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# Itch.io Web Accessibility Report

## Executive Summary

I performed various methods to assess the accessibility of Itch.io's homepage and game browser page. I utilized four different high level methods to carry out the accessibility report, including using my own experience and also using applications that assessed the pages automatically. For manual evaluation, I used W3's 'Easy Checks' and CSS and HTML validators, my own assessment of Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) and reading level. For automatic evaluation, I used WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool and TAW, a web accessibility test.

These itch.io pages have a rather unorthodox structure, and have gaps in accessibility due to elements such as missing alt text and lack of coherent tab navigation. My first major recommendation is to reformat the page with more attention to structural elements such as meaningful headers and tab order. The other major recommendation is to pay more attention to screen reader legibility when labelling and creating images within the site. This includes using alt text on all images, or finding an alternative solution such as meaningful tab order so that screen readers focus on content titles only, rather than their blurbs and descriptions.

## About

Itch.io is a free-to-use game browsing platform with more than 450,000 total games. The website caters to amateur independent developers and gamers alike, since there are few rules and barriers in the way of uploading fresh content. The site hosts free and paid games, game assets, tools, comics, and books. Downloading and playing free games requires no subscription, but does usually require email. An account is required for uploading content among other organization benefits such as keeping and maintaining game lists.

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**SHUT IN**  
 9.2 / 10 Full Sync  
 9 / 10 Crushy, Heavy Buried Treasure  
 4.5 / 5 #RetroGaming #RetroGaming  
 \$2.49 50% OFF



**Dead Estate**  
 #Arcade, #Horror  
 OUT ON 10/19 - Trapped in a monstrous  
 \$14.99



**Echo Beach**  
 In a future where all music banned, you are the hunter.  
 WEB



**The Sundew**  
 #Kickstarter  
 Flee the conspiracy. Reverse the dystopia.  
 \$15

Figure 1: Home Page

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FILTER RESULTS

- Platform
  - Windows
  - macOS
  - Linux
  - Android
  - iOS
  - Web
- Price
  - Free
  - On Sale
  - Paid
  - \$5 or less
  - \$15 or less
- When
  - Last Day
  - Last 7 days
  - Last 30 days
- Genre
- Input methods

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 A 12 year girl was left alone in house by ...  
 Bruno Bricchi  
 Interactive Fiction  
 Windows



**Fear Tapes: Game Show**  
 Time To Have FUN!  
 Matthew Ager  
 Survival  
 Windows Apple



**SAMHAINOPHOBIA**



**BAD BOX**

Figure 2: Browse Games Page

The website's main goal is to get the user to interact with user generated content. Both the home and browse games pages represent this by having most of the focus on large thumbnails along with ways to sort and search content.

## Methods

### W3.org Easy Checks

The biggest red flags found from the easy checks evaluation were surrounding the page titles, alt text, headings, structure, and tab key navigation of both the homepage and browse page. Page title for the homepage included an advertisement-type blurb before stating page info: *Download the latest indie games - itch.io*. This makes the homepage sound more like a link when not viewing it directly or using a screen reader. Using a grid layout for displaying main content, both pages show thumbnails of games but lack alt text for these images. All page headings are h2, meaning there is no meaning behind each header denoting a structure. Navigating with the keyboard alone is quite burdening, as it requires pressing the tab key a lot to actually reach the content grid - which seems to be the main focus of the page for sighted users.

### W3.org Validator

Coinciding with the easy checks, the automatic validator showed a lack of alt text and proper headings. Considering only one type of image - the thumbnail - is shown on these pages, the alt text was missing on all of them. Despite this, there was one h1 used as the top-left logo of the page, but the page is still structurally unsound due to h2 being used as the only visible header.

### Readability

Readability was scored using Readable.com, in which the tool automatically assesses the reading level of a website by extracting and analyzing its text. Both the games and home page resulted in a reading level below grade 5. The text of the pages was quite simple, but belongs mostly to user-generated content. This means the grade can vary dramatically depending on what the page contains at any given hour. For the non-user content within the site, the tool found that the language used was still easily understandable, despite some grammar errors.

### Automated Evaluations

Despite the manual checks, many factors went unnoticed to me that were found by the tools used for automatic evaluations. One tool was WAVE, which tagged all errors and warnings for page accessibility on the page itself. A specific case of something I missed was redundant titles for each game cell. This means that itch uses something other than alt text or the game title to describe the game title, internally. There were also many instances of redundant links. This means the screen reader may read the redundant text multiple times. WAVE also reported several instances of very low contrast text, which nearly blends into the white background of the pages. Finally, on the browse page specifically, WAVE reported 40 ARIA errors, which means itch developers didn't follow ARIA HTML standards when building the site.

In the TAW Summary, the major problem areas once again included lack of alt text on images. This is a problem to accessibility of a site in general, but especially so for those who are blind or vision impaired. When an image is hosted online, it shouldn't solely include image data, but text to accompany it. Zero images on the site have this text. TAW also found 100+ problems with both page's navigability - a score based on the structural layout of a site.

### **Screen Reader Experience**

As predicted from the other evaluation methods listed above, the screen reader experience was difficult. The screen reader will read plenty of text before getting to any main content - similar to the order of tab navigation. Considering this was my first experience with a screen reader outside of other class activities, I am biased in my feelings about it. I felt as though most of what was being read was irrelevant, but that's simply because it's reading everything on the page. This page is just heavily crowded, so it feels rather unpleasant for a screen reader. One positive that came from using the browse page was the screen reader favoring customizable filters quickly, which is the main goal of the browse page.

## **POUR Results**

### **Perceivable**

#### 1.1 - Text Alternatives

Home and Browse pages include purely image-based content with no alternative text. No alternative text found anywhere.

#### 1.2 Time-based Media

N/A

#### 1.3 - Adaptable

Some items contain no data that relates the content together. Sequences are sometimes out of meaningful order.

#### 1.4 - Distinguishable

Some questionable use of color contrast - some very light text on a white background.

### **Operable**

#### 2.1 - Keyboard Accessible

While the TAW Summary reported no fault in keyboard accessibility, I found that tab key navigation suffers on both pages.

#### 2.2 - Enough Time

N/A

#### 2.3 - Seizures

No automated results, but user-generated gif images can be nearly anything, including flashing lights.

#### 2.4 - Navigable

TAW Summary reports an immense amount of problems in this area, specifically due to lack of link purpose. This means that it's difficult for a screen reader to recognize where a link will take the user. In addition to this, header information is incoherent due to lack of header structure.

### **Understandable**

#### 3.1 - Readable

Readability was below grade 5.

#### 3.2 - Predictable

User input didn't always coincide with site data.

#### 3.3 - Input Assistance

TAW Summary found lack of labels or instructions within these two pages.

### **Robust**

#### 4.1 - Compatible

Many parsing errors were found, coinciding with the screen reader experience. Screen reader will read text unseen and irrelevant.

## **Recommendations**

I recommend reassessing the overall structure of the home and browse pages, as there is no coherent header structure to follow ARIA guidelines. Reformatting structure can result in a lower number of errors related to guidelines 1.3 - Adaptable, 2.1 - Keyboard Accessible, 2.4 - Navigable, 3.3 - Input Assistance, and 4.1 - Compatible. A structural reformatting would mostly negate issues with navigation. The easiest fix related to accessibility would be to add alt text to all images.

Though this would need to align with the user-generated content the text is describing, it would allow for actually meaningful screen reader narration.