



## What is Web Accessibility and Section 508?

Web accessibility is the cyberspace equivalent of wheelchair ramps and closed captioning—it allows people with diverse abilities to have access. In the case of web sites, this means access to information. Someone who is blind and using a screen reader on their computer can learn from the same web site as a sighted person. Someone with impaired motor ability that prevents them from using a mouse can navigate the same web site using their keyboard. In education, accessible web sites allow students with disabilities to access information; share their work; communicate with peers, teachers, and mentors; and take advantage of distance learning options.

Not only is it a good idea to have a homepage that is accessible to all, it is the law. In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. This amendment strengthened Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to eliminate barriers in information technology, to make available new opportunities for people with disabilities, and to encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals.

How can you make your homepage accessible? The easiest way is to use one of the web templates designed for this purpose by the Web Development Team. If you want to do your own site, there are many online resources. WebAIM ([www.webaim.org](http://www.webaim.org)) is a good place to start. You may also direct any questions on web accessibility to the Director of DSS at (619) 216-6682. DSS is located in room S108E.

## Web Design Guidelines

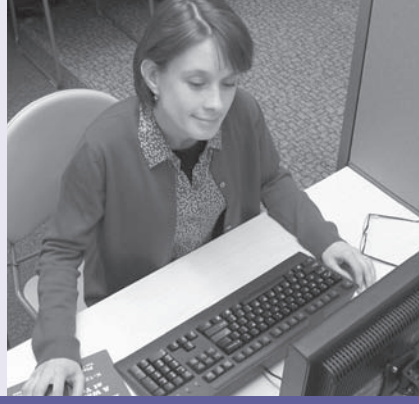
- Your site should be well organized. Create an outline before beginning the design process.
- Keep your copy short. Long scrolling pages discourage users from reading, and some don't like to read from the computer screen for long periods of time. If you want to give more information, create a PDF file for download.
- Check the readability of your text, including grammar and spelling.
- Always include contact information.
- Keep the look of your site consistent and not busy.
- Background color and text color should have enough contrast to make the text easy to read.
- Do not center all the text on a page. A large amount of centered text is difficult to read.
- Don't use blue for regular text color, or underlined text for emphasis. Blue and underlined text both usually signify a link.
- Use motion sparingly! Motion causes the screen to flicker and should only be used to convey a message.
- If your site uses helper applications, such as Acrobat Reader for PDF documents, or QuickTime or Flash players, include a link to the application download site on the same page the application is used.
- Keep your files and graphics as small as possible. Some users have slow internet connections and large files take more time to load.
- Include a "title" on all your pages.
- Use meaningful text for your links, such as the name or a short description of the page or file they link to. Don't use "click here."
- Label navigation links so they match the titles of the pages they link to.
- Make sure all your links work properly.
- Always use "alt" text with your graphics, as well as including "height" and "width" tags.
- Sites won't necessarily look the same in different browsers and platforms. Check your site on at least Netscape, Firefox, and Internet Explorer. If possible, also check it on both a Mac and PC.
- Use an on-line validator, such as WebXact (formerly Bobby), located at [webxact.watchfire.com](http://webxact.watchfire.com), to check for Section 508 accessibility.

## *My Own SWC Site*



## *How to Get One*

All faculty and staff at Southwestern College are welcome to create a personal (or “post tilde (~)”) homepage for courses, programs, and clubs. To request a homepage, go to the Southwestern College main web site ([www.swccd.edu](http://www.swccd.edu)) and click on **Home Page Request Form (Employees)** from the drop-down menu under **Faculty and Staff**. You'll receive your user name and password upon completing Staff Development's Web Wizard Workshop.



## Homepage Options

When you request your homepage account, you will have three options to choose from. Your skill level and the time you have available will determine which option is best for you.

- **Templates**

The Web Development Team has created 14 homepage templates for faculty and staff to choose from. Using one of these templates is a quick and easy way to put together and maintain an attractive site that complies with web standards and meets Section 508 web accessibility requirements\*.

Training on how to use the templates is available through Staff Development. To register, visit [www.swccd.edu/~staffdev](http://www.swccd.edu/~staffdev) or call (619) 421-6700 x5678.

- **Create Your Own**

If you want to create your own site, be sure you have the skills and time to dedicate to your homepage. The look and feel of your site will

be up to you. Though you are not constricted by a template, there are some requirements you must meet. These include, but are not limited to, the post tilde (-) account disclaimer, the Southwestern College logo, and a link back to the Southwestern College main website. In addition, your homepage must meet Section 508 web accessibility requirements\*.

- **Someone Creates/Maintains the Page for You**

You may also have someone create and/or maintain your homepage. However, you are responsible for making any arrangements with this person and submitting their information to the Web Development Team. Please be cautious when giving out your username and password for server access. The same homepage requirements must be followed as described under “Create Your Own.”

*\* See back for more on web accessibility and Section 508.*

## Blackboard vs. Homepage Template

Blackboard is a course management system used to post information related to your classes. Students use a single login and password to access Blackboard for each of their classes. Information on Blackboard is not available to the general public.

Homepage templates are easy to use and maintain, and they meet Section 508 web accessibility requirements\*. With homepage templates, you have the freedom to create, name, and remove links as your needs change. Your homepage is also available to the general public, and there is no need for students to log in.

## Maintaining Your Site

You are responsible for the maintenance of your homepage. Make sure the content and files of your homepage are appropriate, even if you've delegated maintenance to another person. The World Wide Web is constantly changing, and your page works best if it's kept up-to-date.

## Renewing Your Homepage

All tilde accounts will expire one year after their creation date. At this time, your account will be disabled and you will need to renew it. If you do not renew within three months after your renewal date, your account will be deleted.

## Training

Staff Development has workshops for graphic programs, web programs, and the Homepage Template program. These workshops are available at different times and days. Go to [www.swccd.edu/~staffdev](http://www.swccd.edu/~staffdev) to view a list of workshops and to register online. Or you can also call (619) 421-6700 x5678.

## Online Resources

There are many tips and tutorials on the internet for building websites. Go to [www.swccd.edu/~wdt](http://www.swccd.edu/~wdt) for a listing of links and resources.

