

THE WEBSITE ADA COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

7 Steps to Avoid Lawsuits and Make Your Website Accessible to Everyone

ADA-related website lawsuits have surged year over year, and small and mid-sized businesses are increasingly the target — not just big brands. Most violations come down to a short list of fixable technical issues. This checklist walks you through the exact areas auditors and plaintiffs' attorneys look at first, so you can find and fix problems before they find you.

Why this matters now

A website is considered a "place of public accommodation" under the ADA in most court rulings, meaning it must be usable by people with visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive disabilities. Non-compliance can mean demand letters, lawsuits, and settlement costs — often before you even know there's a problem.

1. Images & Visual Content

Screen readers rely on text alternatives to describe visual content.

- ☐ Every meaningful image has descriptive alt text
- ☐ Decorative images use empty alt text (alt="") so screen readers skip them
- ☐ Text is never embedded inside an image as the only way to convey information
- ☐ Complex images (charts, infographics) have a text summary nearby

2. Color & Visual Contrast

Low contrast is one of the most common — and most cited — violations.

- ☐ Text-to-background contrast ratio meets WCAG AA (4.5:1 for normal text, 3:1 for large text)
- ☐ Color is never the only way information is conveyed (e.g., error states also use icons/text)
- ☐ Links are distinguishable from body text without relying on color alone
- ☐ Focus indicators are visible when tabbing through the page

3. Keyboard Navigation

Many users navigate entirely without a mouse — every action must be reachable by keyboard.

- ☐ Entire site is navigable using Tab, Shift+Tab, and Enter only
- ☐ No keyboard traps (elements you can tab into but not out of)
- ☐ Dropdown menus, modals, and popups are operable via keyboard
- ☐ Skip-to-content link available at the top of the page

4. Forms & Interactive Elements

Forms are a top source of ADA complaints because they block task completion.

- ☐ Every input field has a properly associated <label>
- ☐ Error messages are specific, visible, and announced to screen readers
- ☐ Required fields are clearly marked in text, not just color/asterisk
- ☐ Buttons and links have descriptive text (not just "Click Here")

5. Multimedia

Audio and video content needs alternatives for users who can't see or hear it.

- ☐ Videos include accurate closed captions
- ☐ Audio content has a text transcript available
- ☐ Auto-playing audio/video can be paused, stopped, or muted
- ☐ Video content avoids flashing more than 3 times per second (seizure risk)

6. Site Structure & Screen Reader Compatibility

Assistive technology depends on clean, logical code structure.

- ☐ Headings follow a logical order (H1 → H2 → H3, no skipped levels)
- ☐ Page titles are unique and descriptive for every page
- ☐ ARIA labels used correctly on custom interactive elements
- ☐ Site tested with an actual screen reader (VoiceOver, NVDA, or JAWS)

7. Ongoing Compliance & Documentation

Compliance isn't a one-time fix — it needs to be maintained and documented.

- ☐ Automated accessibility scan run monthly (e.g., WAVE, axe, Lighthouse)
- ☐ Accessibility statement published on the website
- ☐ New content/pages checked against this list before publishing
- ☐ Staff trained on basic accessibility best practices

Quick Win

Start with Section 2 (Contrast) and Section 4 (Forms) — automated scanners catch most issues here in minutes, and they're two of the most commonly cited problems in ADA demand letters.

Want help implementing this?

Ingenious Netsoft helps businesses audit and fix website accessibility issues before they become legal problems. Reach out for a free ADA compliance scan.

sales@ingeniousnetsoft.com

+91 99686-43754 (INDIA)

+1 (786) 352-8924 (USA)