

Section 508 of the Disabilities Act of 2001

The 508 Act is a Federal Act that mandates all Federal Departments as well as Federal Agencies to develop and maintain equipment, electronic and technology for people with disabilities. The General Services Administration (GSA) is the agency that provides technical assistance and training on guidelines and standards, in making sure individuals with disabilities are fairly being accommodated. Within the GSA offices there are branches CITA (Center for IT Accommodation) which are responsible for educating Federal employees in implementing and fostering an ongoing collaboration among stakeholders to assist the government providing proper services.

The Act of 508 also covers animation. Animation may display information or may display animation in at least one non-animated presentation mode at the option of the user. *Animation can be described as an automated* visual movement created by and under the control of the software application that is displayed on a user interface. Note this definition does not include video, which is the result of differences in the images within individual video frames, and is not created by the display application.

Color coding is an act of 508 that shall not be used as the only means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element. When a product permits a user to adjust color and contrast settings, a variety of color selections capable of producing a range of contrast levels shall be provided. Assume the required variety of color settings is that which is necessary to produce an adequate range of contrast by distinguishing foreground or element color from background color. This is considered color coding.

Web based intranet and Internet information and applications of Section 508 technical requirements apply to purchased or contracted websites, including the information content as well as any associated applications and plug-ins. These requirements also apply to web-based interfaces to other E&IT products or systems, such as web-based interfaces to digital copiers or telecommunications devices (wired, analog and digital wireless, and Internet).

Web based information is content provided via Web pages. A Web based application is any application embedded in a Web page that is necessary to fully deliver the content of the page to the user. A web based application may be used for any aspect of a Web page with which the user must interact in order to operate the given function of a Web page. For example, a streaming audio player delivers the content of a page to the user and, therefore, must be accessible to the user. Most Web interoperability issues deal with the design of Web pages and how effectively they work with assistive technology (such as screen readers, screen magnifiers, Braille readers, and alternate input devices). Assistive technology cannot be employed effectively to convey equivalent information to a user with disabilities if these provisions are not met.

Products which have mechanically operated controls or keys, shall comply with the following: Controls and keys shall be operable with one hand and shall not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. The force required to activate controls and keys shall be 5 lbs. (22.2 N) maximum. Assume that requiring a user to twist their wrist and/or pinch in order to use a product is prohibited. Assume that knobs are not specifically prohibited if they could be operated without tight grasp, pinching, or twisting of the wrist, e.g. with the side of the hand or with a head stick.

Lastly, All analog television displays 13 inches and larger, and computer equipment that includes analog television receiver or display circuitry, shall be equipped with caption decoder circuitry which appropriately receives, decodes, and displays closed captions from broadcast, cable, videotape, and DVD signals. As soon as practicable, but not later than July 1, 2002, widescreen digital television (DTV) displays measuring at least 7.8 inches vertically, DTV sets with conventional displays measuring at least 13 inches vertically, and stand-alone DTV tuners, whether or not they are marketed with display screens, and computer equipment that includes DTV receiver or display circuitry, shall be equipped with caption decoder circuitry which appropriately receives, decodes, and displays closed captions from broadcast, cable, videotape, and DVD signals.

For more information:

<http://www.ittatc.org>

<http://accessibilityforum.org>