# Contacting Organizations about Inaccessible Websites

## Page Contents

* [Overview](" \l "overview)
* [Introduction](" \l "intro)
* [Who do You Email?](" \l "contact)
* [What to Include in Your Email](" \l "report)
* [Sources for More Information](" \l "pointers)
* [Follow-up](" \l "follow-up)
* [Sample Emails](" \l "samples)

## ****Overview****

You will find steps on how to report accessibility problems to websites on this page:

1. **Identify key contacts**
2. **Describe the problem**
3. **Follow-up as needed**

Additional tips include:

* Consider what approach will get the results you want
* Keep records of all communications for possible follow-up
* Encourage others to also provide feedback to the organization
* Use the sample emails provided below

## Introduction

This document shows you how to encourage organizations to make their website accessible. Contact organizations when you find accessibility barriers on their website.

Your feedback to an organisation can help them improve their website's accessibility. This will benefit you, other people who use the website, as well as the organization itself.

Some website owners are not aware of the importance of making websites accessible. They also often have competing priorities for change and improvements. Organizations will likely increase the priority of accessibility if they hear about it. This is particularly true if the feedback comes from people who use their website.

## 

## Who do You Email?

Identify the person responsible for the web page or application that is inaccessible. You could also look for the person responsible for accessibility at the organization. Be aware that there often is not a dedicated accessibility employee. Sometimes you will have to use any contact you can find. Look for links on their website such as:

* Accessibility
* Editor, Author, Page Owner, Webmaster
* Contact Us, Feedback, Comments
* Help, Support, Customer Service, FAQ

Some links will be email addresses. Other links go to online forms, or provide other ways to contact the organization.

You could look in other places if you cannot find contact details on the website, such as:

* Telephone directory
* Local library and librarian
* Local business directory
* Public companies register

## What to Include in Your Email

Provide a clear description of the accessibility barrier. This will help the organization find and fix the problem. A clear description includes information such as:

* The page where you found a problem
* What the problem is
* What computer and software you use
* A screenshot of the page

### Where is the Problem?

Include the web address (also called URL), or a description of the page.

e.g.

Example of a web address (URL):

* http://www.example.org/services/local.html
* https://www.example.org/checkout/confirm.php

Examples of page descriptions:

* "The Local Services page, the one with the lists of Residential and Business Services"
* "The Confirm Sale page after I entered my credit card information"
* "The Search Results from the Services Directory Database"

### What the Problem is

Provide details about what you were trying to do, and why it was difficult or impossible to do it.

e.g.

Examples of problem descriptions:

* **Keyboard navigation** - I can't get from the home page to the pages for paying my bill. I can't use a mouse so I use Tab to get to links, but I can't tab to the Pay Your Bills link.
* **Mouse clicking** - It's hard for me to get the mouse to stop on small things. In the survey, it’s hard to click the little circles. On other surveys I've used, I can click on the words as well as the circles, which is a lot easier.
* **Small text** - I can't read the bus timetables because the text is too small. I set the text size to Larger in my browser, but the text didn't get any bigger.
* **Overlapping text** - I had trouble reading the small text. The text overlapped other text and pictures when I increased the text size in my browser. This made it impossible to read the page.
* **Color combinations** - The colors make it hard to see the text. This makes it hard to read some of the product descriptions. I have problems with blue/yellow and blue/orange color combinations.
* **Alt text** - I'm using a screen reader to listen to your website. Screen readers can’t read images; they read the alt text from the code. The images on this page are missing alt text. For example, I hear "240.gif" which my friend tells me is an image for Special Discounts.
* **Distracting animations** - I found the home page very confusing. It was difficult to find the information I wanted with all the animated things all over the page. They kept drawing my attention away from what I was trying to read.
* **Captions** - There are good video tutorials on your website. But I cannot get much information from these videos because I can't hear them. The videos are missing captions.

### What Computer and Software are You Using?

Provide details about your computer and software. If you don't know, maybe a friend, a relative, or a colleague can help you find that information. You can skip this part, but it will often help the organization find and fix the problem more easily.

Include:

* The **operating system** you are using, and the version
* The **browser** you use to view the Web, and the version

Also include the following information if it relates to the problem you are having:

* Any **settings** you have customized
* Any **assistive technology** that you use

e.g.

Examples of detailed computer and software descriptions:

* I use Windows 10 with Internet Explorer 11 and Tazti voice recognition software. This allows me to navigate my computer screen and the Web.
* I use the NVDA screen reader version 2017.2 with Windows 10 Home edition and the Firefox browser version 60.

Include all the information you know, even if you don't know all the information.

e.g.

Examples of simple descriptions:

* I use a Mac with the Safari browser and set the Universal Access to never use fonts smaller than 14.
* I use Windows with Edge. I changed the Windows colors to give me yellow text on a black background as it’s easier to read.
* I use the Opera browser with Windows and I use keystrokes to navigate websites (I can't use a mouse at all).

Note: **Do not reveal personal information such as passwords, via email or otherwise.** Do not provide any information that you are not comfortable disclosing.

### Screenshot of the Page

An image is worth a thousand words. In some cases, providing a screenshot will help the organization identify the problem. This makes it easier for them to fix it.

### 

Ask the organization to reply to you. Give them a timeframe for their response. Include how you want them to contact you.

e.g.

* Please contact me by email within 2 weeks.
* I would appreciate a phone call in the next few days.

Include a phone number in case they want to discuss the problem, if you are comfortable with talking to them.

## Provide Sources for More Information

Help the organization understand these web accessibility issues. Consider including the following resources:

* **[Accessibility - W3C](http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility)   
  http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility.html**
* [Introduction to Web Accessibility](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php)  
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php
* [Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for Your Organization](http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/Overview.html)   
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/Overview.html
* [How People with Disabilities Use the Web](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web)  
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web.html
* [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php)   
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php

### 

## Follow-Up

Responsible organizations will follow up with you. But sometimes you might need to follow up with them.

### Be Available for Follow-up

The website developers might need more information to diagnose and fix the problem. Make yourself available to help them and provide that information.

### Keep Records for Further Follow-Up

You might need records if you later decide to [take further action](" \l "action). In particular:

* Keep copies of the website when you first encounter the problem. Make other copies any time the website changes. For example, take screenshots, save the pages on your hard drive, or print the pages.
* Keep copies of all correspondence, including email, postal mail or online forms. Keep this in either print or electronic formats.
* Keep records of all phone calls. Include the dates, the name of the person you talked with as well as what you discussed.

### Getting a Response

You may get a quick response, or it may take longer to hear back. It depends on the company's culture, policies, and internal systems.

The reply may be a simple acknowledgement that the organization received your feedback. This may be generated automatically, especially if you use an online feedback form. The organization should follow up later with a direct reply to your issue.

Sometimes the organization does not have expertise in accessibility. As a result, they may not understand your feedback. They may assume the issue is on your end, with your browser or assistive technology.

Note that in some cases, the organization might fix the problem and not notify you.

Take further action if you do not receive a satisfactory response in a reasonable time.

### Further Action to Consider

IYou may take further action if you feel the organization is not resolving the problem. The following are some ideas to consider:

* Contact an advocacy group of people with disabilities to see if they will get involved. You could also contact an advocacy group of older people, or other advocacy group.
* Contact the organization's senior management. Sometimes going to the CEO or the Managing Director makes a difference.
* Use online community resources to tell others about the inaccessible website. Share what the organisation did in response to your contact.
* Contact the press or write a "letter to the editor".
* Start a petition (maybe online).
* Contact your local government representative if the website is for a government organization.
* Lodge a formal complain with the relevant industry regulator or ombudsman.
* Contact the government department responsible for disability rights or older people's rights. Or contact the human rights commission, or your local equivalent.
* Consider legal action. For example, based on web accessibility requirements in [anti-discrimination regulations in your country](/WAI/Policy/).

## 

Consider what approach will get the results you want. Your tone in emails, phone calls, and other communications influences how people react. Their response will depend on how they felt when they received your communication. "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar". In other words, a polite and concise approach is more likely to get a positive response.

Assume an organization doesn't know about the accessibility barriers on their website. You can adjust your approach if their response shows they are unwilling to fix the barriers. Their response will guide your choice of follow-up action.

### 

Feel free to ask someone for help. You may need help with understanding the problem you are experiencing on the website. You may want assistance in communicating with the organization. An advocacy group may contact the organization on your, or their own, behalf

### 

Complain when there are barriers. Provide praise when there are no, or few, barriers. Providing positive feedback is important when organizations do a good job with accessibility. Positive feedback motivates individuals. It also encourages organizations to invest in web accessibility.

## Sample Emails

Feel free to adapt these sample emails for your situation.

### Email Template

In the template below, the [hints] in brackets are sections for you to complete.

**Subject:** Problem encountered on [XYZ website]

**Dear** [name or position of person you're writing to]

**I had problems on the web page** [web address (URL), or describe the page where the problem occurs   
**I tried to** [describe what you were trying to do on their site].   
**The problem was** [describe what doesn't work for you or what doesn't work the way you expected].  
**This meant I was unable to** [describe what you had hoped to do on their website]>.  
[optional: "**I have no trouble on**" [ describe a similar site that works for you].

**Here is some information to help you diagnose and fix the problem. I use a** [your computer operating system]  
**with the** [name and version of your browser].  
**I also use** [describe any assistive technology you use, or settings you changed - if this is relevant].

**To learn about web accessibility please see "Accessibility - W3C" at http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility.html** [optional: include *[other references](" \l "pointers)*]

**I look forward to your fixing accessibility barriers on your website. Please contact me** [at the phone number or email address below] **if I can be of further assistance.**

**Sincerely,**   
[your name and contact information]

### Sample Email 1

**Subject:** Problem with Citylights' ticket page

Dear Citylights Marketing Manager,

I have encountered some accessibility barriers on your website.

I recently visited your ticket offers page (http://www.cl.example.com/tickets/mank.html) looking for tickets for Thelonius Mank. I couldn't use the page because the gray text on the black background is too hard to read.

You can get information about web accessibility from the web page   
http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility.html

As I am a CityLights' events fan, I would appreciate your attention to this problem - please let me know when it's fixed. If you would like me to supply any further information, please email me.

Regards, Maria

### Sample Email 2

**Subject:** Accessibility of Citylights' news page

Hello Citylights Director,

Your news page (http://www.cl.example.com/news/news.html) is not accessible. I listen to web pages with the NVDA screen reader (version 2017.2). I use Windows 10 and Internet Explorer 11.

My colleague told me that you had some heat wave information so I went to the news page, however there was something strange going on. I found a sentence about the heat wave and temperatures, but then there was something about the violin case man. Much of the page seemed mixed up and was confusing for me to listen to - it appears it was not written in a linear fashion so that someone like me using a screen reader can understand it.

Also, your news page doesn't have any headings. Headings are important because I use them to get an overview of the page and to help me navigate to the stories.

Please check out this web accessibility information from the W3C:

* Accessibility - W3C  
  http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility.html
* Introduction to Web Accessibility  
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php
* Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for Your Organization   
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/Overview.html
* How People with Disabilities Use the Web  
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web.html
* Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview  
  http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php

Please let me know when these problems are addressed.

Thank you for your attention. Noriyuki

### Sample Email 3

**Subject:** Problem accessing Citylights' surveys

Hi Citylights,

Love your stories, but not your surveys! I can't use a mouse very much because my arms don’t work well. Usually I tab around web pages. Anyway, on your survey page I was only able to get to the question about how many cars we have when I tabbed around. When I did try using the mouse to answer the 'where do I live' question, I couldn't click on the words like I can on many other sites' forms, I had to click the little circle before the words.

In case it helps you diagnose and fix the problem: I have a Win10 laptop and use Chrome browser Version 60.0.3112.78.

To learn more about these and other accessibility issues, check out www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility.html

By the way, making your site accessible will benefit Citylights too, see Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for Your Organization (www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/Overview.html).

Please tell me when you've fixed these problems. Happy to help you further. You can ring me at 12-345-6789.

Best,  
Jasmine

[CC: Spinal Cord Injury Association]