

WCAG 2.2 Frontend Cheat Sheet

mirzaa.dev

The success criteria that actually come up in frontend work — Level A & AA, with what changed in 2.2

Free resource — share freely

CONTRAST RATIOS (1.4.3, 1.4.6, 1.4.11)

WHAT	AA	AAA	NOTES
Body text	4.5 : 1	7 : 1	Applies to text over images and gradients too
Large text (24px+, or 18.66px bold+)	3 : 1	4.5 : 1	Size thresholds are 18pt / 14pt bold
UI components & graphics	3 : 1	—	Borders, icons, focus rings, chart elements
Disabled controls, logos	exempt	exempt	But don't rely on the exemption for placeholders

Check both themes if you ship dark mode — muted text and borders fail there first. Quick checker: mirzaa.dev/tools/contrast-checker

KEYBOARD & FOCUS

- 2.1.1 Everything reachable and operable by keyboard alone — do a full Tab-only pass
- 2.1.2 No keyboard traps; modals must release focus on `Esc`
- 2.4.3 Focus order follows visual/reading order
- 2.4.7 Focus visibly indicated — never `outline: none` without a replacement
- 2.4.11 Focused element not fully hidden behind sticky headers/footers **NEW 2.2**
- Scroll-margin fix: `:focus { scroll-margin-top: 80px }`

POINTER & TOUCH

- 2.5.8 Targets at least **24 × 24 CSS px**, or spaced so a 24px circle fits without overlapping neighbours **NEW 2.2**
- Inline links in prose are exempt; icon buttons are not
- 2.5.7 Anything draggable needs a non-drag alternative (buttons, tap-to-select) **NEW 2.2**
- 2.5.2 Actions fire on `pointerup`, not `pointerdown` — lets users abort
- Practical floor: keep interactive icons at 44px on touch-first UI

FORMS & INPUT

- 3.3.2 Every input has a visible label — placeholder is not a label
- 1.3.5 Use `autocomplete` attributes (`email`, `name`, `tel`...)
- 3.3.1 Errors identified in text, not colour alone; link error summary to fields
- 3.3.7 Don't make users re-enter info you already asked for **NEW 2.2**
- 3.3.8 No cognitive tests to log in — allow paste in password fields, support password managers, offer non-CAPTCHA paths **NEW 2.2**

IMAGES & MEDIA

- 1.1.1 Informative image → descriptive `alt`; decorative → `alt=""` (never omit the attribute)
- Image inside a link/button → alt describes the *destination* or *action*, not the picture
- Complex charts → short alt + adjacent text or table with the data
- 1.4.2 / 2.2.2 Autoplaying audio/motion needs pause or stop controls
- Respect `prefers-reduced-motion` for large animations

SEMANTICS — THE FREE WINS

- One `<h1>`; heading levels never skip down (h2 → h4)
- Landmarks: `<main>`, `<nav>`, `<header>`, `<footer>` — screen reader users navigate by them
- `<button>` for actions, `<a>` for navigation — a clickable `<div>` is neither
- Native elements first: `<dialog>`, `<details>`, `<select>` before ARIA rebuilds
- 2.4.4 Link text works out of context — no bare "click here"
- 3.1.1 `<html lang="en">` — one attribute, frequently missing

ARIA — FIVE RULES

- Don't use ARIA if a native element does the job
- Don't change native semantics (`<button role="heading">` — no)
- Every interactive ARIA control must work with keyboard
- Never `role="presentation"` / `aria-hidden="true"` on focusable elements
- Interactive elements need an accessible name — and it must contain the visible label text (2.5.3)

LIVE UPDATES & SPA ROUTING

- Async results/toasts → `aria-live="polite"`; errors → `role="alert"`
- On client-side route change: move focus to the new page's h1 or main, announce the title
- Loading states need text, not just a spinner (`aria-busy`, visually hidden "Loading...")
- Infinite scroll: provide a way to reach the footer; announce appended content counts

2.2 CHANGES AT A GLANCE

- **New A/AA:** 2.4.11 Focus Not Obscured · 2.5.7 Dragging · 2.5.8 Target Size · 3.2.6 Consistent Help · 3.3.7 Redundant Entry · 3.3.8 Accessible Auth
- **Removed:** 4.1.1 Parsing (obsolete — browsers handle it)
- 3.2.6 Help links (contact, chat, FAQ) appear in the same relative place on every page **NEW 2.2**
- AAA additions (2.4.12, 2.4.13, 3.3.9) — worth reading, rarely mandated

TESTING TOOLBELT

- **Automated (~30–40% coverage):** axe DevTools, Lighthouse a11y audit, `eslint-plugin-jsx-a11y`, `@axe-core/react` in CI
- **Manual, every feature:** full keyboard pass · 200% browser zoom · dark + light contrast check
- **Screen readers:** VoiceOver (macOS/iOS, `Cmd+F5`), NVDA (Windows, free)
- **Simulate:** DevTools → Rendering → emulate vision deficiencies & reduced motion

COMPLIANCE CONTEXT — AUSTRALIA

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 applies to websites serving Australian users; the AHRC recommends WCAG 2.2 AA as the benchmark, and government services mandate it. Complaints go through the AHRC — retrofitting after a complaint costs far more than building it in. If you sell into the EU, the European Accessibility Act (enforced since June 2025) makes AA a hard requirement for e-commerce.