Carousels & Sliders

What is it for?

A carousel is a sliding banner that automatically cycles through images or messages on a webpage, like a digital billboard. They are very common on websites, but they cause a lot of accessibility problems.

When content moves on its own, people who read slowly or have difficulty focusing can miss it entirely. People who use special software to read screens aloud often cannot follow the content in the right order. And people who cannot use a mouse frequently have no way to control the carousel at all.

There is also a simpler problem: research shows that most people ignore carousels and never click past the first slide. So anything important hidden in slide two or three is missed by almost everyone.

How to support it

The best solution is often to not use a carousel. Showing content in a simple list or grid means everyone can see it, without any of the accessibility problems.

When a carousel is truly needed, it should never move on its own without the user choosing to advance it. The controls need to be big, clear, and work with a keyboard as well as a mouse. And nothing important should only appear inside a carousel.

Useful links

- Should I Use a Carousel? (shouldiuseacarousel.com)
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Carousel Accessibility Tutorial
- SC 2.2.2: Pause, Stop, Hide (Level A)