Navigating Neurodiversity: 13 Guidelines for Designing Inclusive Web Pages

Neurodiversity is a concept that recognizes and celebrates the natural variations in neurological differences among individuals. It encompasses the idea that diverse neurological conditions, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and others, are part of the normal spectrum of human cognition and should be acknowledged and respected rather than deemed “disorders” that need to be fixed or normalized. Rather, neurodiversity is the understanding that variations contribute to the richness of human experiences, skills, and perspectives.

To be advocates of neurodiversity in the events industry, we need to prioritize creating inclusive environments that accommodate and embrace these differences, allowing individuals with diverse neurological traits to fully participate in and thrive at our events, not only onsite, but online as well. That means that we must ensure that we are creating inclusive and user-friendly online experiences.

By following these 13 guidelines, you can make your event web pages and online forms more accessible and welcoming for everyone.

1. Clear and Consistent Layout

A structured and predictable layout helps all attendees find what they need. Keep headings, colors, and spacing consistent throughout your event web page and forms to create a familiar visual pattern for neurodiverse users.

Resource: At CDS, our Product and Development teams use the standardized layouts from Ant Design. These layouts follow interaction, visual, and component rules to maintain consistency.

2. Readable Typography

Choose legible fonts and appropriate font sizes to enhance readability. Simple and clean typography ensures that all attendees, regardless of their cognitive processing, can easily understand and engage with your content.

Resource: We keep it simple by using Lato, or other widely used fonts. Also, double check that your text is resizable. Here’s an explanation of text resizing.
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3. Create Colors that Contrast, But Don’t Overstimulate

On one hand, creating a high contrast between text and background can improve visibility, making it easier for those with visual processing differences to distinguish content and reduce cognitive strain. However, overlaying two highly contrasting colors on top of each other can create an unpleasant, overstimulating experience.

In general, neurodiverse audiences have a preference toward muted, pastel hues and neutral tones. Consider using a matte black background with two or three pastel hues to depict data, or a neutral tan, gray, or white background to prevent colors from overwhelming the reader.

**Resource:** At CDS, one of our favorite quick tools to use for accessibility regarding color contrast is the [WebAIM contrast checker](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/). There are other color contrast tools out there, but this will make sure you are specifically in compliance with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag).

4. Minimal Distractions

Simplify your event web page and forms by reducing unnecessary animations and busy backgrounds. A clean design minimizes sensory overload, allowing neurodiverse users to focus on essential content.

**Resource:** To better understand how to keep our web pages simple, we wanted to learn exactly who we were designing for. [This resource](https://www.accessibility.com) helped us understand visual impairments better.

5. Visual Hierarchy

Use clear headings, subheadings, and visual cues to establish a hierarchy of information. Neurodiverse users benefit from a structured content layout that helps them quickly grasp the importance and organization of information.

**Resource:** At CDS, we make certain that the sites we build follow a consistent H1-H6 text structure for content. This helps the full spectrum of people follow our content. No shortcuts! It sounds simple, but here’s some [further reading on making headings more accessible](https://www.accessibility.com).

6. Descriptive and Concise Content

Craft straightforward language and concise sentences to facilitate comprehension. Clear content helps neurodiverse individuals process information more easily and reduces the risk of misinterpretation.

**Resource:** Designers, developers, and content writers are the “Big 3” we keep in mind when it comes to making our sites accessible. The articles in this [content writing guide](https://www.accessibility.com) are what we use at CDS to influence how we write our content.
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7. Meaningful Visuals with Alt Text

Include descriptive image alternative text (also known as alt text or alt tags) for images and diagrams. This ensures that neurodiverse attendees who rely on screen readers or have difficulty interpreting visuals can access and understand the content.

Resource: The 5 mistakes in this Alt Text Guide are something we keep in mind when writing alt text here at CDS. Hubspot also has this Image Alt Text article with lots of helpful guidelines and examples to reference.

8. Thoughtful Use of White Space

Incorporate sufficient spacing between elements and paragraphs. White space enhances content digestion, prevents crowding, and enables neurodiverse users to focus on individual pieces of information.

Resource: When considering whether there is “too much white space” on the page, keep this white space article in mind.

9. Option for Customization

Provide the ability to adjust font sizes, color themes, and reading modes. Customizable options empower neurodiverse attendees to tailor the online experience to their preferences, enhancing their engagement.

Resource: Our developers try to keep relative units, over absolute, in mind as much as possible. It applies to more than just text. Here's some further reading on how we create customizable text.

10. Clear and Simple Navigation

Offer a straightforward navigation menu with clear labels. Neurodiverse individuals may rely on structured browsing paths such as breadcrumb navigation, and intuitive navigation ensures everyone can easily find and explore relevant content.

Resource: Mobile work needs to be inclusive, too. We like to double-check our responsive navigation by confirming our touch targets on mobile are large enough using this Large touch targets article as our guide.

11. Text-to-Speech and Read Aloud Functionality

Incorporate text-to-speech features to accommodate auditory learners and those with reading challenges. Enabling this functionality allows neurodiverse users to absorb content through their preferred sensory channel.

Resource: We use a person-first mentality for design and development to make sure we stay motivated when taking the extra time to develop sites properly for advanced tech. Learn more about the people you are helping.
12. Controlled Use of Video and Audio Elements

When using videos or audio, provide transcripts and captions. This supports attendees who may struggle with auditory or visual processing, ensuring they can access and comprehend information effectively.

**Resource:** We don’t have too many video and audio elements on our sites, but when we do, we try to make transcripts available. However, nowadays, everyone is in online meetings. [Here’s how you can make your online meetings more accessible.](#)

13. Predictable and Intuitive Forms

Ensure forms follow a logical flow and offer clear instructions, and that there are visual cues like highlighted inputs to help readers know where they are in the form. A step-by-step approach minimizes confusion and frustration for neurodiverse users during data input.

**Resource:** We create lots of forms, and we use over-communication and other leading practices listed in this [form accessibility article](#) to help make sure they are accessible.

**Additional Resources**

We recommend you follow these links to guide your accessibility efforts.

- **WCAG:** Your essential online resource for understanding and applying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), advancing web accessibility and improving your users’ experience.
- **A11Y:** The A11Y Project is a community-driven effort to make digital accessibility easier with lots of resources, content, and workshops to guide you.
- **What is Neurodiversity and How It Applies to Web Design (editorx.com)** is another resourceful article with visual examples explaining how to design web pages for neurodiverse audiences.

**Summing it Up**

Inclusivity isn’t just a checkbox – it’s a commitment to providing a seamless and accessible experience for all.

By following these 13 best practices, you can create event web pages that cater to a diverse range of attendees, including those who are neurodiverse.

We hope this information has been useful! Let’s make every event and interaction a platform where neurodiverse attendees can thrive and engage with confidence.