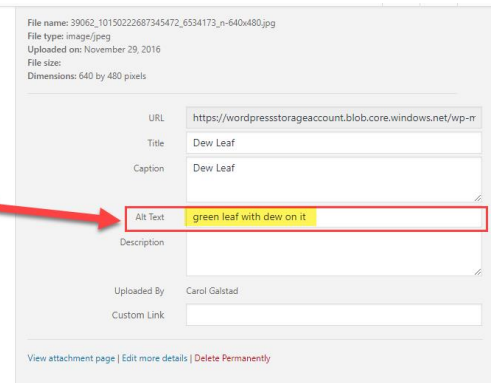# A Practical Guide to Implementing ADA Compliance
per the WCAG Standards

Navigating the murky waters of ADA compliance for websites is a challenge. The Federal Government still hasn't presented guidelines to go by specific to websites. Until then, it is best to adhere to guidelines created by the WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). The WCAG is a working group that is part of the World Wide Web Consortium or W3C. At the end of the day, ADA compliance is about doing the right thing to ensure all people can experience and enjoy one of the more significant human achievements in history (memes and all). This is the least we can do.

An important note: the intent of this document is to outline some of the most critical areas of focus for WCAG/ADA compliance, along with practical steps to take to ensure greater compliance so you can provide all of your visitors with the best experience possible. This document is not to be taken as a complete, all-inclusive list of areas you need to comply with. Nor is it to be considered as legal advice. At the end of this document is a resource link to the WCAG Guidelines for more comprehensive information on these and other guideline topics.

1. **Provide alternatives**

    a. **Alt Text for images** – One of the most important areas to tackle is adding alternative text (or 'alt text') to meaningful images on your site. This text should quickly and accurately convey what the image is or portrays. For example, 'child playing with train set'. In GZCMS, there are multiple ways to easily add alternative text by clicking on an image in the Media Library or when adding/editing an image in a content area on a page:

    If the image does not convey any meaning, such as a blue bar under a menu, it does not need alternative text, and it is best to leave the alt text blank. SCMS also has many similar methods of adding alt text.

b. **Subtitles/Closed Captioning** – All videos should have some type of mixture of Subtitles (the actual words spoken) and Closed Captioning (this conveys a description of what is going on, prominent sounds, etc.). YouTube can create automatic subtitles for you and allows you to add closed caption descriptions.

c. **Text Transcripts** – For all video-only and audio-only files on your site a text transcript should be available. For audio, an alternative for time-based media should be provided that presents equivalent information for prerecorded audio-only content, such as a text transcript. For video, either an alternative for time-based media or an audio track should be provided that presents equivalent information for prerecorded video-only content.

d. **No images of text** – It is recommended that sites don't use images containing text (this does not include your logo), as the visually impaired may not be able to read this text. There are obvious cases were this is just not practical, such as infographics. In these cases, provide descriptive, informative alternate text to these images.

2. **Limit automatic content** – Automatic content is content that appears automatically without any user input. Think pop-up ads or modal windows that appear on page load or on a visitor's intent to exit the page. A user must be able to pause, stop, or hide all automatic content.

3. **Keyboard Accessibility** – Users must be able to navigate and fully access a web page via their keyboard and without using a mouse. You must be able to navigate to and away from elements on your site such as navigation links, forms, and buttons. At no point should a user be 'trapped' on an element of your site because they cannot move forward or backward using the arrow keys.

4. **Intuitive website** -
   a. **Language** and **Title tags** – Your site should have a language assigned to it in the language meta tag; GZCMS does this for you. You also need to use unique, descriptive page titles for all your pages. These titles are auto-generated by GZCMS when you create a new page and create the Title for that page. If you wish to modify one of your existing page titles go to the Dashboard, click on Pages, hover over the name of the page you wish to modify, and click on Quick Edit:
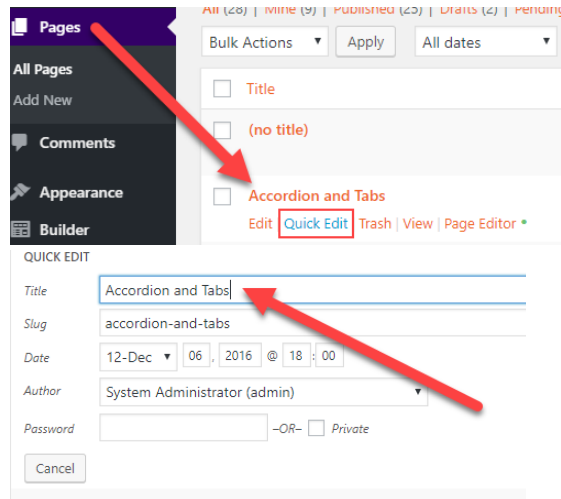
b. For SmartCMS:
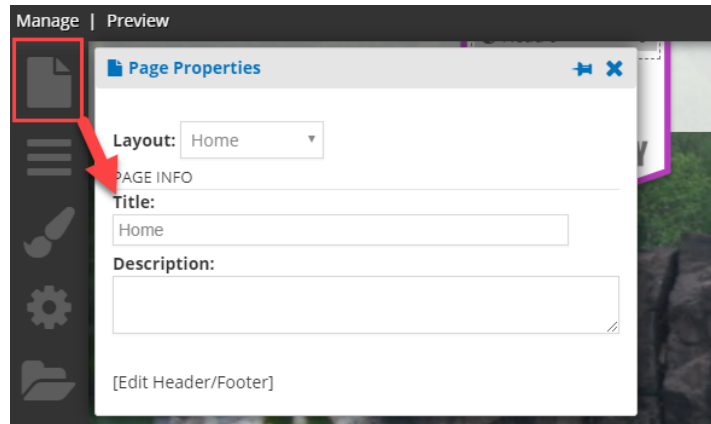
Not to worry, modifying the page title will not change the url, so no broken links.

c. **Consistent navigation flow** – The overall structure and navigation should remain consistent throughout your site. Content should flow in a logical, predictable sequence. This does not mean each page needs to look the same, but pages need some intuitive predictability in the overall design.

d. **Descriptive links and headers** – When creating text links, use descriptive texts that conveys where this link is taking the visitor such as 'view our brochure'. Avoid generic text such as 'click here' as this does not convey any meaningful information to the visitor. Similarly, use descriptive headings that accurately describes the content that follows. This applies to all heading tags (H1, H2, H3, etc.).

e. **Multiple ways to access content** – Your site should have multiple methods to bring visitors to different pages on your site. This can include an additional footer menu, a related pages section, or a search bar.

f. **Any added code should be clean, validated** (e.g. https://csslint.net, https://validator.w3.org/ and https://jslint.com).

5. **Font Thresholds** -

a. **Color ratio** – All fonts on your site should have a minimum 4.5:1 color contrast between the font color and the color of its background to make the text readable. A great resource for checking your ratios is at https://contrastchecker.com/
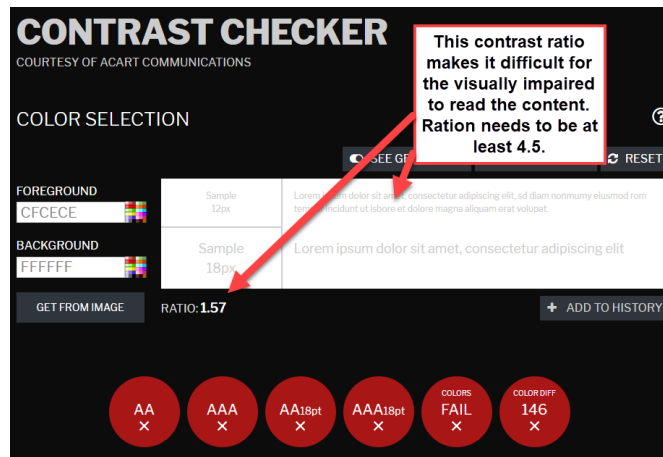
b. **Scalable up to 200%** - Text should be able to be scaled up to 200% larger without loss of function on your website, for example it will not overlap or hide other text or elements on the page.

It is recommended that your paragraph font-size be at least 16px and the smallest size used for any text content should be 12px.

Resource:
For a deeper dive into these and other ADA Compliance issues please visit the WCAG Quick Reference site.