Access Board—Refers to the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, an independent federal agency, whose primary mission is to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities.


accessible content—Information, regardless of form, structure or presentation that can be easily retrieved by any person, regardless of ability.

ADA—Acronym for the American Disabilities Act.

adaptive technology—Hardware and/or software created or modified to enable people to use an interface with or without its standard input or output devices.

alt tag—The HTML code used to provide an explanation of an image found on a Web document. When a screen reader receives the code, the description following the “alt” tag enables a screen reader to provide an auditory description of the image. The “alt” tag is used for IMG, INPUT and APPLET elements.

alternate formats—Formats usable by people with disabilities. Examples include Braille, ASCII text, large print, recorded audio, and electronic formats that comply with the accessibility guidelines.

alternate methods—Refers to a different means of providing information to people with disabilities. Examples of alternate methods include voice, fax, telecommunication relay service, TTY, closed-captioning and text-to-speech synthesis.

American Disabilities Act (ADA)—U.S. public law enacted in 1990 that mandates reasonable accommodation and effective communication for people with disabilities.
**applet**—A JAVA program that is executed within a Web page.

**Application programming interface (API)**—Refers to the standard way for programs to communicate with each other, including the operating system, and with input and output devices. This definition is identical to that listed in the Access Boards Standards at http://www.access-board.gov.

**Architectural Barriers Act (ABA)**—Requires that buildings and facilities that are designed, constructed, or altered with federal funds, or leased by a federal agency, comply with federal standards for physical accessibility. This definition is consistent with the National Council of Disability’s Guide to Disability Rights.

**ASCII art**—Refers to text characters and symbols that are combined to create an image. An example would be the smiley emoticon J.

**assistive technology**—Any item, equipment or product that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional abilities of individuals with disabilities.

**Assistive Technology Act**—The Assistive Technology Act of 1998 provides federal aid to states for the development of programs that assist people with disabilities in the purchase of assistive technology and devices.

**backward compatible**—Design features that continue to work with earlier versions of a language or software program. This definition is identical to the definition as listed in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

**Bobby**—A validation tool developed by the Center of Applied Technology that checks the Web accessibility of Web documents.

**Braille display**—Raises or lowers dot patterns on command from an electronic computer device.

**broken links**—Hyperlinks that no longer retrieve the Web document or attached file.

**Clinger–Cohen Act (CCA)**—Provides that the government information technology shop be operated exactly as an efficient and profitable business would be operated. Acquisition, planning and management of technology must be treated as a “capital investment.” This definition is identical to the definition as
stated in the Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996.

Closed captioning—A service for persons with hearing disabilities that translates television and video dialog into written words on the television screen. Closed captions normally do not appear as part of the video unless the viewer selects them to appear.

CSS—Acronym for Cascading Style Sheets. CSS1 and CSS2 are the W3C official recommendations for style sheets.

DECTalk—A speech synthesizer for computers. DECTalk is available as hardware and software options.

Device-independent access—Refers to when the user can interact with the user agent or document with a preferred input or output device.

disability—According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), “The term disability means, with respect to an individual (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such impairment.”

Dynamic Web pages—Web pages assembled from content stored in databases.

Electronic and information technology (EIT)—As defined by the Access Board, “includes information technology and any equipment or interconnected system or subsystem of equipment that is used in the creation, conversion, or duplication of data or information. The term electronic and information technology (EIT) includes, but is not limited to, telecommunications products, information kiosks and transaction machines, World Wide Web sites, multimedia, and office equipment such as copiers and fax machines. (See http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/).

equivalent facilitation—Refers to the process of making peripheral accommodations that provide an equivalent or greater access to a product that does not meet the applicable technical provisions of Section 508.

FAR—Acronym for Federal Acquisition Regulation.
**FAR Rule**—The second rule issued to implement section 508 amends the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to ensure that agency acquisitions of EIT comply with the Access Board’s standards. The entire FAR is found at 48 CFR Chapter 1 (http://www.arnet.gov/far/).

**Federal Information Technology Accessibility Initiative (FITAI)**—An interdisciplinary partnership organized by the General Services Administration to serve as a resource on access to electronic and information technology and agency compliance with Section 508.

**File Transfer Protocol (FTP)**—A set of rules for sending and receiving files between computers connected to the Internet.

**focus**—The position on a computer screen where an action will take place.

**frames**—A method to simulate multiple windows in a single Web page.

**graceful transformation**—Refers to the ability of Web content to remain intact regardless of the presence of any constraints. Graceful transformation is one of the requirements for universal accessible Web design.

**HTML**—Acronym for hypertext markup language, the primary language used to create Web pages. HTML 4.0 is recommended by W3C for use in the creation of accessible documents.

**HTML-Tidy**—A utility device created by Dave Raggett that fixes and edits HTML errors into more concise markup language. A free copy of HTML-Tidy can be retrieved at http://tidy.sourceforge.net.

**human-centered design**—User interface design that focuses on the needs, preferences and requirements of the user, resulting in a product or process that is accessible and usable.

**hypertext**—The ability to move in nonlinear fashion through an electronic document or file, or through a series of documents, by selecting specific words or pictures that have been “linked” to related words or files.

**IDEA**—Acronym for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
**image map**—A graphic element stored on a Web page that contains regions that are hyperlinks. Use the “alt” tag with AREA or MAP elements.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**—Requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. This definition is consistent with the National Council of Disability’s Guide to Disability Rights.

**information technology**—Any equipment or interconnected system or subsystem of equipment that is used in the automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission or reception of data or information. This definition is identical to that in the Clinger–Cohen Act and the Access Board Standards.

**Information Technology Assistance & Training Center (ITTATC)**—Government-sponsored resource that promotes the creation, use and dissemination of accessible telecommunications and information technology by providing technical assistance, training and informational resources.

**Invisible Web**—Text pages, files or other information available on the World Wide Web that general-purpose search engines cannot retrieve due to technical and selection limitations.

**Java Accessibility API**—The Java protocols designed to give assistive technology access to information in user interface objects.

**JavaScript**—An object-oriented scripting language developed by Netscape Communications Corporation.

**linearized table**—A table-rendering process where the contents of the cells become a series of paragraphs one after another. The paragraphs will occur in the same order as the cells are defined in the document source. This definition is identical to the definition listed in the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines*.

**longdesc tag**—Refers to the code used to distinguish more complex Web elements such as image maps and frames. This tag is often used with IMG, FRAME and links inside an OBJECT.
**MathML**—A markup language used to describe mathematical equations and expressions.

**Natural language processing (NRP)**—Technique used by search engines to break up the search terms into a query the engine can translate for the retrieval of information.

**nontext equivalent**—Refers to an element that provides information in a format different from written text. An example would include a voice-over in a multimedia presentation.

**Office of Civil Rights (OCR)**—U.S. Department of Education office that is responsible for ensuring that all educational institutions comply with the requirements of all federal civil laws. The OCR has been instrumental in several cases regarding Web accessibility.

**open captions**—Refers to text that is displayed automatically as part of a video, without having to be selected by the viewer.

**Peer-to-peer (P2P)**—Two or more computers interacting directly with one another without going through a central server or directory.

**SAMI**—Acronym for Synchronized Accessible Media Exchange. SAMI is a Microsoft file format specification that enables one to create a file with captioned information.

**screen magnification software**—A software application that increases the size of text and graphics on a computer screen, making it easier to view.

**screen reader software**—A software application that renders electronic information using a synthetic voice.

**Section 255**—Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act establishes federal guidelines for access to telecommunication services, equipment, and customer premises equipment. The law requires that manufacturers and providers of telecommunications equipment services ensure that their products are accessible for people with disabilities. This definition is consistent with the National Council of Disability’s *Guide to Disability Rights.*
Section 504—States that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under” any program or activity that received federal funding or is conducted by any agency of the executive Branch or U.S. Postal Service. This definition is consistent with the National Council of Disability’s Guide to Disability Rights.

Section 508—Establishes requirements for electronic and information technology developed, maintained, procured or used by the federal government. The provision of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires that electronic and information technology must be accessible to people with disabilities. This definition is consistent with the National Council of Disability’s Guide to Disability Rights.

Section 713—Aims to ensure that video services are accessible to individuals with hearing and speech disabilities. This provision of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires the FCC to review closed-captioning requirements.

Self-Contained, Closed Products—Products that have embedded software and are designed in such a manner that a user cannot easily attach or install assistive technology. An information kiosk is an example of a self-contained closed product.


site map—The area of a Web site that provides a global view of the organization of the pages included in the Web site. All Web sites should provide a site map.

SMIL—Acronym for Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language. SMIL 1.0 is the W3C recommendation for defining a markup language that describes Web multimedia.

start tag—Markup that identifies the start of an element.

style sheets—Used to define the style of elements on a Web page.

telecommunications—The transmission between or among points specified by the user and the information of the user’s choosing, without change in the form or content of the information sent and received.
Telecommunications Act of 1996—Legislation designed to promote the availability of telecommunications services and equipment to people traditionally underserved in telecommunications, including people with disabilities. Sections 255 and 713 of this law focus on provisions for people with disabilities.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS)—A free service that enables persons with TTYs, individuals who use sign language and people who have speech disabilities to use telephone services by having a third party transmit and translate the call.

telephony—The science of transmitting voice over a telecommunications network.

text-equivalent—Refers to a phrase, sentence or combination of phrases and sentences that are written within the code to provide a description of the graphic it represents.

TTY—An abbreviation for teletypewriter. A teletypewriter is equipment that employs an interactive text-based communication through the transmission of coded signals across the telephone network. It is sometimes called a TDD. This definition for the term is consistent with the definition as listed in the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines.

tuner card—Refers to a product that enables a computer to receive television broadcasts.

undue burden—Undue burden refers to the significant difficulty or expense in relation to making an accommodation for a person with special needs. In determining whether a request for accommodation would result in an undue burden, an agency shall consider all resources available to the program or component for which the product is being developed, procured, maintained or used. This definition is consistent with the definition as outlined by the Access Board and Title I of the ADA.

universal design—The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

URL—Acronym for Uniform Resource Locator. Refers to the address or location of a Web site.
user agent—The software one uses to access and navigate the Web.

user interface—Any part of a system with which the user interacts.

Valid HTML—Web content that complies with the W3C recommendations for accessibility.

validation service—An online software service that checks and validates a Web page according to W3C WAI recommendations.

video description—An audio narration for television viewers who are blind or visually disabled, which consists of verbal descriptions of key visual elements in a television program, such as settings and actions not reflected in dialog. Narrations are inserted into the program’s pauses and are typically provided through the Secondary Audio programming channel. This definition is identical to the definition used by the FCC.


WAI—Acronym for the Web Accessibility Initiative.

Web Accessibility Initiative—Established by the World Wide Consortium to promote Web accessibility projects and programs in five areas: technology, guidelines, tools, education and outreach and research and development.

Web Authoring software—Refers to the HTML editors, document tools and tools that generate Web content from databases.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines—The standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium’s Accessibility Initiative to offer guidelines to assist in the creation of accessible Web documents.

World Wide Web Consortium—An international industry consortium whose mission is to “lead the world Wide Web to its full potential by developing common protocols that promote its evolution and ensure its interoperability.