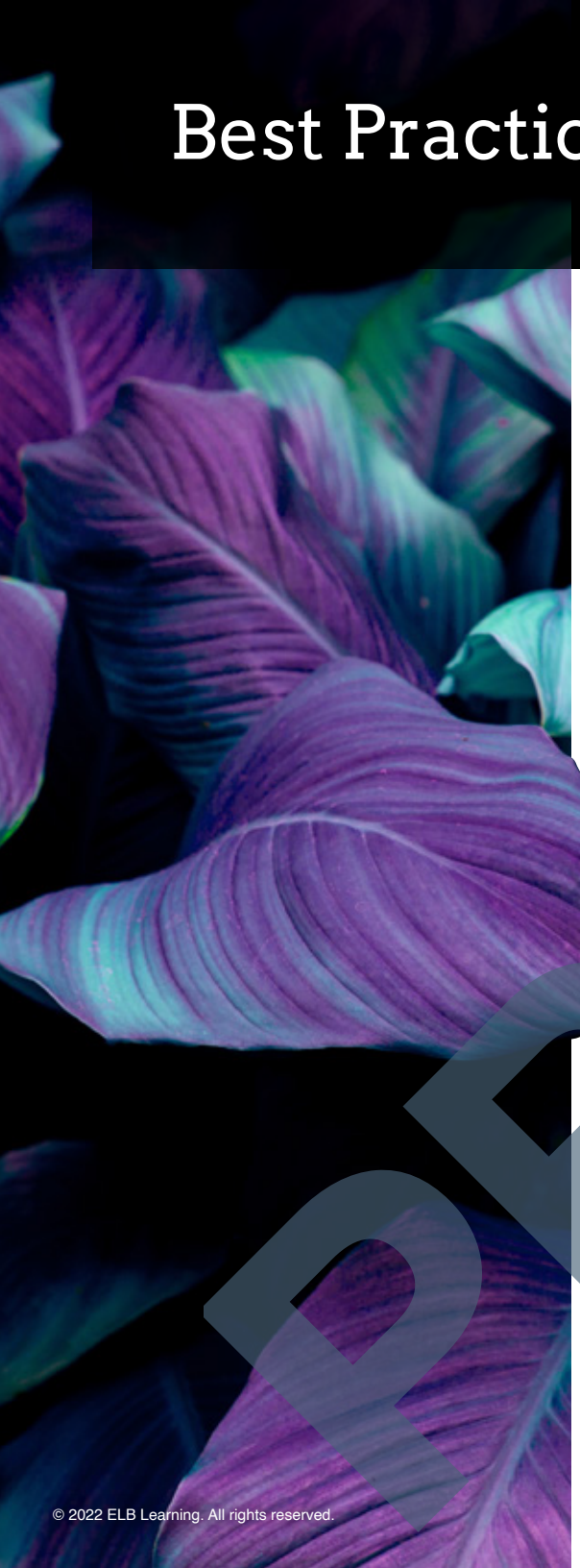
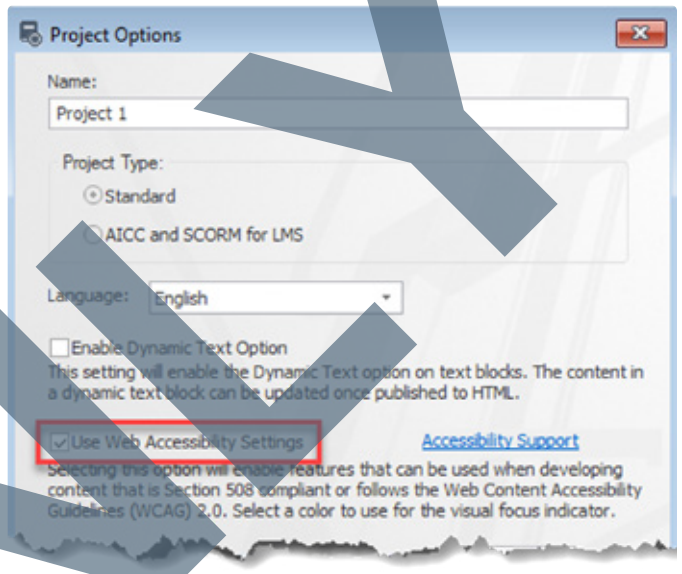
Best Practices for Creating Accessible Content



Authoring tools simplify the process of creating eLearning. Instead of coding directly in HTML and scripting languages, the tool does some of the coding for you. With some authoring tools, developers can often use different methods to achieve the same result. However, when it comes to WCAG compliance and accessibility, certain factors must still be met.

Web Accessibility Settings

As you begin to design your content, be sure to turn on the **Use Web Accessibility Settings** option within your **Project Options** on the **Design Ribbon**. When you select this option, Lectora will automatically enable certain features in the application that will assist you with meeting Section 508 standards and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA. As stated throughout this eBook, you will still need to check your title for accessibility both manually (try unplugging your mouse and using just your keyboard), using automated tools (like a screen reader or accessibility evaluation tool), and in the field with students. However, this should give you a head start down the path toward more usable, accessible content.



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