



Accessibility of Advanced Communications Services and Equipment

Advanced communications services and equipment, such as computers, tablets and mobile phones, are required to be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. FCC rules implementing this requirement apply to advanced communications services and equipment - including Internet browsers on mobile phones - introduced into the marketplace or upgraded on or after October 8, 2013.

To be *accessible*, the main functions of a product or service must be locatable, identifiable and operable by individuals with varying abilities, and all information necessary to operate and use the product or service must have an accessible output or display.

To be *usable*, individuals with disabilities must be able to learn about and operate the product or service's features, and must be able to access information and documentation for the product or 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 are advanced communications services?

Advanced communications services include:

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

What equipment is used for advanced communications services?

Equipment covered by these rules includes computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones used for text messaging, instant messaging and e-mail, and any other type of device used for advanced communications services.

What are the obligations for manufacturers of equipment and service providers?

- If achievable, manufacturers must make sure that people with disabilities have access to the hardware they produce, as well as software components they provide, such as the operating system, user interface, applications, and Internet browser. The obligations apply also to any upgrades used for advanced communications services.
- Providers are responsible for making their advanced communications services accessible, including the hardware or software applications they provide.



- Manufacturers may build accessibility into their products -- and providers into their services -- or rely on other companies or entities to create solutions and make them available to consumers at a nominal cost.
- When accessibility is not achievable, manufacturers and providers must make their equipment and services compatible with other accessibility devices or specialized equipment, such as refreshable Braille displays, visual signaling devices, and magnifiers, unless such compatibility is not achievable.
- Manufacturers and providers are not required to make every feature and function of every device or service accessible for every disability. They may offer products and services with varied functions, features and prices that are accessible to the full range of consumers with varying types of disabilities.
- Providers must not remove or hinder the transmission of accessibility information or data, such as tags and navigational controls for screen reader technologies that have been built into content.

What are the accessibility requirements for Internet browsers?

Internet browsers installed by manufacturers on equipment used for advanced communications services must be accessible and usable for individuals with disabilities, unless doing so is not achievable. Advanced communications service providers have this same obligation if they provide or require the installation and use of an Internet browser as an underlying component of their service.

What are the exceptions to these accessibility rules?

Equipment used for advanced communications services that is customized for the unique needs of a particular business, and that is not offered directly to the public, is exempt from the FCC's accessibility requirements.

The FCC may waive the accessibility requirements for equipment or services that are designed for multiple purposes, but are primarily designed for purposes other than using advanced communications services. Under this provision, the FCC granted a waiver for video game software until January 2017. In addition, the FCC waived the advanced communications accessibility requirements for basic e-readers.

Are multipurpose devices subject to other accessibility requirements?

Yes. Equipment for advanced communication services must follow other accessibility requirements as well, including the following:

- **Telecommunications Access.** FCC rules addressing accessibility requirements for telecommunications products, services and relevant equipment can be found in the [Telecommunications Access for People with Disabilities](#) consumer guide.
- **Internet Browsers.** Internet browsers on the mobile phones must be accessible to and usable by individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- **Closed Captioning.** Equipment that receives, plays back or records video programming, including mobile devices, must be capable of displaying closed captions. The FCC's [Closed Captioning Display Requirements for Equipment](#) consumer guide has information about these requirements.

For more information

For more information about FCC programs to promote accessibility for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's [Disability Rights Office website](#).

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at fcc.gov/consumers.

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