



# Basic WordPress Accessibility

A training module brought to you by the Syracuse University IT Accessibility Office

## Training Description

In this module, you will learn the following:

1. Toggling the **Toolbar** in the WordPress Visual Editor
2. Understanding and implementing **alternative text** in WordPress
3. Formatting with **styles**
4. Defining numbered and bulleted **lists**
5. Identifying the **site language**
6. Adding a **page title**
7. Adding **tab focus**

## Prerequisite Skills Required

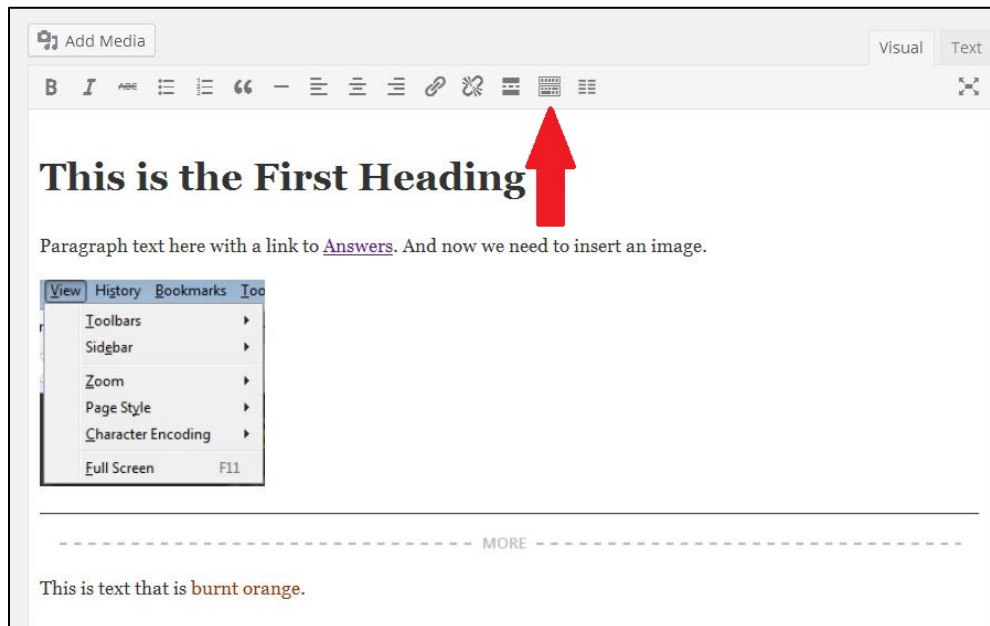
- Access to a Syracuse University [Expressions or Expressions Plus](#) account (this includes departmental WordPress sites)
- A **basic working knowledge** of the following WordPress functions:
  - Installing plug-ins
  - Creating and editing pages
  - Uploading images
  - Adding and editing hyperlinks

## Notes on Accessibility Terminology

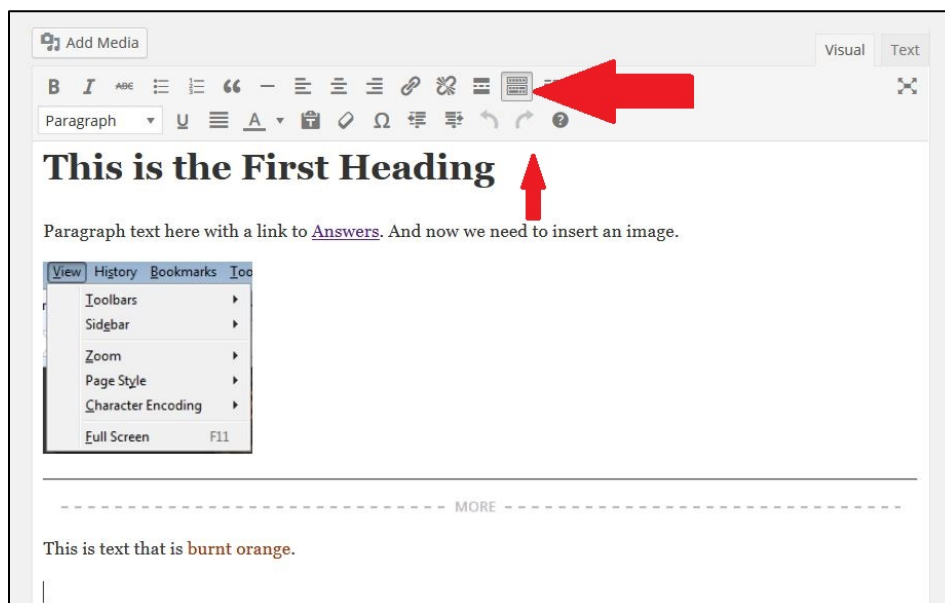
One term you will encounter frequently in this tutorial is **screen reader**. A screen reader is a piece of software that allows individuals who are blind or otherwise have difficulty reading text visually to access digital content by **listening** to it. Screen readers can read much of a computer's interface, but cannot decipher the content of certain things—such as images—so certain types of formatting are needed to make digital materials accessible to screen readers. This tutorial includes information about how various formatting features in WordPress can facilitate making your pages and posts more accessible.

## Toggling the Toolbar

When you edit a page in WordPress, the site gives you an option to use a [Visual Editor](#) or a **Text Editor**. In this tutorial, we will be using the Visual Editor. The toolbar in this editor contains a button titled **Toolbar Toggle**. This allows you to show or hide an [additional toolbar](#) underneath the first, containing a number of formatting-related items.



Location of Toolbar Toggle button



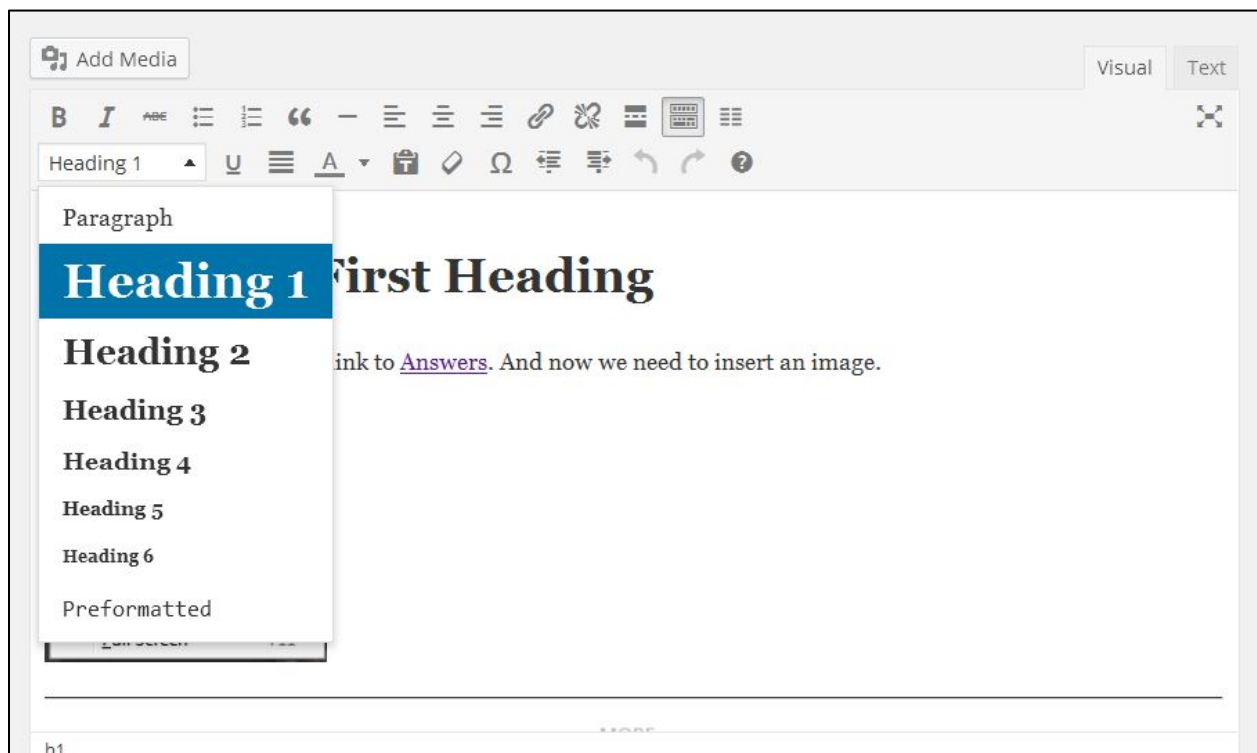
The lower toolbar opens...

## Formatting with Styles

Now that you've opened the formatting toolbar, you will notice a drop-down menu on the far left of the editing window. This toolbar contains a number of different **style tags** that you can use to mark up and organize your page or post. The default style for pieces of text is **paragraph**; other styles include various levels of **headings** and **preformatted text** (which we will not be using here).

**Headings are very important!!** They allow you to create a **hierarchical structure** on your page or post. Additionally, screen readers read text elements tagged as headings as “Heading Level 1/2/3/etc.,” allowing users to list and skip through different parts of pages instead of having to navigate each paragraph or section individually.

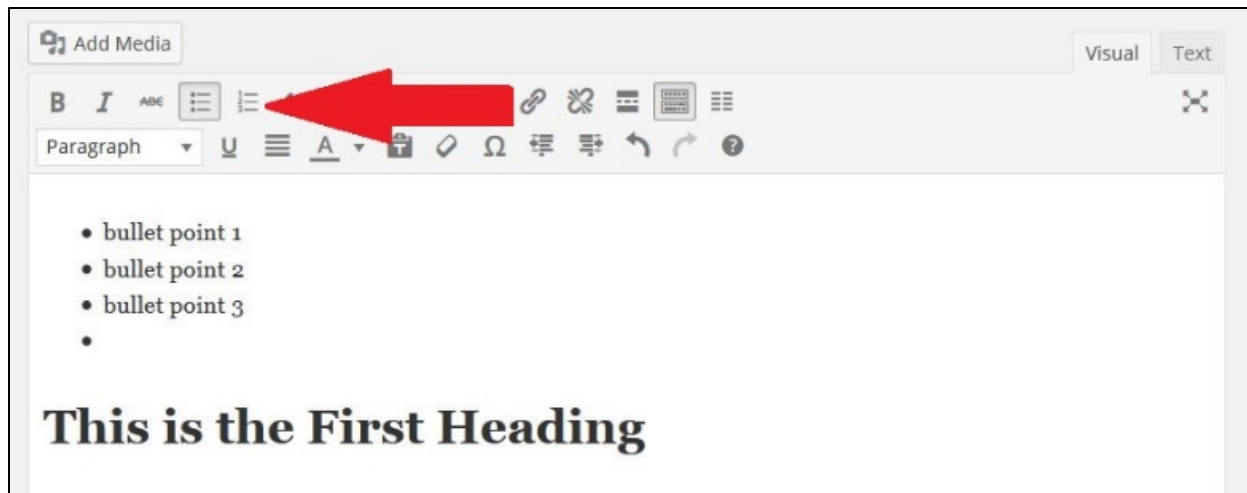
**Make sure** that you use headings in the correct hierarchical order—**don't** nest, say, a Heading 1 underneath a Heading 2, or a Heading 3 under a Heading 1 without a Heading 2 in between. Think about how you want the **content** of your page to be organized if read **sequentially from beginning to end**. **What** should come first, and **why**? What should you put **next**? Which pieces logically go **inside** or **underneath** which other pieces?



Formatting toolbar with dropdown menu showing paragraph, headings, and preformatted styles

## Define numbered and bulleted lists

Use the top row of the formatting toolbar to add bullets or numbering and create a list. Bulleted and numbered lists allow screen readers to indicate to users that they're in a list, instead of just reading “bullet [item] bullet [item]”.



Bulleted list button selected

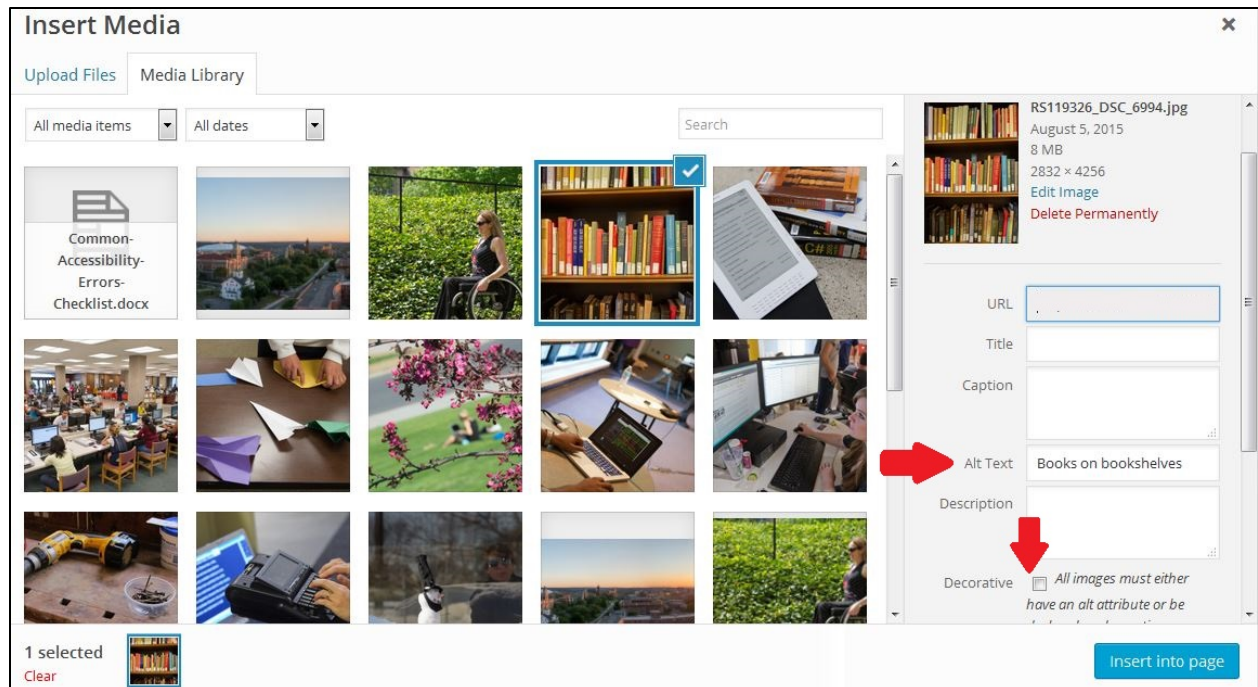
## Adding Alternative Text

**Alternative (alt) text** is a tool that allows screen readers to “read” the content of an image. With alt text, you can set, for instance, an image of a dog to read “dog” instead of something like “021xv9ad.jpg.”

**Tip:** Alt text is **not** typically the same as a detailed image description – its purpose is to provide screen reader users, or users who turn images off in their browsers, to understand the **purpose or meaning** of a given image. For more detailed information on how to use alternative text effectively, visit [WebAIM’s alt text page](#).

In WordPress, you can set alt text when uploading or editing an image in the **Media Library**. **Please make sure to put alt text in the alt text field, NOT in the Title, Caption, or Description fields.** (However, there are instances in which including text in the Caption field may be appropriate; see WebAIM’s alt text page for more info.)

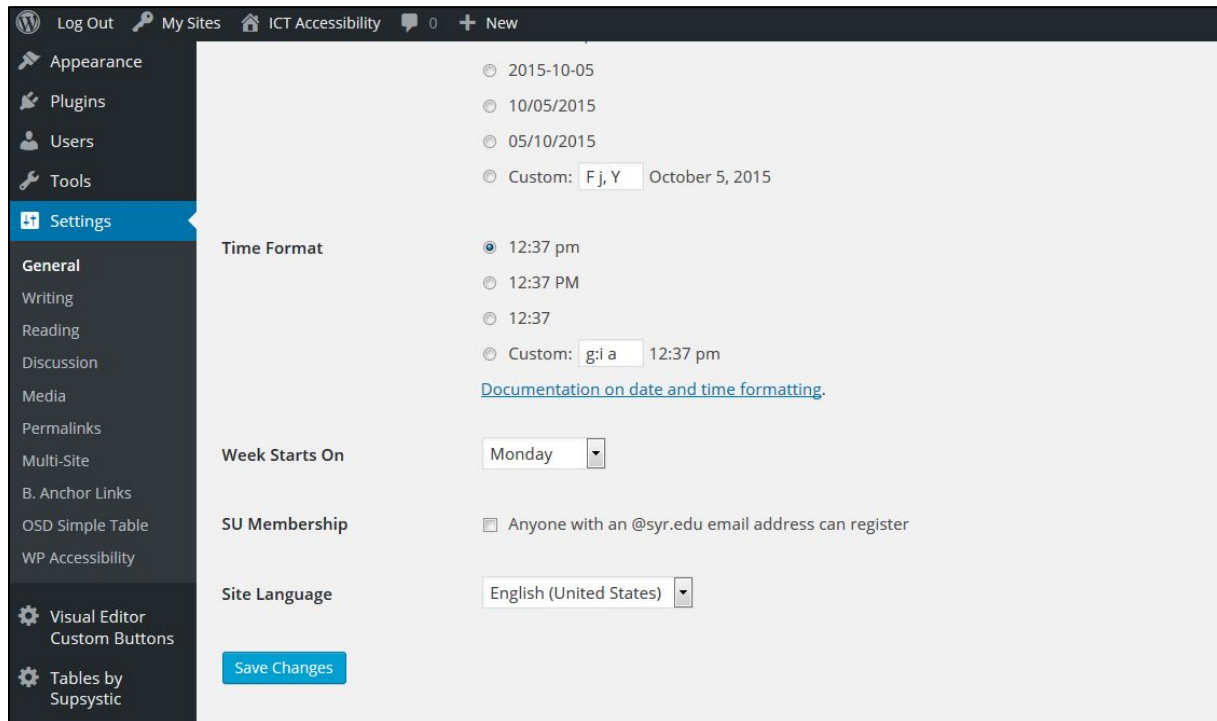
**Also:** Images that are **decorative** (do not convey a purpose or meaning) should be set as such. This makes screen readers **skip over** them altogether.



Adding alt text to an image, with red arrows pointing to the Alt Text and Decorative options

# Identifying the Site Language

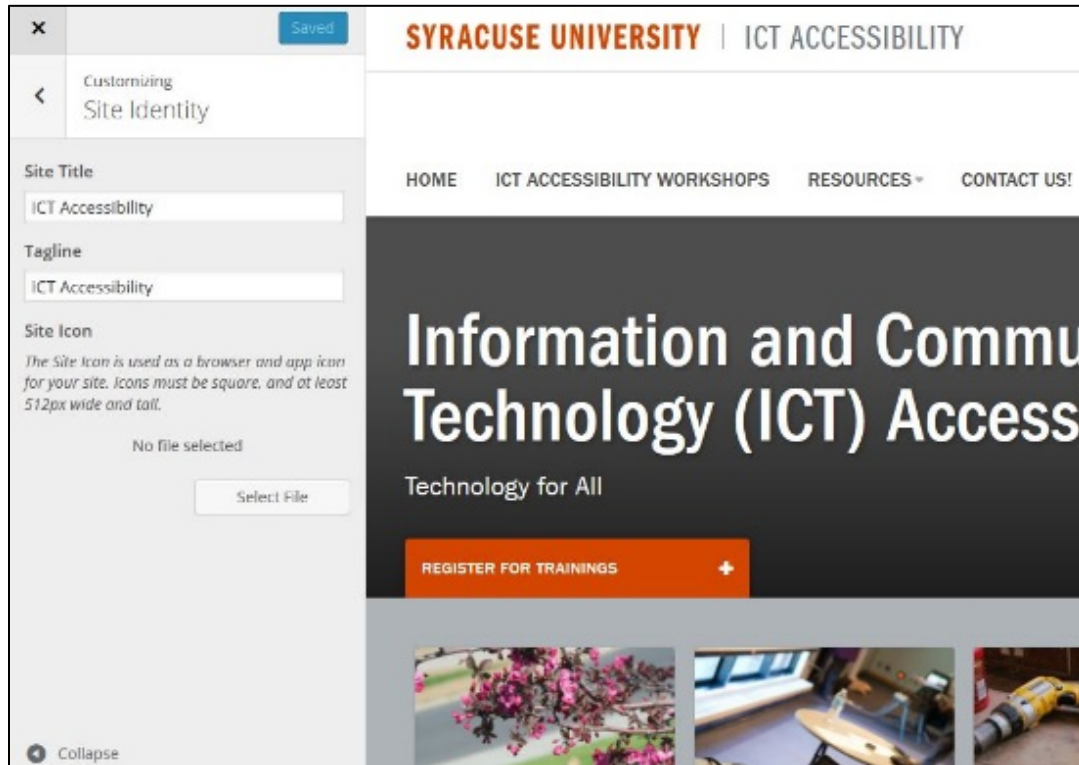
Identifying the site language makes it easier for screen readers to know what language your Wordpress site should be read in. To set the language in WordPress, go to **Settings** → **General** in the dashboard. You can set the language at the bottom of the General pane, right before the **Save Changes** button.



General Settings page, showing Site Language and other settings

## Adding a Page Title

In the dashboard, go to **Appearance: Customize**. Open **Site Identity**, and add a title in the **Site Title** field. Don't forget to click **Save**!



Site Identity pane open with site title and tagline inputted

## Adding Tab Focus

Install the plugin **WP-Accessibility**, and activate it if needed:



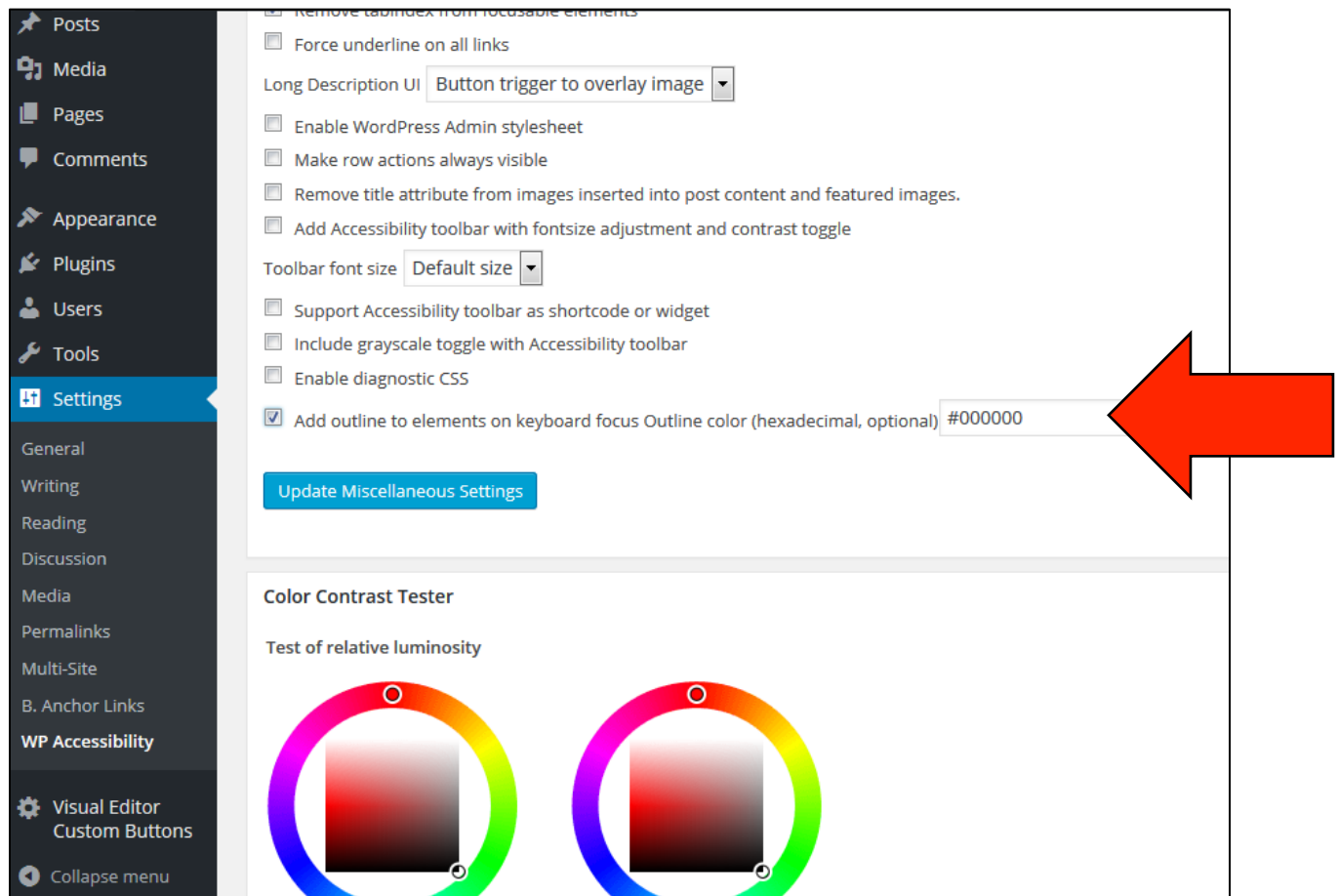
### WP Accessibility

WP Accessibility fixes common accessibility issues in your WordPress site.

By Joe Dolson

In the settings pane for the WP Accessibility plugin (Settings tab in Dashboard: WP Accessibility), there is an option in the **Miscellaneous Accessibility Settings** section called **Add outline to elements on**

**keyboard focus.** Set the **Outline color** value to **000000** (which is the hexadecimal value for black). Do not check any other options!



WP Accessibility settings pane showing "Add outline to elements on keyboard focus" option checked