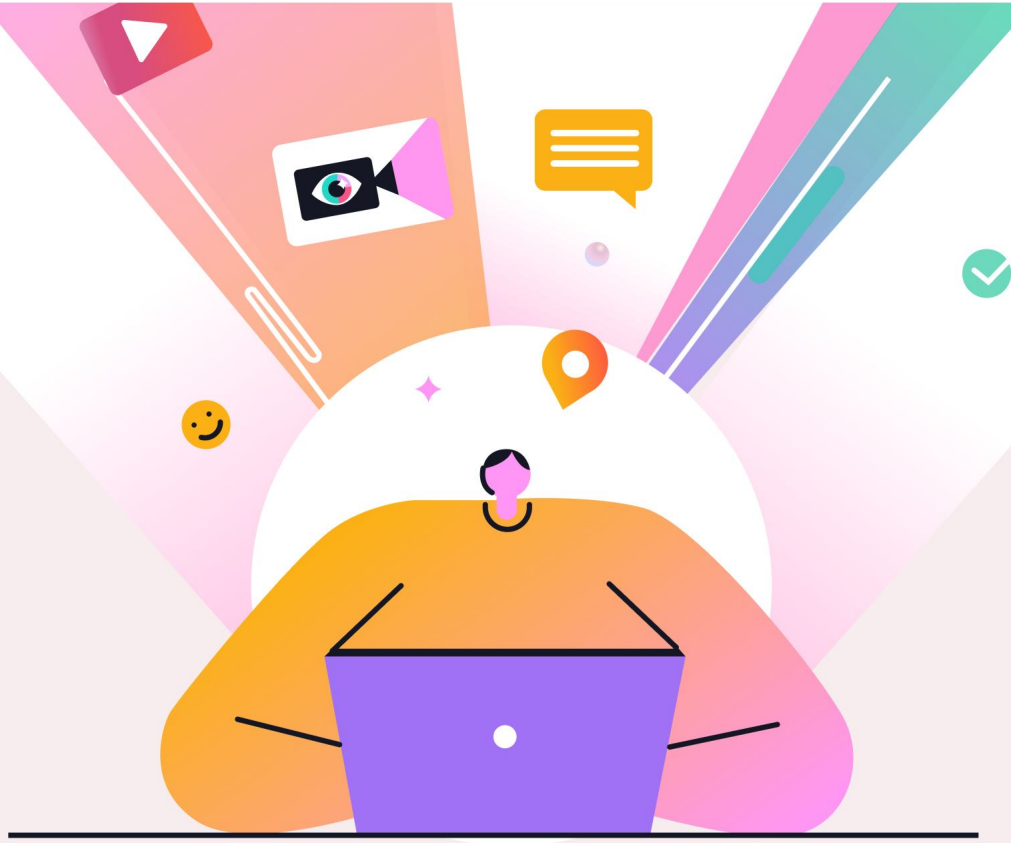# ispring

HOW TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE ELEARNING CONTENT

In this digital age, education has overcome physical boundaries and become more inclusive than ever before. However, this inclusivity depends on how accessible the online learning materials are. Making eLearning content accessible to everyone isn't only about legal requirements – it's a promise to support equal opportunities for all.

In this guide, we'll delve into the essential practices that make eLearning content accessible to a diverse range of learners, including those with disabilities. You'll find out how to make every part of your course – from text and pictures to quizzes and interactions – clear and easy to use for everyone.

Content

What Is Accessible eLearning?

Accessible eLearning is a way of creating online courses that everyone can use, regardless of whether or not they have a disability. Just as buildings have ramps for wheelchairs, online learning should have "digital ramps," like videos with captions for people who can't hear well, or text that a screen reader can narrate for those who can't see.

The idea is to make sure that no one feels left out when they're trying to learn something online. This means using clear language that's easy to understand, choosing colors that are easy to distinguish for those with color blindness, and making sure that all the interactive parts of the course can be reached in different ways.

Why Accessibility in Online Learning Is Important

There are a few reasons you should consider accessibility when creating eLearning courses:

Everyone will have equal access to learning

Accessible design enhances learning for everybody

By law, eLearning must be accessible

1   Everyone will have equal access to learning

Education is a fundamental right that should not be limited by physical or cognitive barriers. In the context of online learning, "equal access" means that every student has the same opportunity to participate in learning activities and benefit from the resources provided. When online courses are designed with accessibility in mind, they don't just accommodate students with disabilities, they ensure that these students are not excluded from the learning experience.

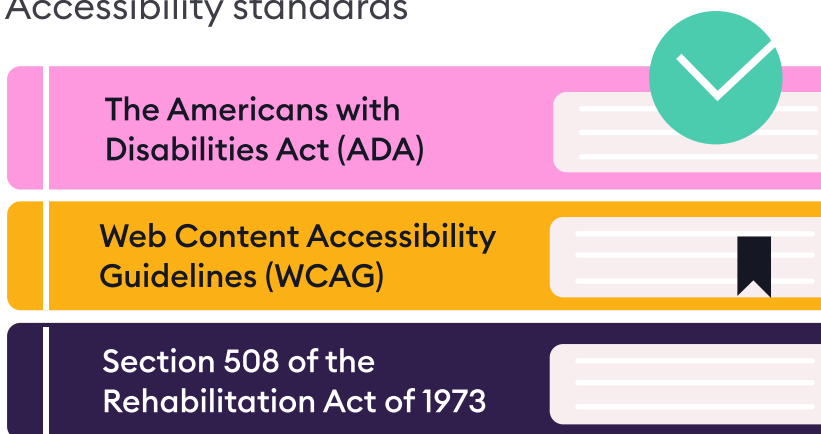## 2   Accessible design enhances learning for everyone

Accessibility in online learning doesn't just help people with disabilities; it improves the learning experience for everyone. With online training that adheres to accessibility standards, all people can navigate, comprehend, and engage with content more easily. As a result, your training will be more effective, leading to a workforce that is better equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge.

3   By law, eLearning must be accessible

Around the world, legislation such as ADA in the United States, or the European Accessibility Act in the EU, requires that educational materials be accessible to individuals with disabilities. These laws are not just guidelines; they are enforceable standards that educational institutions and organizations must comply with. Noncompliance can lead to legal consequences, resulting in financial costs and damages to a company or school's reputation.

What Are Accessibility Standards?

Accessibility standards

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)	
Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	

There are two major laws and extensive guidelines that govern accessibility:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA (ADA in the US; in the UK, there's the Equality Act)

- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (in Europe, there's the European Accessibility Act)

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG

WCAG 2.0 principles and guidelines

WCAG 2.0 is a set of international standards of accessibility designed by the W3C. These standards are built on four key principles for web accessibility, which state that all digital content must be:

Perceivable   Operable   Understandable   Robust

- **Perceivable:** Content and interface elements must be detectable through at least one sense.

- **Operable:** Users must be able to use all controls, buttons, and other interactive elements.

- **Understandable:** Users must be able to understand all the information on interfaces and their operation.

- **Robust:** Content must be sturdy enough to be interpreted by a wide array of platforms, including assistive technologies.

How to Make eLearning Content Accessible

If you're new to accessibility, all these requirements might sound overwhelming. However, it's not as bad as it seems. Following are some tips that are easy to apply and can significantly improve the usability and accessibility of your content.

Text and typography

When crafting accessible content, ensure that learners can comfortably read and understand the material.

- Structure your text
- Use simple sentences
- Choose legible font sizes and types

Structure your text

Using a clear hierarchy of headings helps learners skim the content and grasp the main points. Headings are usually larger and bolder than the main body of a text. But visual changes alone aren't enough for accessibility. Even if you make them big and use a different font, without the proper markup, screen readers won't recognize them as headings and will read them as plain text.

Also, keep in mind that long paragraphs are difficult to read. Try to break them down into smaller portions using the concept "one paragraph, one new idea." For lists, use bullets or numbers to make the text simple to read, organized, and less daunting.

Sustainable business criteria

It incorporates principles of sustainability into each of its business decisions.

It supplies environmentally friendly products, which replaces the demand for non-green products.

It is greener than the traditi

It has made an enduring co principles in its business op

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS CRITERIA

It incorporates principles of sustainability into each of its business decisions.

It supplies environmentally friendly products, which replaces the demand for non-green products.

It is greener than the traditional competition.

It has made an enduring commitment to environmental principles in its business operations.

Choose legible font sizes and types

Fonts should be large enough for learners to read without straining their eyes. A good rule is to use a font size of at least 16 pixels for the main body text. It's also important to choose fonts that are clear and easy to read. Rather than using a fancy font that might look attractive but is hard to decipher, like Papyrus, select simple sans-serif fonts, such as Arial or Calibri, which are designed for clarity on computer monitors.

Use simple sentences

To enhance comprehension, sentences should be straightforward and not overly complex. This helps learners, especially those with cognitive disabilities or those who are not fluent in the language, grasp the concepts more easily.

Colors and images

Colors and images used in a course can either aid or hinder the learning process, depending on how they're used. So, it's essential to choose the right combination of colors and images to accommodate all learners.

- Provide text alternatives for images
- Avoid text in pictures
- Use high contrast colors
- Don't rely on colors alone

Provide text alternatives for images (Alt Text)

All images and graphics should have text alternatives, commonly known as "alt text." This ensures that learners who can't see the images can still understand their meaning. Alt text should concisely describe the image's purpose and content.

For example, if there's a chart showing the growth of a plant over time, the alt text might read, "Line graph depicting plant growth over a four-week period."

Important!

When selecting an authoring tool for creating online courses, make sure that the tool has all the necessary functionalities for building accessible content. For example, iSpring Suite allows you to make courses, quizzes, videos, interactions, and e-books that are **fully compliant with Section 508 and WCAG 2.0.**

Try iSpring Suite for free

With iSpring Suite, you can add alt text to media objects that can be read by special devices that help people with disabilities work on computers.
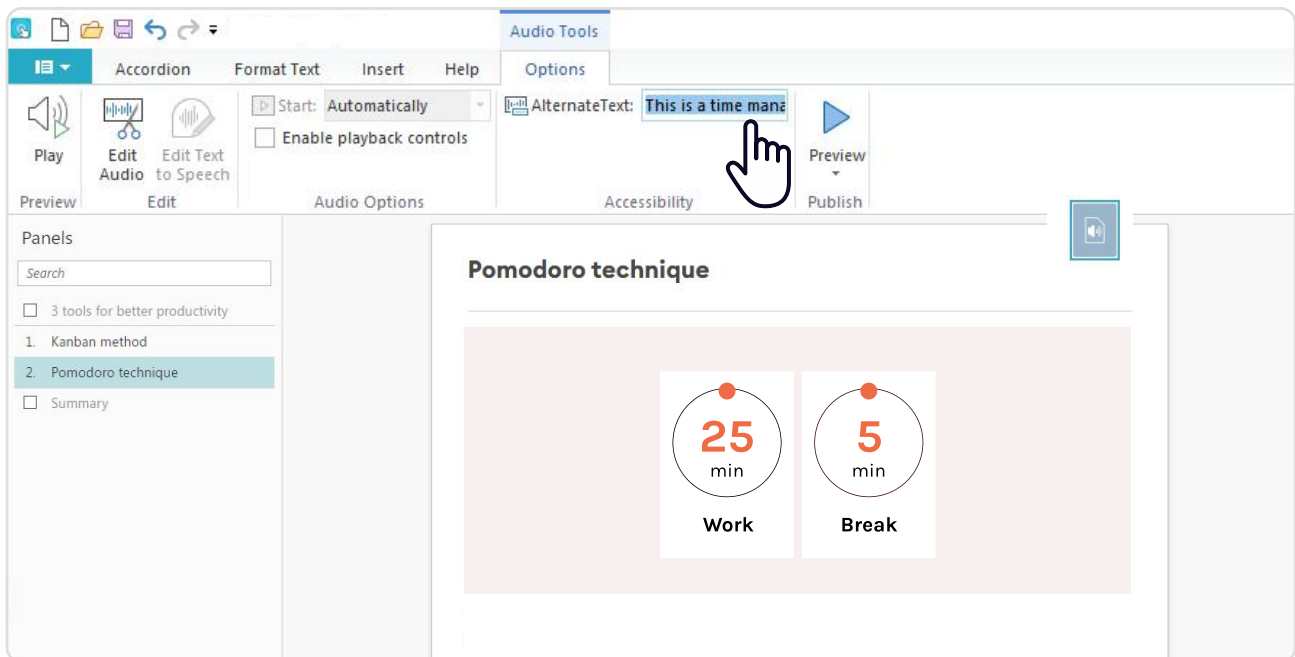
Avoid text in pictures

Using text as an image is a bad idea. Screen readers (as well as search engines and translating software) cannot recognize it as text and therefore read it. Moreover, when one zooms in to enlarge the image, its quality gets worse, and it's hard to read, since all you can see are pixels.
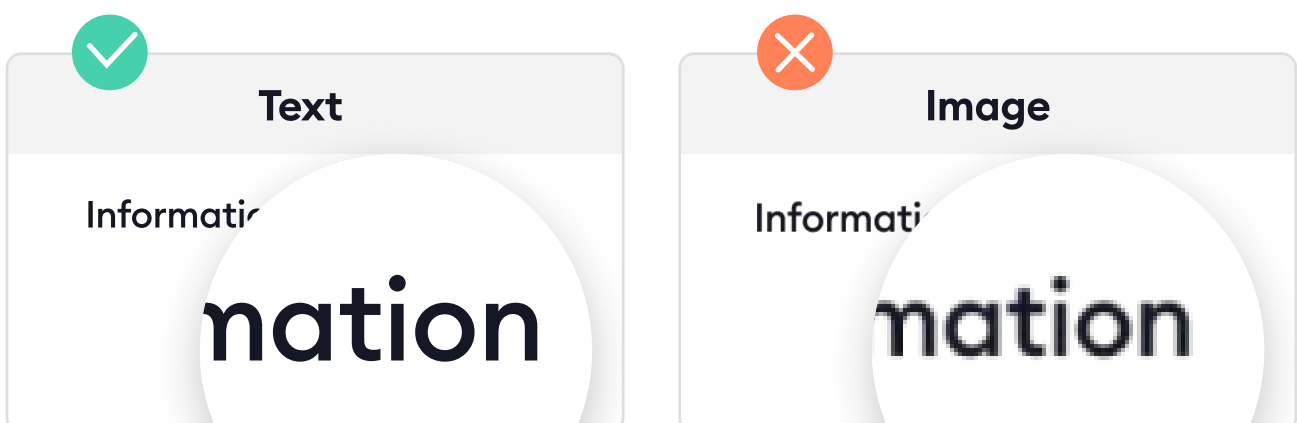
Use high contrast colors

Information is easier to perceive when there is sufficient contrast between the text, graphic elements, and background. If the color of your text is too close to the color of the background or if you use a photo as the background, it makes the content difficult or impossible to understand. For example, it's better to use black text on a white background rather than gray text on a light gray background.

Don't rely on colors alone

There are about 300 million people with color blindness worldwide. Therefore, colors should never be used as a single source of information. Always pair colors with text or symbols. For instance, if a chart uses green to signify growth and red for decline, it should also include arrows pointing up or down or labels like "increase" or "decrease."
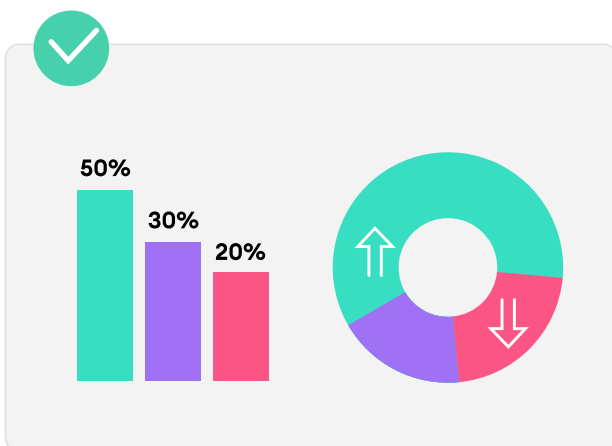
Audio and video

Make your content accessible by paying special attention to audio and video elements. Ensure that everyone, including individuals with hearing impairments or those who prefer reading, can access the information.

- Provide transcripts for audio
- Use captions and subtitles for videos
- Voice online quizzes

Provide transcripts for audio

Provide a full transcript for any audio content. Your transcript should capture all spoken words and relevant sounds that are part of the learning experience. This will enable learners to read along with or review the material without needing to listen to the audio.

Use captions and subtitles for videos

Captions and subtitles are crucial for video content. They not only help those who are deaf or hard of hearing but also enhance understanding for non-native language speakers and those who are learning in noisy environments. Ensure your captions accurately represent spoken dialogue and describe important sounds.

With iSpring Suite, you can easily add subtitles to video narration.
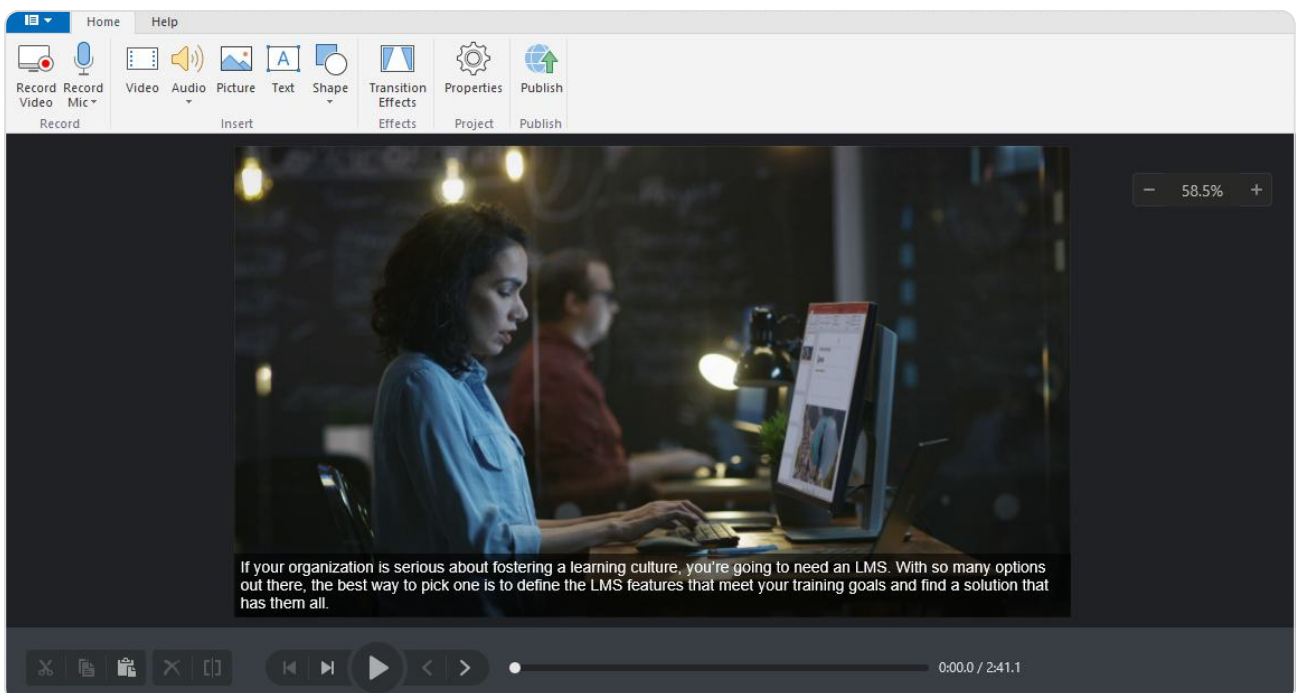
Voice online quizzes

Incorporate audio into your quiz questions and answer options to give learners the option to listen to the question instead of reading it. This can be particularly helpful in enhancing eLearning accessibility for learners with visual impairments or reading difficulties, like dyslexia.

iSpring Suite allows you to either upload an existing audio file to your computer or record audio right in the tool.

Interactivity and navigation

Interactivity and navigation are key components of engaging eLearning experiences. For all users to benefit, these elements must be designed with accessibility in mind.


Use simple navigation

Create keyboard-friendly interactions
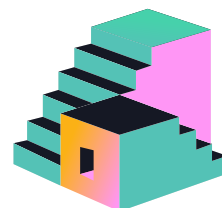
Add alternative ways to participate in activities

Use simple navigation

Navigation should be intuitive and predictable. Buttons and links must be clearly labeled and placed in familiar locations on the page. For example, using the "Next" button on the bottom right of each page will make it easy for your learners to progress through the course without having to search for the way ahead.
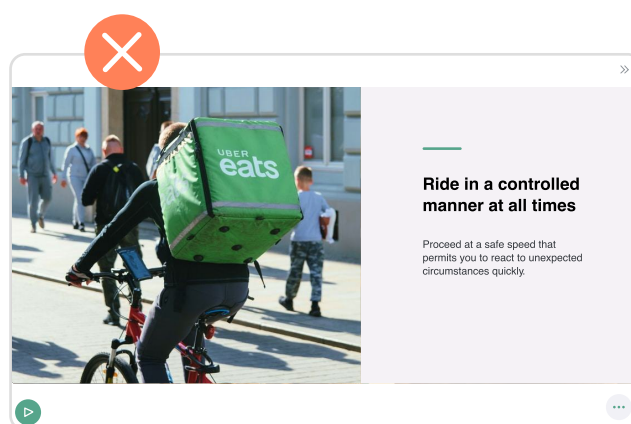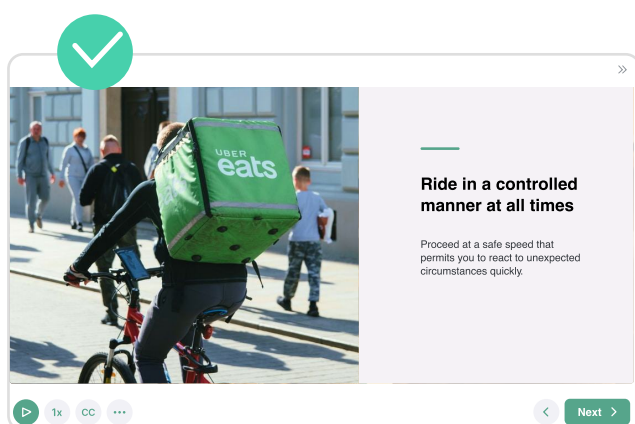
Create keyboard-friendly interactions

All interactive elements should be fully accessible using a keyboard. This is especially important for users who rely on assistive technologies or cannot use a mouse. For instance, when designing a quiz, ensure that learners can use the "Tab" key to move between questions and the "Enter" key to select their answer.

Add alternative ways to participate in activities

Offer different methods to engage with interactive content to ensure it's accessible to users with various abilities. For example, if there's a drag-and-drop activity, also provide a way to select items from a list.

Creating different versions of activities may seem daunting and time-consuming. That's why it's important to select an authoring tool that allows you to create accessible content without extra effort. iSpring Suite publishes learning modules in a format that enables learners to switch to accessibility mode with the click of a button.

Here's how a course slide and a quiz question look in different modes:
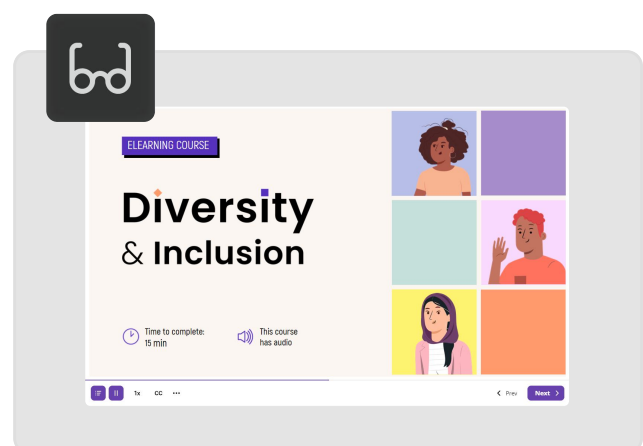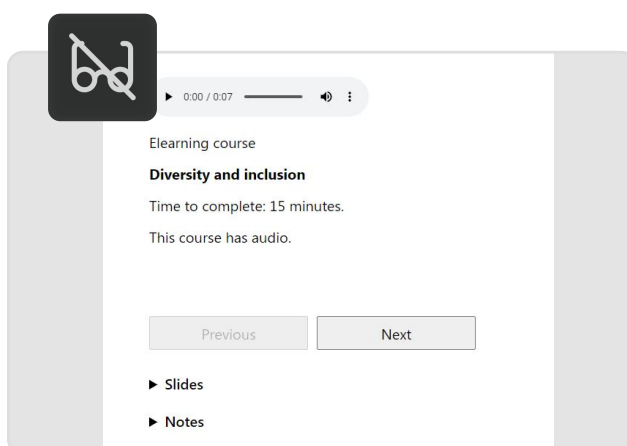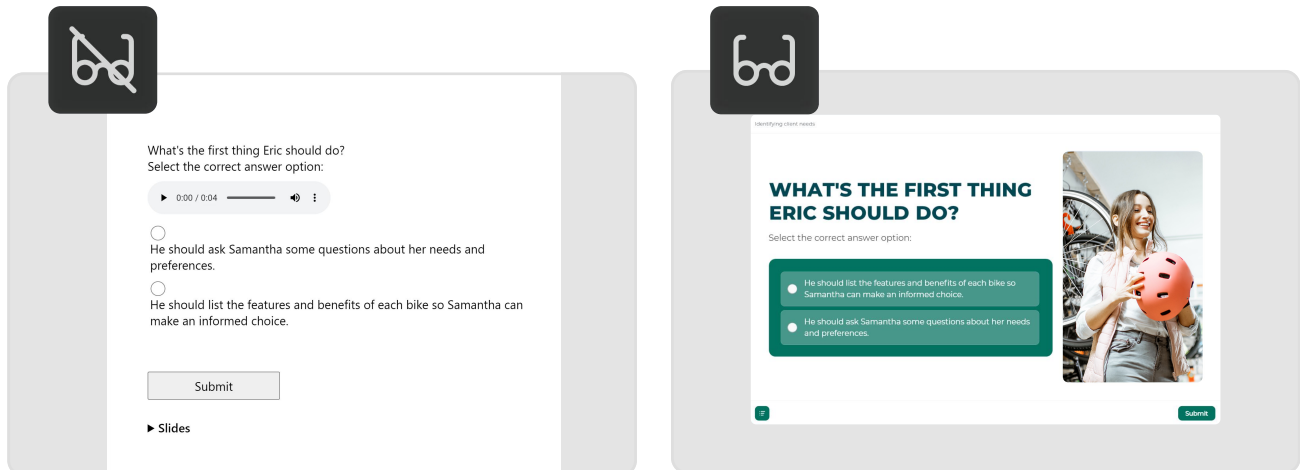
Here's what you can expect from the accessibility mode:

- **Perceivable texts.** Clear fonts and high contrast make it easier for a person with a visual impairment to read the text on the screen. In accessibility mode, courses created with iSpring Suite feature the comfortable sans-serif typeface Segoe UI.

- **Minimalistic layout.** Courses and quizzes include only the most necessary elements, which keeps the interface devoid of distractions. If your course slides include animations, transition effects, and elements set to autostart, they won't appear in the accessibility mode. Such neat and succinct slides are easy to navigate for those who use only a keyboard to work on a computer.

- **Screen reader-friendly content.** Screen readers turn text into speech and allow users to navigate with the keyboard, e.g., jump between elements, select checkboxes, and fill in fields. Courses created with iSpring Suite are recognized by the most popular screen readers: JAWS, VoiceOver, and NVDA.

Conclusion

Creating accessible eLearning content is a powerful step toward inclusive education. By following the guidelines we've discussed, you can open a world of knowledge to all learners, regardless of their abilities. Remember, every design choice you make can build a bridge to learning. Keep it simple, clear, and considerate, and you'll not only meet standards but also make learning available to everyone.

To start creating accessible eLearning content, download iSpring Suite. Our authoring tool will let you create outstanding courses with quizzes, videos, role-plays, and interactions that every learner, regardless of their disabilities, will enjoy.
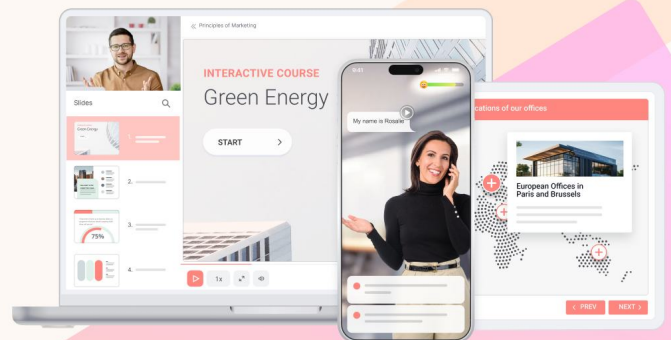
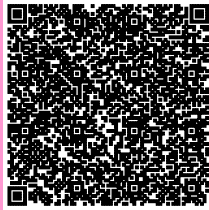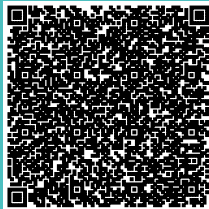# Welcome to the iSpring Community!

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