**Accessibility and Older People:  
Meeting the Needs of Ageing Web Users**

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**Introduction**

Older Web users are an increasing market segment and important customer base for many businesses, governments, and other organizations. As we age, we might face age-related impairments that affect how we use the Web.

**Older Users and Disabled Users Have Overlapping Needs**

The needs of older users overlap with the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. Older users may experience impairment or decline in::

* **vision** - including reduced contrast sensitivity, color perception, and near-focus, making it difficult to read web pages
* **physical ability** - including reduced dexterity and fine motor control, making it difficult to use a mouse and click small targets
* **hearing** - including difficulty hearing higher-pitched sounds and separating sounds, making it difficult to hear podcasts and other audio, especially when there is background music
* **cognitive ability** - including reduced short-term memory, difficulty concentrating, and being easily distracted, making it difficult to follow navigation and complete online tasks

By applying WAI's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines [WCAG 2.0](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag), websites and tools that are accessible to people with disabilities will also be more accessible to older users.

**Understanding Older Web Users**

* **[Stories of Web Users](https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web/stories" \l "retiree)** - gives the example of how an 85 year old retiree uses the Web but faces a number of problems because he has reduced vision, a hand tremor and mild short-term memory loss
* **[Involving Users in Web Projects for Better, Easier Accessibility](http://www.w3.org/WAI/users/involving.html)** describes the benefits of obtaining feedback from actual users
* [**Older Users Online - WAI Guidelines address older users' Web experience**](http://www.w3.org/WAI/posts/2009/older-users-online)(Originally published in *User Experience Magazine*, Vol 8, Issue 1, 2009)  
  explains age-related impairments that impact Web use, requirements for web design that enhance the ability of older people to use the Web and how existing accessibility guidelines for people with disabilities cover the needs of older users, and future work in this area.
* [**Web Accessibility for Older Users: A Literature Review**](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wai-age-literature) prepared for the WAI-AGE project povides detailed research on aging, age-related impairments and Web accessibility.

**Practical Computer Guidance to Help Older Users**

* [**Better Web Browsing: Tips for Customizing Your Computer**](http://www.w3.org/WAI/users/browsing)  
  This practical resource provides guidance on how to set up your computer to work better for your specific needs and preferences; for example, enlarging text, making the mouse pointer bigger, and using the keyboard (instead of the mouse) to browse websites.

**Technical Resources for Developers, Managers and Vendors**

Web developers, managers and owners who want or need to make their websites, web applications, and web tools usable by older users can use [existing international accessibility guidelines](http://www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html),as follows:

* For **developers** - [**Developing Websites for Older People: How Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Applies**](http://www.w3.org/WAI/older-users/developing.html) ntroduces WCAG 2.0 and techniques to improve the accessibility and usability of websites and web applications for older people.
* ~~WAI's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines [WCAG 2.0](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)  
  Guidelines and techniques for making websites and web applications work better for people with disabilities as well as older users with accessibility needs due to ageing.~~
* For **managers** –
  + [Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for Your Organization](https://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase)
  + [Social Factors Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for your Organization](https://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/soc.html" \l "older), specifically the sections [Overlap with Older Users' Needs](https://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/soc.html" \l "older) and  [Access for Older People](https://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/soc.html" \l "of)
* For **vendors** - WAI's User Agent Accessibility Guidelines [UAAG](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/uaag) provides guidance on how to make web browsers and media players accessible to older users who have accessibility needs that should be met through the browser instead of requiring additional [assistive technologies](http://www.w3.org/WAI/users/involving" \l "at).

**~~Additional WAI Resources~~**

~~The afore-mentioned resources address aspects of web accessibility related to web users who are older and whose needs overlap with web users who have disabilities. Additional resources include:~~

* ~~[How People with Disabilities Use the Web](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web.php), specifically the sections on older users~~
* ~~[Contacting Organizations about Inaccessible Websites](http://www.w3.org/WAI/users/inaccessible) - Provides guidance on what to do when you come across a website that has accessibility barriers that make it hard to use.~~

**WAI-AGE Project**

The “Web Accessibility Initiative: Ageing Education and Harmonisation (WAI-AGE)” project is a European Commission IST Specific Support Action with the goal of increasing accessibility of the Web for older people as well as for people with disabilities in European Union Member States. It focuses on:

* Better understanding the needs of older web users
* Participation of older users in W3C standardization
* Development of educational materials and resources
* Pursuit of international standards harmonization

To learn more about the WAI-AGE project, see the [WAI-AGE Project page](http://www.w3.org/WAI/WAI-AGE/), which includes:

* [About WAI-AGE](http://www.w3.org/WAI/WAI-AGE/#about)
* [WAI-AGE Publications and Presentations](http://www.w3.org/WAI/WAI-AGE/#pubs)