



Connecticut Tech Act Project

Achievement Through Technology

CTTAP NEWS

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Digital Accessibility Tip! Alternative Text

by Adam Kosakowski, M.Ed., ATP

Alternative text, also known as alt text, is text attached behind-the-scenes to online images and photos. This text is accessible to people with disabilities using screen readers so that they can enjoy these pictures. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have an endless number of photos shared on them every single day, but people with disabilities, like low vision or blindness, miss out on enjoying these photos because they cannot perceive them like people with vision can. To make your photos on social media accessible, add alt text! This column will teach you how.

What exactly is alt text? Alt text is a description of an image. The author of the picture's post is in the best position to write the alt text because they can best answer the following: What does the author want the audience to get out of seeing the picture? Take this picture for example:



If a pet owner posts this picture of their dog for their friends and family to see, they might want their alt text to say, “Small dog frolicking in the park looking exceedingly happy.” If a veterinary professor is posting that same image for their class they might want their alt text to say, “small dog leaping forward extending their stifles and wrists.” The alt text all depends on the author and the intended audience. Also, it’s short! Alt text is typically no longer than a sentence or two, like a short tweet on Twitter. Next, we’ll see how to add alt text to Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram on mobile devices.

Twitter

To add alt text to Twitter on mobile devices, first you need to enable the “compose image descriptions” feature:

- Go into Settings and Privacy > Accessibility > Turn on/select “Compose image descriptions”

With this on, you can now add alt text to pictures you tweet:

1. While composing a tweet, add a photo like you typically would
2. Select Add description on the photo
3. Type in the alt text for the photo, then select Apply/Done
4. Tweet away!

Facebook

To add alt text to Facebook on Apple mobile devices you post normally and then go back to add alt text afterwards. (Unfortunately, Facebook’s Android app cannot add alt text.) On Apple, do the following:

1. While creating a post, add a picture like you typically would, and post it
2. After you post, navigate to that post, and select the picture
3. Select the three dots in the top right to see the options

4. Select Edit Alt text from the resulting list
5. Delete the auto generated alt text and enter your own
6. Select Save!

Instagram

1. Select a photo and filter like you typically would
2. On the New Post screen, select Advanced Settings on the very bottom
3. Select Write Alt Text, and type in alt text
4. Select Save/Done
5. Share away!

Learning how to add alt text is one of the easiest digital accessibility skills to learn, but it is also one of the hardest to master. The example given here is a simple one and likely can serve most of your social media needs, but it can get much more complex.

To learn more, read up on [alternative text on WebAIM!](#)

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Link Accessibility: No-Nos That May Surprise You

Adapted from an article posted by:

by Eliza J. Anderson July 24, 2019 ICT Accessibility

For those of you are not familiar with the AT3 Center and its functions, AT3 is your one-stop connection to information about the Assistive Technology Act, State Assistive Technology Programs, and general assistive technology. The purpose of the AT3 Center is to provide training and technical assistance for all AT Act Section 4 State and Territory Assistive Technology Programs and to support a national internet site that makes general AT information available to the public and other stakeholders. The following article is adapted from one written exploring the findings when the AT3 center examined its own website accessibility.

Six changes made to AT3 Center News and Tips to improve readability for everyone, including individuals with disabilities and seniors.



True confession: I like to write about things I don't know too much about. I've observed over the years that this naiveté is valuable for reaching large numbers of people. After all, what is news to me is often news to others. However, when I began researching how to create accessible links, I thought this was a topic I knew reasonably well.

I was wrong.

“Because links are so basic to the functionality of web content, inaccessible links are one of the most severe barriers to overall accessibility.” —[WebAIM “Introduction to Links and Hypertext”](#)

Gulp.

As a result, this month a few changes took place at AT3CenterBlog.com to improve the experience and usability of the site for a larger audience. That audience includes visitors with visual and/or cognitive disabilities, seniors, as well as anyone using a smartphone or tablet. Yes, that's most of us.

Below are six rules for accessible hypertext links that triggered changes to this site.

One: Link Text Must Inform Out Of Context

I thought I already had this nailed. You won't find “click here” or “read more” as stand-

alone links at AT3CenterBlog. I knew users of screen readers often scan links on a page to skim content and structure. Links need to be descriptive and intelligible on their own. Also, “click here” is unnecessary and annoying. Screen readers already announce when text is a link.

Still, my site menu offered two pages: “What is AT?” and “About.”

About what?

Now it reads “About this Blog.”

Read more about [link text accessibility and phrases to avoid](#) (such as why I’m no longer including the “read more about” within the link).

Two: Links Must Look Like Links

This is so obvious. I thought I had this covered. The corollary to this rule is text that is not a link should not resemble a link. Hence, no one underlines book titles anymore (although dinosaurs were taught to do so on our typewritten papers).

Still, this site’s menu offered “What is AT” and “About” using the same grey font as body text.

Now they are red.

Note: there is an exception to this rule for a site’s primary navigation links. I noticed that WebAIM.org also has a menu without distinguished links. However, I think turning mine red would assist anyone who is not savvy about Web convention (such as a few of my own family members...).

Three: Colored Links Must Have a 3:1 Contrast Ratio

Best practice is to underline all links in content. However, if your links are not underlined, web accessibility guidelines ([WCAG 2.0](#)) require link text be discernable from body text by at least a 3:1 contrast ratio.

I used WebAIM's [link contrast checker](#) after inspecting my page to learn the hex value of my colors. I found I had to adjust both my body text and my link text colors to achieve that ratio. Of course, an easier fix would be to underline all links, but I'm not fond of how busy this looks on the page.

Learn more about [color and contrast requirements](#).

Four: Color Isn't Enough for Mouse Hover or Keyboard Focus

This was news to me. If a website uses color instead of underline to designate links, those links must change in a different way when a mouse hovers over them. This is also true for "keyboard focus" (using keystrokes to navigate links). Links "must present a 'non-color designator.'"

Testing this rule, I found no change at all when I used my mouse to hover above an AT3CenterBlog link. With keyboard focus (using the tab key) I found they did highlight with a subtle box outline.

To comply with WCAG 2.0, I changed my links to be more perceivable for selection. All links now become underlined when hovered with a mouse or with keyboard focus (thank you WordPress Help).

Learn more about [link appearance](#).

Five: Linktips Cannot Provide Vital Information

Ouch. This one hurt. A linktip (or tooltip) is the text that sometimes shows up when you hover over a link. Yet no one sees a linktip on a mobile device or using keyboard focus. Screen readers have to be set to read them (some can't).

Linktips are created with HTML using the "title attribute." Although I am not a coder, I had been earnestly hand-coding them. Linktips are now dead to me. Read more about [accessibility problems with the title attribute](#).

Six: Links That Open in a New Tab Need a

Permanently Visible Label

Ouch again. I was under the impression I could use the linktip to alert users to links that open in a new tab. Instead, that information should be a part of the link text itself. Alternately, I had learned it was fine to put the statement “all links open in a new tab” on a page. Yet how would someone scanning links with a screen reader find this?

The more I read, the more resigned I am to links opening in the same tab (and letting visitors rely on their back button). This is a change I’ve made to this post and posts going forward.

[The World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\) recommends links open in a new window or tab only when necessary](#) (such as when opening a link would log out a user from a secured area of a site).

American Council of the Blind National Convention

Steve Famiglietti, Blind Services Vocational Manager, NEAT Center at Oak Hill

During the first week of July, Adam Kosakowski and I attended the American Council of the Blind (ACB) national convention, which was held in Rochester, NY, at a large convention center joined by two huge hotels. We arrived on July 5 and returned home on July 12. This was our first time attending a national convention for the ACB.

We attended several informative and educational presentations conducted by Apple, Microsoft and other vendors. We participated in several interviews while we visited the exhibit hall. These interviews will be featured on the next several NEAT Podcasts.

There are a few things we found noteworthy that we learned at the conference.

Aira is a visual interpreting service for individuals who have a smart phone. They can call an Aira agent and get assistance with almost anything. For example, they can ask an Aira agent to guide them around a conference, to their sessions and to a seat in a

session room. They can also ask an Aira agent to help them read food package instructions, locate items in their home and much more. The Aira program can be used to help people with all things employment. A person can use it to have an agent help them pick out their clothes for an interview, to fill out job applications, and to help with resumés. They can also use the program to help with job tasks once they get a job such as checking documents for formatting, finding a folder, running a copy machine, and any task that would require sight to accomplish a task. There is a program employers can sign up for, giving their employees the ability to use the service. The people at Freedom Scientific have Aira for their employees to use when they are using JAWS. When JAWS can't read something, they can call Aira to get assistance.

We met a woman who creates locater dots for microwave ovens, TV remotes, washing machines, exercise equipment and more. The name of her company is called Tangible Surfaces Research LLC. She can make custom dots for a product. These dots are very cool because they are not just dots, they are shapes. On a microwave, you would have a raised X placed on the stop button, a raised arrow pointing to the right on the start button and a shape that looks like a popcorn kernel for the popcorn button. I was thinking that these custom raised shapes would be very useful on the machines at Chapter 126, the Oak Hill sports and fitness center.

The next item we saw was the ID mate made by Envision America. This is a device that I thought wasn't useful because of the Seeing AI app, but we spoke to them and their newest ID mate has something like 4 million products in its inventory. It uses the same scanner that is used in grocery stores, so it quickly picks up a bar code, making it easy for people to scan an item. You can purchase bar codes for clothing, and you can purchase reusable bar codes to use on zip lock bags and freezer bags. You can also import your inventory database into the ID mate so if you worked at a place where you had to know inventory, the ID mate would be perfect.

Microsoft is putting a lot of work into accessibility in Windows 10. The screen reader called Narrator works well in the Windows 10 OS, in Office, Windows Mail and in

Chrome and Firefox. It does not currently work with Google Suite, like Docs etc. They've also made huge improvements to the Windows Magnifier and they will be releasing even more improvements later this year.

Dance Mobility

By Andrea Resnisky

Dance Mobility was founded and developed in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, by Cheryl Angelelli and Evan Mountain. Cheryl is a para athlete who initially started swimming and decided to change to dance. Cheryl and her dance partner, Tamerlan Gadirov, now compete at many competitions and participate in showcases.

The Dance Mobility program is held at the Fred Astaire Dance Studio in West Hartford, CT. The goal of this program is to bring the awareness that dance can be adaptable and everyone has the potential to dance. Dancing changes lives and enriches the quality of life of individuals with and without a disability.

Andrea, who has helped develop the program in Connecticut, went to school for Recreational Therapy. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Southern Connecticut State University and received two certifications with the Paradance committee. The lessons associated with the Paradance certification gave Andrea the skills to teach dance safely and helped her to build knowledge on various diagnosis. During her second training, Andrea provided a presentation on People First Language—putting the person before the disability.

Andrea teaches individuals with all types of diagnoses from spina bifida, spinal cord injuries and many others. Andrea will be holding a Dance Mobility program once a month, free of charge.

To sign up and to learn more please email westhartford@fredastaire.com or call us at 860-232-2678. We look forward to seeing all of you on the dance floor!



Photo by Ariel Freilich



Photo by Janeace Slifka

A Case Study: Home Modifications for Joseph

By Amy Finke, VP, Business Development

Recently, Lifeway Mobility had the honor of working with Joseph, a 29-year-old Navy combat veteran who served in Iraq. Joseph suffered a **spinal cord injury** while working his job as a delivery driver. After a 6-month stay at Gaylord Hospital, he returned home paralyzed from the chest down with limited use of his arms. Prior to his accident, Joseph was in good health and faced no mobility issues.

Joseph's case was referred to Lifeway by Home Access Professionals (HAP), a nationwide team of home accessibility providers. After receiving the referral, Brian Cosker, an Accessibility Consultant from Lifeway Mobility performed a free assessment of Joseph's home.

Brian worked closely with Joseph's clinical team, which included a Nursing Care Manager, Physical Therapist and Assistive Technology Professional. This holistic approach helped Brian learn more about Joseph's physical capabilities and the mobility equipment he would be using. This information, along with an extensive home assessment, allowed Lifeway to provide comprehensive accessibility modifications for Joseph.

Joseph lives in a single-family home built in the early 1900s on a relatively small lot.

Older homes with limited space can make access modifications a challenge, but experienced providers can typically find the right solutions. The primary goal of these modifications was to make Joseph's home wheelchair accessible so he could enter and exit, navigate the living space, and use the bathroom facilities with fewer challenges.

Solutions Provided by Lifeway Mobility:

- Two vertical platform wheelchair lifts were installed to provide access to the front yard, back yard, driveway, and sidewalk. In case of fire or emergency, Joseph has two options for exiting the home. Lifts were used instead of wheelchair ramps, due to the limited size of the lot.
- Two new exterior doors were installed along with motion sensor lighting to illuminate the front and back entryway. The new doors were wide enough to accommodate Joseph's power wheelchair.
- The hallways throughout the first floor of Joseph's home were widened to accommodate his wheelchair and motion sensor lighting was installed to illuminate the hallways.
- The bathroom door was moved and widened to 36 inches to accommodate a wheelchair. A beveled doorway threshold was installed to allow for smooth transition into the bathroom.
- A wall-mounted roll-under sink was installed to maximize space in the small 5' x 8' bathroom.
- Grab bars and toilet rails were mounted by the toilet to allow for safe transfer from a wheelchair.
- A barrier-free, roll-in shower with a telescoping hand-held shower head, heavy duty curtain rod, grab bars and a roll-over neoprene water dam were installed. Larger tiles were used to minimize grout lines and reduce rolling resistance.
- An electric heater was installed in the bathroom to provide additional warmth for Joseph while showering.
- Light and speaker systems that can be controlled by a smartphone or tablet were installed in Joseph's room, allowing him to easily control his lighting and play the gospel music he enjoys.

Working with Joseph, his family and his clinical team is a privilege for Lifeway Mobility. We appreciate the opportunity to help make a difference in their lives.

Lifeway Mobility is an accessibility solutions company that provides ramps, stair lifts, wheelchair lifts, elevators, transfer aids, and bath safety solutions including barrier-free showers, tub cuts, grab bars and railings. Lifeway Mobility emphasizes a holistic approach and customized solutions to help individuals with limited mobility live as freely and independently as possible.

For more information visit LifewayMobility.com or call our office at 860-292-1111.



Upcoming Assistive Technology Events In Our Area

Experience the NEAT Center's Smart Home On Wheels at an Upcoming Open House



Smart technology is having a profound impact on the lives of EVERYONE, but especially individuals with disabilities or those who are aging-in-place. These technologies can be used to dramatically increase one's independence and success in their quest to live at home as long as possible. This can be done in the way that the technology was intended and designed, but at NEAT, they will demonstrate unique approaches to placement of smart tech throughout the house for empowering people to live their best lives.

You can experience the technology in action in their fully equipped, Smart Home on Wheels (SHOW) mobile demonstration center. They will open the doors to the public for tours during these FREE 2-hour events. No registration is required.

When: Each open house will be from 10am-12pm on the following days:

September 20, October 11, November 22 and December 13, 2019

The Assistive Technology Conference of New England

Hosted by TechACCESS of RI



- Full-day, in-depth pre-conference workshops delivered by national AT experts
- 24, 75-minute conference sessions to choose from on Day 2
- Large vendor hall with over 40 exhibitors
- Bringing Access to Life Expo

When: November 14 and 15, 2019

Where: Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI

For additional information and to register visit

www.assistivetechologyconference.com

CREC'S New AAC Council!

Speech-language pathologists, special educators, and related service staff members are invited to attend these meetings to share best practices in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), share resources and network with other professionals in school districts providing AAC services. Topics and speakers will be developed by the group on an ongoing basis.

When:

- October 8, 2019 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- February 20, 2020 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- April 28, 2020 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Where:

- 111 Charter Oak Ave, Hartford

Participation is FREE!

Connecticut APSE Employment First in Action Conference

YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us for our 3rd Annual
Employment First in Action!
Conference



When:

- October 3, 2019 from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Where:

- Red Lion Hotel, Cromwell, CT 06416

This event is intended for employment professionals,
supervisors, advocates, educators, and funding sources.

There will be general and breakout sessions. Lunch will be provided.

APSE Members: \$60 • Non-Members: \$85

[Learn more and REGISTER HERE!!](#)

Have an event of interest to persons with disabilities, their family members
or caretakers and those who work with them to support their development and
maximize independence?

If you would like that event to be included in the CT Tech Act Newsletter,
please send a notice and contact information to
Carol Magliocco at cmagliocco@eastconn.org or call 860-228-3483.

Should you experience any difficulty accessing the content in this newsletter,
please contact Arlene Lugo at Arlene.Lugo@ct.gov

CTTAP MISSION: Increasing independence and improving the lives of individuals with disabilities through increased access to Assistive Technology for work, school and community living.

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