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# Online Wireless Accessibility Information Resources

In response to consumers with disabilities unsure about which wireless devices and services best fit their needs and abilities, the Wireless RERC developed [“Your Guide to Choosing a Cell Phone”](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/for-consumers/your-guide-to-choosing-a-cell-phone-page-1-of-2.html) in 2004.

Today, all of the major wireless manufacturers and service providers, as well as some third party resources, maintain websites offering accessibility information. These websites are powerful tools for gathering and comparing information about available products and services for customers with disabilities. At the same time, navigating these sites, and the sheer amount of available information, can be intimidating for some customers.

In spring, 2010, the Wireless RERC conducted a study among members of its Consumer Advisory Network (CAN), a nationwide group of consumers with varying degrees of abilities, to determine the usefulness of these online accessibility resources. CAN members were asked to explore these sites as if they were intending to purchase a new wireless product or service.

Reaching accessibility information from these sites’ homepages can be challenging. This information may be found under a “corporate governance” section, or “help and support” pages. Sometimes this information is identified as “disability resources”, but more often than not as “accessibility”. To minimize these challenges to study participants, we provided links directly to each site’s accessibility pages.

We asked survey respondents to rate the usefulness of each online accessibility site on a scale from one (poor) to five (excellent). Respondents were also encouraged to comment on the information that they found especially useful or helpful, as well as to suggest improvements.

We separated the resources into three different categories:

1. Third-Party Accessibility Resources
2. Service Provider Resources
3. Manufacturer Resources

1. Third-party accessibility resources are websites dedicated to providing accessibility information on both wireless devices and services. They may also provide useful information on wireless solutions specific to an individual’s disability. Two sites were chosen in this category: CTIA’s AccessWireless.org and the Mobile Manufacturer’s Forum. One respondent noted of these third-party resources:

“CTIA had more information in each disability area. They seemed to focus more on hearing loss than other disabilities. This is good for me because I have a severe hearing loss. They also had videos to help deaf and hard of hearing users determine which phone that would work best for them. Mobile Manufacturers had much less information on each disability but they did have some features that I especially liked. 1) They had device details that showed sketches and names of each type of device; 2) They had a 'Find Phones' page that helped find each of the type of phones shown in the Device Details page--and how to evaluate them; and 3) They are working on How-To-Guides. Both websites had icons that enabled the user to increase font size to make reading easier.”

Note: Additional sites have become available since this study, and are included at the end of this report.

2. Wireless service providers’ websites offer details on end-user services and devices that address the communication needs of people with disabilities. Many of these sites list information relating to specific disabilities, such as text-to-speech solutions for blind or low vision consumers, or service features that assist individuals with dexterity or mobility impairments. Some service providers also maintain call centers for support to customers with disabilities. One respondent said this about service providers’ sites:

“The AT&T website had the information divided into very clear subsections. The Sprint website listed the different phones with their specific accessibility features. T-mobile does a good job of describing their new TTY plan. And Verizon has a great detailed breakdown of the different accessibly features in their phones.”

3. Study participants were also asked to explore and comment on handst manufacturers’ sites. These sites may detail accessibility features built into handsets, often listed by specific disability. For example, hearing aid users might find information about a device’s speech-to-text capabilities or hearing aid compatibility (“M” & “T” rating). Some of these sites provide links to service providers offering that particular handset.

One respondent offered this observation regarding the Research in Motion (RIM) accessibility site:

“BlackBerry provided a list of features available for several disabilities but the descriptions of each feature were very brief. It would be nice if BB expanded these descriptions to provide as much info as I found on the iPhone site.”

Among the study participants’ other suggestions, some with visual limitations wanted to see some of the websites use fonts they could enlarge. Others found issues with colors on the websites that did not provide enough contrast for them to see clearly. Fortunately, web browsers offer some of these options [BEN: please add specifics here – which browsers offer which accessibility features?]

Overall, respondents found the accessibility information useful and helpful for their needs. Survey results indicate an average rating of 3.9 (1=poor, 5=excellent) for nearly all the resources explored in this study.

However, it remains a challenge to locate these accessibility-specific web pages within an organization’s website. The good news is that almost all of the websites offer powerful search tools. Searching “accessibility” will often link directly to these accessibility pages.

Following are the online resources evaluated through this study. Clicking on the hyperlinks below lead directly to the accessibility web pages...

**General Accessibility Guides on Wireless Technology**

[CTIA's Access Wireless webpage](http://www.accesswireless.org/Home.aspx)

[Mobile Manufacturers Forum's webpage](http://www.mobileaccessibility.info/)

**Wireless Carrier’s Accessibility Resources**

[AT&T's accessibility webpage](http://www.wireless.att.com/learn/articles-resources/disability-resources/disability-resources.jsp)

[Sprint's accessibility webpage](http://www.sprint.com/landings/accessibility/?ECID=vanity:accessibility)

[T‐Mobile's accessibility webpage](http://www.t-mobile.com/Company/CompanyInfo.aspx?tp=Abt_Tab_ConsumerInfo&tsp=Abt_Sub_AccessibilityPolicy)

[Verizon's accessibility webpage](http://aboutus.verizonwireless.com/accessibility/index.html)

**Wireless Manufacturer’s Accessibility Resources**

[Apple iPhone's accessibility webpage](http://www.apple.com/accessibility/ios/)

[BlackBerry's accessibility webpage](http://us.blackberry.com/legal/accessibility.html)

[HTC's accessible devices webpage](http://www.htc.com/us/accessibility/)

[LG's Hearing Aid Compatibility Public Notice](http://www.lg.com/us/public-notices/general/hearing-aid-compatibility-20120702)

[Motorola's accessibility webpage](http://responsibility.motorola.com/index.php/consumers/accessibility/)

[Nokia’s accessibility webpages](http://www.nokia.com/global/about-nokia/people-and-planet/sustainable-devices/accessibility/accessibility/)

[Samsung's accessibility webpage](http://www.samsung.com/us/consumer/learningresources/mobile/accessibility/pop_accessibility.html)

The Wireless RERC welcomes additional feedback from both consumers and the wireless industry, including recommendations for additional sites of interest to customers with disabilities.