

## Accessibility of Communications in Video Games

Accessible features in video games allow individuals with disabilities to participate in what has become a routine activity for millions of Americans.

The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) requires that [advanced communications services](#) (ACS) and equipment be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, unless doing so is not achievable. Some features of video games are ACS and need to be accessible and usable for all participants, if possible.

### What are advanced communications services?

Advanced communications services include:

- Interconnected voice over IP (VoIP) services, such as a home phone service provided by an internet service provider;
- Non-interconnected VoIP services, such as using a computer to engage in voice communication over the internet;
- Electronic messaging services, such as text messaging, instant messaging, or e-mail; and
- Interoperable video conferencing services.

Online multiplayer video games and gaming platforms often include non-interconnected VoIP and electronic messaging as real-time communications options for players. For example, many games include in-game voice or text chat between two or more persons, and game consoles may feature a platform-wide “party” voice chat, as well as both individual and group messaging. Some third-party service providers include external platforms for communicating and sharing information, enabling the use of non-interconnected VoIP, video conferencing, and electronic messaging services in conjunction with video games or otherwise.

### What are the obligations for video game companies?

- Video game companies must ensure that any advanced communications services they offer, such as voice or text chat, are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities, unless doing so is not achievable.
- To achieve this, video game companies may either build accessibility into the video game hardware or software, or use third-party accessibility solutions that

are available to consumers at nominal cost. When ensuring accessibility through these options is not achievable, developers and service providers must ensure that their services and equipment are compatible with peripheral devices, such as screen readers or specialized equipment commonly used by individuals with disabilities, if achievable.

- Video game companies that provide ACS must not install network features, functions, or capabilities that impede accessibility or usability.

## **What does it mean to be “accessible” and “usable”?**

For ACS to be *accessible*, individuals with disabilities must be able to locate, identify, and operate the functions of advanced communications services or equipment. Individuals with disabilities must also be able to access all information necessary to operate and use the advanced communications service or equipment.

For example, individuals who are blind or have low vision must be able to locate and operate a game’s in-game text chat features, and access the information necessary to do so. A developer may need to ensure that a game offers players instructions on how to locate and use the available accessibility settings, which may include an option to read aloud the game’s text chat using text-to-speech technology.

Similarly, as a step toward ensuring that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can operate a video game’s communication functions, a developer could offer deaf or hard of hearing individuals an option to convert voice chat audio to text using automated speech recognition.

To be *usable*, individuals with disabilities must be able to learn about and operate the advanced communications service’s features, and must be able to access information and documentation for the service, including instructions and user guides. In addition, companies must provide access to support services, such as technical support hotlines and databases, call centers, service centers, repair services, and billing services.

## **What is not covered by the accessibility rules for advanced communications services?**

The accessibility rules mentioned in this guide only apply to video games and associated services and platforms that provide advanced communications services that allow players to communicate with each other. These rules do not cover non-communications aspects of video games. Also, if a video game company’s involvement in advanced communications is limited to letting its players access a separate electronic

messaging service, the company is not subject to the CVAA's accessibility requirements.

## **What can you do if you are concerned about the accessibility of communications in a video game?**

You may contact the equipment manufacturer or service provider to let them know about your accessibility concerns. Providers of advanced communications services are required to submit contact information to the FCC. The FCC's website has [contact information](#) for companies, or you can contact the Disability Rights Office (DRO) for assistance.

Whether or not you decide to first contact a company, you can request assistance from DRO to resolve an accessibility problem by submitting a "request for dispute assistance" (RDA). DRO must work with you and the company for at least 30 days to try to resolve the accessibility problem before you can file an informal complaint with the FCC.

The best way to file an RDA is through the FCC [Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Center](#) or directly at [fcc.gov/RDAform](http://fcc.gov/RDAform). This online form requests all of the information that DRO will need to assist you. You may also request dispute assistance by sending an e-mail to [dro@fcc.gov](mailto:dro@fcc.gov), or a letter to:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Disability Rights Office  
45 L Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20554

Your RDA should include the following:

- Your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.
- If communication by telephone or e-mail is not accessible to you, your preferred method of communication.
- The name of the equipment manufacturer or service provider.
- The type of device, model number, and any necessary software.
- When you purchased, acquired, or used the service or equipment, or tried to do so.
- When you became aware of the accessibility problem.
- How or why the service or equipment is not accessible to or usable by you.
- If you contacted the company about your accessibility problem, how the company responded.



- What you want the company to do to resolve your accessibility problem.
- Any other information or documentation you think may help describe or resolve your accessibility problem.

Your RDA will be assigned a case number. If your accessibility problem is not resolved in 30 days, you will have two choices:

- Request an additional 30 days for DRO to work with you and the company to try to resolve your accessibility problem.
- File an informal complaint about the accessibility problem with the FCC's Enforcement Bureau.

To request an additional 30 days or to file an informal complaint, contact DRO. If you take no action for 60 days after the 30-day time period ends, your case will be closed.

## DRO Contact Information

For more information about FCC programs to promote access for people with disabilities, you can visit the FCC's [DRO website](https://www.fcc.gov/dro) at [fcc.gov/accessibility](https://www.fcc.gov/accessibility), email DRO at [dro@fcc.gov](mailto:dro@fcc.gov), or call 202-418-2517 (voice), or 844-432-2275 (videophone).

## Other Resources

- [Accessibility of Advanced Communications Services and Equipment](#)
- [Request for Dispute Assistance for Access to Communications](#)

## More Information

To browse FCC consumer guides, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at [fcc.gov/consumers](https://www.fcc.gov/consumers).

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