Articulate 360 and Accessible E-Learning

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As the #1 creator platform for workplace learning, Articulate strives to empower *all* learners to have accessible, compelling, and enjoyable e-learning experiences.

We know that creating accessible e-learning is both a mission-critical business goal and a legal requirement for our customers, which makes providing excellent accessibility support a top priority for us.

We continue to invest in improvements that go beyond technical compliance, including working with usability testers who rely on assistive tools like screen readers to vet our products, with the goal of facilitating online learning that is accessible to everyone.

Accessibility in Online Learning

"Accessible" means the content is designed for all learners—including those with auditory, visual, mobility, learning, or other disabilities. As of 2022, over 7.5 million Americans (age 16 and over) in the workforce identify as having a disability. Think about how many folks in your organization might miss out on skills development without access to accessible training.

Imagine this scene: Our learner, Jane, is sitting in front of her computer, ready to take her organization's required e-learning course. She turns up the volume on her speakers and listens to the narrator speak while a video plays on the screen. A few moments later, the course poses a series of questions about images on her screen. Jane uses her mouse to interact with the quiz and submit her answers.

The scene above describes a standard online learning experience involving fairly common activities. But are these activities accessible to all learners?

Let's say, for instance, that Jane has hearing loss. How will Jane access the information from the audio narration? Are there closed captions or a script panel? Now let's imagine that Jane is visually impaired. In addition to the audio narration, the course provides information via images, navigation controls, and

exercises on the screen. Can Jane use a standard screen reader tool to navigate the course? Do the images and videos have alternative text so her screen reader can describe them to her? The course also has an interactive quiz. Will Jane be able to complete this activity if she can't visually scan the screen?

As you can see, creating accessible online learning is critical to learner success. And not only is website accessibility <u>required by law in the United States</u> and elsewhere, but it also benefits all online learners. Just as the Americans with Disabilities Act-mandated curb cuts for wheelchair accessibility have benefited caretakers with strollers, the elderly, and others outside the original target group, website accessibility standards help ensure a digital environment that is easier for everyone to understand and navigate.

One example: Providing a transcript or closed captions for course audio and video sequences benefits not only people with hearing loss—as we saw in our example with Jane above—but also anyone who doesn't have access to headphones and is taking the course in a noisy or shared environment.

Articulate 360's two award-winning authoring apps, **Storyline 360** and **Rise 360**, offer intuitive accessibility features for course creators. Here's an overview of the accessibility optimizations you can expect from Articulate 360.

Accessibility in Articulate 360

Articulate 360 delivers all the creator tools and resources you need to build online learning quickly and effectively, all in a single subscription. That includes powerful accessibility functionality in our two award-winning authoring tools, Rise 360 and Storyline 360. Storyline 360 and Rise 360 empower course designers to easily create compelling, enjoyable learning experiences for everyone. Features such as screen reader device support, keyboard navigation accessibility, alternative text and closed captioning options, customizable settings, and more (outlined below), make exploring e-learning content easier than ever for learners using assistive technologies. As part of a subscription-based platform, Articulate 360 tools are continuously updated with new features, and our team of industry experts is committed to putting accessibility at the forefront of functional updates.

Storyline 360
Accessible media:
Learners who use assistive technologies may need the rich visual media in courses to be accompanied by <u>alternative text</u>, closed captions, or audio clips for legibility. Storyline 360 makes it simple to import closed captions or create them from scratch using the built-in caption editor. Your captions automatically get included when publishing to Review 360, the web, an LMS/LRS, or an MP4 video file. Learners can even use Live Caption in Google Chrome. Additionally, the <u>text-to-speech feature</u> can provide audio voice-over tracks for silent videos. And you can now deliver video content to learners, regardless of their internet speed, with adaptive <u>streaming video</u>.

Screen reader expansion:

Learners use a range of devices to participate in e-learning. Storyline 360 offers accessibility support for all devices—including tablets and mobile phones. In addition to JAWS, learners can now use NVDA, VoiceOver, and TalkBack to perceive their Storyline 360 courses.

Screen reader experience:

Learners who use screen readers rely on a website's semantic formatting to paint a mental picture of the content that sighted users get by visually scanning the page. To improve the learner's experience, Storyline 360 authors can use text styles to identify headings throughout their courses, making it easier for screen reader users to understand and explore content divided by headings, links, and lists. We've also improved the screen reader experience for specific interactions like hotspots, drop-down lists, markers, video controls, and the optional launch page. You can further improve the screen reader experience by converting layers to modal dialogs when you need learners to focus on specific content, such as quiz question feedback.

Keyboard navigation:

Learners may rely on keyboard commands and shortcuts to navigate their learning environment. Storyline 360 offers accessible keyboard navigation, including intuitive course player controls that are similar to popular video-streaming sites. We also added keyboard shortcuts to let learners do things like mute and unmute audio, zoom, replay the slide, turn closed captions on or off, and more. And learners can easily skip repetitive player navigation controls, such as the sidebar tabs, and return to the first object on the slide simply by pressing a key—a valuable accessibility feature for screen reader users and keyboard-only users.

Text readability:

Learners with low vision, dyslexia, or cognitive disabilities often need to swap out fonts, change the color, enlarge the font size, or increase the line spacing to make text easier to read. Thanks to the accessible text feature, learners can use stylesheets or browser extensions to make these changes to the text in Storyline 360 courses—just like they do on websites. If text no longer fits within its bounding box when learners reformat it, a scroll bar appears so they can still access all the content. And the modern player style uses accessible contrast by default, making it easier for learners to read text, decipher icons, perceive interactions, and navigate content. Authors can also take advantage of new quiz result slides with fresh designs that have color and contrast accessibility baked right in.

Customizable accessibility settings:

Learners are not a single, homogenous group—they're a diverse population with a wide range of needs. To empower learners to personalize their learning experiences according to their needs, we added accessibility settings to the course player. With these settings, learners can change the zoom mode, turn both background audio and accessible text on or off, and toggle keyboard shortcuts. You can also help learners minimize distractions and boost accessibility in published courses with a full-screen toggle. Empower learners to explore training at their own pace with the new course playback speed control.

For more information about accessibility improvements in **Storyline 360**, review the Storyline 360 articles in our accessibility hub.

Rise 360

Accessible interactions:

Flashcard stacks, flashcard grids, and process interactions are now accessible. We're proud to have pioneered the first accessible flashcard carousel interaction in the industry. Be sure to check out the complete list of accessible blocks.

Screen readers:

Learners often use screen readers to experience e-learning courses, so it's important to note that Rise 360 supports JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver, and TalkBack screen readers. You can now broaden your impact and enhance accessibility for a range of audiences by translating screen reader labels into other languages.

Contrast ratio:

Learners with visual disabilities may have difficulty perceiving content on a webpage. We've examined the color contrast and opacity of elements in Rise 360 and adjusted them to be more accessible—while maintaining the clean, modern design you expect from Rise 360.
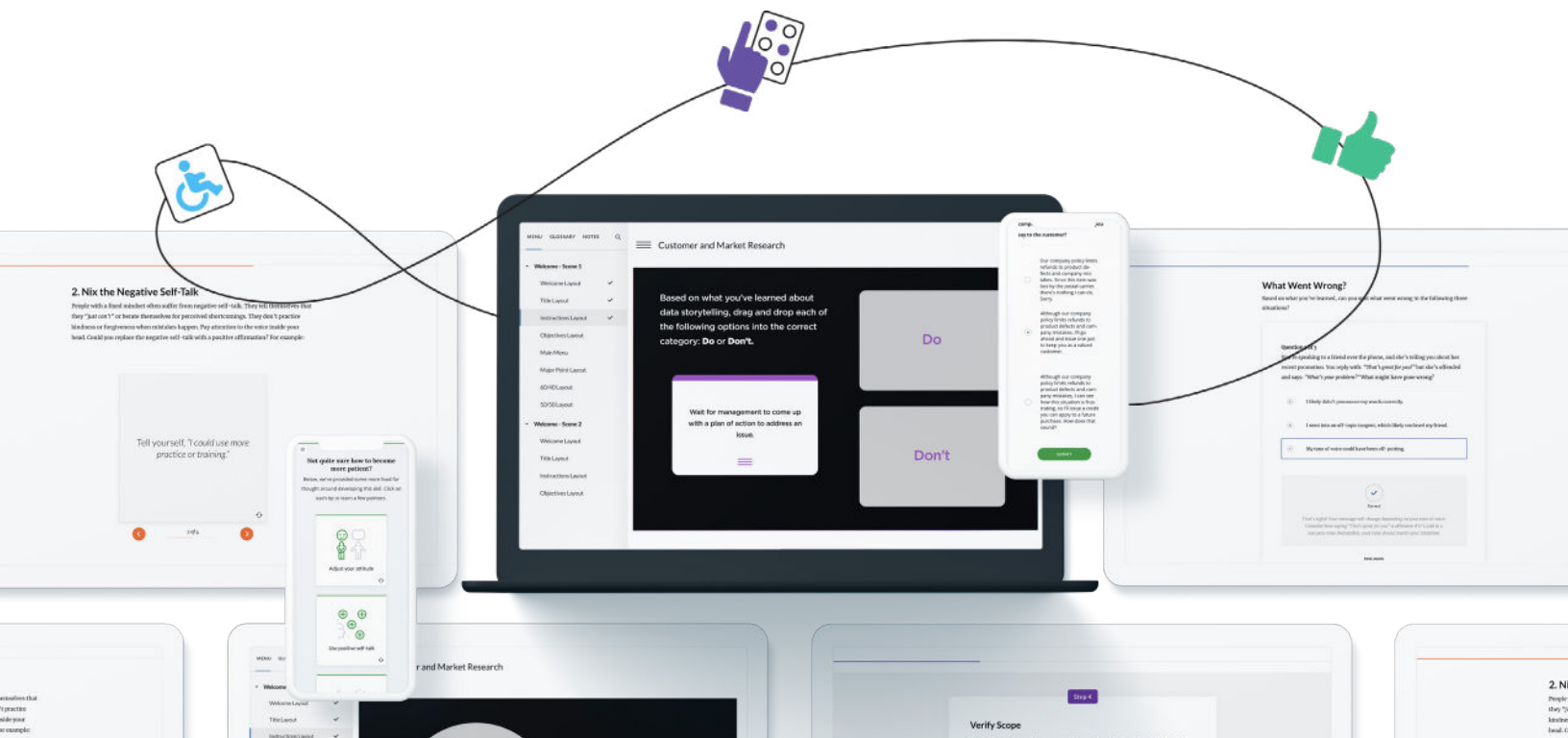
Alternative text:

Learners who can't see need a way to access information from image-based learning. Rise 360 ensures alternative text (alt text) is available where it's needed for course comprehension.
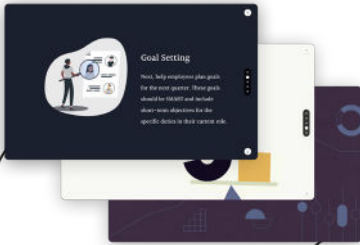
Closed captions:

Learners who can't hear your content (for whatever reason, be it physiological or environmental) rely on closed captions for access to audio content. It's easy to upload closed captions to your videos in Rise 360. You can even include subtitles in multiple languages, so each learner can choose their preferred language. Note that Rise 360 doesn't currently support captions for audio blocks, so we suggest adding the script in a text block or attachment.

For more information about accessibility improvements in **Rise 360**, review the Rise 360 articles in our accessibility hub.

Accessibility Is a Mindset

Accessibility standards and practices are evolving, which means the tools you rely on to create and deliver online learning need to evolve, too. Articulate is committed to continually improving our products to help you deliver the best possible learning outcomes for your workforce. It's one reason we offer **Articulate 360** as a subscription-based platform, ensuring that you always have the latest training technology at your fingertips. Read more about <u>our commitment to accessibility</u> on our website.

Ready to create accessible e-learning with Articulate 360?
Whether you're new to online learning or a longtime creator, Articulate 360 offers everything you need to create accessible online training.
Contact us at sales@articulate.com or sign up for a <u>free 30-day trial</u>.

Appendix: Digital Accessibility Standards

There are two digital accessibility standards most commonly used in the United States:

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines):
A set of accessibility standards for web design that can guide your e-learning accessibility efforts.
<u>Click here for our WCAG quickstart guide for e-learning developers</u>.

Section 508:
Section 508 is an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that requires that all federal information available electronically be provided in a variety of methods to address various disabilities. <u>Click here for our top Section 508 Compliance resources for e-learning</u>.

Before you begin designing an accessible course, make sure you're familiar with the set of standards your content needs to meet for compliance. Different countries have varying legislation and guidelines in place that document specific compliance requirements.