honey
creative

Brand Accessibility Guide

DESIGN WITH EVERYONE IN MIND

Welcome

HIVE FIVE!

First and foremost, thank you for taking an interest in accessibility practices and wanting to apply them to your own brand. It's a big step and deserves a high five from my hive to yours!

I started Honey Creative in 2015 with a passion for...well other people's passion! I love using brand design as a superpower to help my clients tell their story easier so they can focus on their mission with more clarity and less stress. Design has this incredible way of connecting others that care about the same thing through storytelling.

But I've noticed recently that the road connecting passion and people is filled with holes in ways to access it. Whether you're a designer, business owner, or executive director, we have control over our story's accessibility; we're the beekeepers of our brand hive. And as such, **we have the power—and a responsibility—to remove barriers set up around it so that more people have a greater chance to experience our story.**

I've created this guide to empower you to make small changes that make a big difference to improve your brand's accessibility.

My hope is to encourage mindfulness about how others with varied abilities and disabilities experience, not only your brand, but the obstacles faced living in a world that was not designed with them in mind.

Intro

- About 15% of the world's population experience some form of disability. *(who.int)*

- About 1 in 12 men experience some form of color blindness and 1 in 200 women worldwide. *(colourblindawareness.org)*

- As many as 15–20% of the population as a whole have some of the symptoms of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words. *(dyslexiaida.org)*

- Approximately 15% of American adults (37.5 million) aged 18 and over report some trouble hearing. *(nidcd.nih.gov)*

- Nearly 14 million people in the US are vision impaired. *(cdc.gov)*

Persons with disabilities have buying power and deserve alternative ways to engage with your brand that aren't completely reliant on one singular point of access.

A PSA

USING THIS GUIDE

- First and foremost, it's interactive! Which means you can click on links throughout.

- The field of accessibility is a dense line of study and this guide is intended to be a high-level overview.

- This guide was created by an able-bodied individual in a text-based format. However, this PDF is formatted to allow for text-to-speech translation.

- Throughout this guide, you'll find several different resources recommended. I am not sponsored, affiliated, or supported in any way by the tools seen in this guide. They are ones I use and have researched to be effective, but of course, it's the World Wide Web and there are likely others out there.

- It can be overwhelming and intimidating stepping into a space feeling like you're behind. We likely all (myself included!) have a lot of work to do toward collective progress but the key is to take one step at a time.

- To start, focus on ONE takeaway that really resonated with you that you think is something you can realistically implement into your branding or touchpoints ASAP.

- Then, once you've gained some traction and confidence, slowly start taking stock of other areas you could improve.

The Basics

It's time to put your thinking caps on and bust out your magnifying glass to take a close and hard look at your brand's presence and brush up on your R&D (that's research and development).

1. **Make a list of all the places your brand lives like:**

    - Website

    - Social Media

    - Emails

    - Print Design

    - In-person/virtual Communication

    - Physical Space/Access

2. **Review The Holy Grail for website guidelines:** View the Web Content Accessibility Guide (WCAG)

3. **Test your site's accessibility:** Use Tenon.io tester or a similar online tool

4. **Complete a web accessibility audit:** Reach out to Unity Web for a free consult

5. **Of course, have this guide handy as you review your other brand locales!**
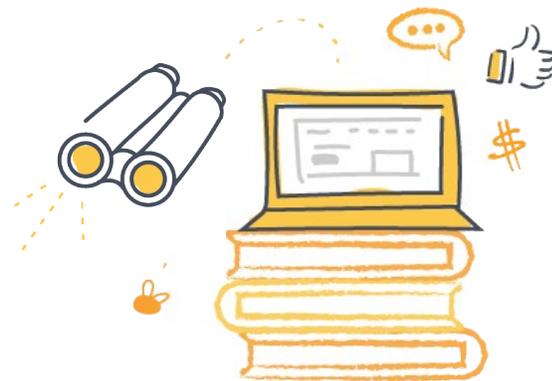
The Basics

BEE INFORMED

Educate yourself and your team as you dive in and dig deep.

- Build accessibility into your hive, from your brand guidelines to the systems you have in place!

- Teach your team about why accessibility is valuable not just for your brand but beyond.

- *Share this message: Accessibility compliance isn't enough. The goal is to provide an inclusive and positive customer/client experience for all.*

- Offer insight into the different types of accessibility needs, i.e sensory disabilities, physical + mobility impairments, and cognitive conditions, chronic illness, etc.

Website

Use this checklist to help brush up your site. Already implemented?
Select Done. Or add it to your Honey-Do List.

RECOMMENDATION	DONE!	HONEY-DO LIST
Offer text alternatives ("alt text") that can be converted into speech to describe photos that serve more than a decorative purpose (they provide meaning and context).		
Use high contrast for text and buttons. >> A great tool to check and see how visible your brand colors are is **whocanuse.com** or the Chrome extension **Colour Contrast Checker**.		
Provide transcripts, captions, and descriptive imagery for all audio. >> For speech-to-text transcription, check out **Temi.com.**		
Write descriptive links and headings.		
Button text like "subscribe" or "meet our team" will help screen reader users browse on your website rather than more vague text like "click here."		
Make sure that all critical navigation choices are not completely dependent on color. Particularly avoid red and green only error and success messages, use checkmarks or x icons too. >> Use simulators to see how your site appears to users with color blind vision impairments like **Chrome extension Colorblinding.**		
Design with different devices and touch screens in mind. Avoid placing tiny text next to clickable elements that would get in the way.		
Create large, clickable targets for those using a mouse.		
Flag timed actions (e.g., "You can take up to 20 mins to complete this form").		
Avoid content that flashes more than three times per second.		
Help users avoid mistakes. Spell out requirements ahead of time (e.g., "password must be at least 6 characters with no spaces") and write clear, descriptive error messages.		

Social Media

Use this checklist to help brush up your social media content. Already implemented? Select Done. Or add it to your Honey-Do List.

RECOMMENDATION	DONE!	HONEY-DO LIST
Avoid using emojis as bullet points in captions and in your profile description, they muddy the text to speech translation.		
Use line breaks and numbering to help break up text in captions.		
Use captions or paraphrase your audio in video content like Stories, Reels, IG TV, and TikTok videos. >> **MixCaptions (iOS App)** is pretty accurate for translations on mobile or **Clipomatic**. You can also turn on auto-captions for IG TV under Advanced Settings.		
Use alt-text for images, particularly text-heavy images.		
Provide a warning for flashing images, quick motion camera angles, or sensitive/triggering content.		
Type your hashtags in **#CamelCase**. (For example, #BlackLivesMatter verses #blacklivesmatter)		
Use web-friendly fonts that are legible in your text-based images. Traditionally sans-serif is easier but use the "I/L test" to check a typefaces' legibility (does the uppercase I and lowercase l look the same like in this font vs **I and l in this one**. Increasing the size and choosing a medium-weight text can also help improve legibility.		
Make your contact info easy to access and be active in the event a user would prefer your content in a different format.		

Graphic Design

BEE REFINED

Use this checklist to help brush up your designed material. Already implemented? Select Done. Or add it to your Honey-Do List.

RECOMMENDATION	DONE!	HONEY-DO LIST
Use consistent design grids for columns and spacing to help with legibility.		
FORMATTING		
Try organizing information starting from relevance and influence and use formatting to help with readability.		
Avoid all uppercase paragraphs		
Use bold or weight variances to emphasize		
Keep a leading (line-height) to type size ratio of at least 120% (i.e. 10 pt type, 12 pt leading)		
Use bullet points and headline breaks		
Use at least 7 pt font for print and 16 px for digital		
Limit lines of text to 80 characters or less		
Maintain margins of between .75"-1"		
COLOR USE		
Use color blind simulations like **this one** to check how your brand colors are perceived and which combinations to avoid.		
Rely on other ways to differentiate between items in charts and graphs like patterns or labels rather than solely on color.		
Maintain a ratio of at least 70% contrast between background and type color. >> A great tool to check and see how visible your brand colors are is **whocanuse.com** or the Chrome extension **Colour Contrast Checker**.		
A good rule of thumb is pairing complementary colors (opposites on the color wheel) that vary in intensity, value, and saturation.		
Red on black messages are a no-no!		

Graphic Design

Use this checklist to help brush up your designed material. Already implemented? Select Done. Or add it to your Honey-Do List.

RECOMMENDATION	DONE!	HONEY-DO LIST
Consider printing on matte or uncoated finishes, rather than glossy stock. You can also reduce glare with stock color, try a warm white over a bright white.		
TYPEFACES		
Use serif for long passages and sans to help distinguish between letters.		
Use the "I/L test" to check a typefaces' legibility (does the uppercase I and lowercase l look the same like in this font vs **I and l in this one**.		
Taller typefaces are typically better! Use taller x-height (the height from the baseline to the height of the lowercase letters).		
Opt for more equal width-to-height typefaces		
Avoid overly heavy fonts, they close off letterforms (especially vowels, **like this example here**).		
Typically regular or medium weights are preferred. The 'open' or negative space between the letterforms that create the letter itself help with legibility.		
Avoid ornate or display typefaces. (Watch out on Creative Market for those tempting complex scripts!)		

In-Person

Use this checklist to help be more considerate when scheduling in-person meetings. Already mindful of it? Select Done. Or add it to your Consider It List.

RECOMMENDATION	DONE!	CONSIDER IT
Before an in-person meeting, it's a good idea to ask guests about their accessibility needs this way you can be prepared.		
LOCATION - ASK YOURSELF...		
Is it easy to find? Be sure there is clear wayfinding signage and directions.		
Is it well-lit?		
Are screens and presentation material visible from all seating?		
Is it noisy?		
Is it distracting or overly busy?		
Is it handicap accessible		
Is there accessible parking near the place?		
Are there ramps, elevator access, accessible bathrooms, and wide doorways?		
Consider space for service animals: Is there accessible water and facilities for the service animal to go out?		
MEAL CONSIDERATIONS		
If meeting at a location that offers food, be sure to find out what restrictions may be at play (vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free etc.) and plan accordingly.		

Virtual

BEE REFINED

Use this checklist to help be more considerate when scheduling virtual meetings. Already mindful of it? Select Done. Or add it to your Consider It List.

RECOMMENDATION	DONE!	CONSIDER IT
Before a virtual meeting, it's a good idea to ask guests about their accessibility needs this way you can be prepared.		
Include accessibility features in all event communications		
Do some R&D to see if the platform you're using is compatible with assistive technologies like screen readers, screen enlargement applications, closed-captioning, cognitive aids including computer devices, etc. >> Check out Zoom's accessibility **features here** and **Accessibility Features of Common Virtual Platforms here.**		
Keep the meeting to two hours maximum.		
Chat and Q&A features can be very beneficial. Consider designating a staff member to answer chat questions.		
Make sure your material/presentation is available beforehand (provide all materials in an electronic format).		
During the meeting offer text captioning (many platforms allow for real-time text captions). >> Zoom uses a **third-party provider**. To set up, in the navigation panel, click Account Management then Account Settings. Then click the Meeting (Advanced) tab. And verify that Closed Caption is enabled.		
Explain images or slides in detail.		
Make sure that presenters with their cameras on are: in a well-lit environment, wearing contrasting colors, and in a quiet location.		
Try to avoid having participants use virtual backgrounds.		
Allow the option to turn off self-view (it can be distracting).		
Advise attendees to use gallery view so they can see all presenters		
Request that each speaker share their name prior to speaking		

Homework

BEE CONNECTED

- Continually bee a student, learn from other resources, and research ways to improve.

- Instill mindfulness about the content and material you're pushing out. Always asking yourself, am I missing something? What if I were a person of _____ community? Would I be able to engage with it?

- Look to other individuals in the disabled community for guidance and follow others for tips based on their own lived experiences; don't just take my word for it!

- Here are a few great IG/TikTok accounts to follow:

    - **AAPD Official**

    - **Closed Captioning My Life**

    - **Spark Clarity**

    - **Rachelle Chapman**

    - **Erin Perkins (Mabely Q)**

    - **Disabled Culture**

    - **Theresa Mabe**

    - **Alice Wong**

Need help?

HONEY-DO LIST LONG?

If you've reviewed the checklist and have quite the honey-do list and are wanting to level up your design practices to be more inclusive a **Honey-Do Day** might be just the thing for you.

A Honey-Do Day is a full day dedicated entirely to just your honey-do list. It's like having a designer on staff for the day!

HOW HONEY-DO DAYS WORK:

Step 1: Schedule a Consult
We'll have a 30 min call to discuss a defined list of action items we can realistically tackle for you to approve.

Step 2: Book your Day
Schedule a day with us one week in advance with your honey-do list in-hand and content ready to go 48 hours before our day.

Step 3: Hooray—it's your Honey-Do Day!
I'll start first thing in the morning and then around lunchtime (12 pm CST), we'll review our progress via shared screen Zoom.

Based on your feedback, I'll spend the rest of the day wrapping up your to-do list of items. You'll receive a final design preview by 4 pm CST. And give final approval by 4:30 pm.

Step 4: Deliverables Next Day!
I'll send you all files by 10 am CST the next day!

HONEY-DO DAY DETAILS   **EMAIL ANDI**

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