Landmarks & Roles

What is it for?

Imagine trying to navigate a city with no street signs, where every building looks exactly the same. That is what a website feels like to a screen reader user without Landmarks and Roles.

- Landmarks: These are like zones on a map. They tell the user 'This is the Navigation' or 'This is the Main Content'. They let users jump right to what they want to read.
- Roles: These are like name tags. They tell the user exactly what an item is. A plain box tells the user nothing, but a 'Button' role says, 'Click me!'

It is supported universally. All browsers understand standard HTML tags automatically. It's just a matter of choosing the right ones.

How to support it

The best way is to use semantic HTML (standard HTML tags). When you use the right tag, you get the Landmark or Role for free.

- Landmarks: Use <nav> for menus and <main> for your main content.
- Roles: Use <button> for buttons and <a> for links.

The Catch

You can use code to force a plain box (`<div>`) to act like a `<button>`, but it is risky, and takes much more work.

- Using a `<button>` tag is like buying a chair. It comes ready to sit on.
- Using a `<div>` is like buying a pile of wood and writing 'Chair' on it. It says it's a chair, but you have to build the legs yourself (e.g. add keyboard support) or it will fall apart.

Useful links

- CSS Tricks - Why, How, and When to Use Semantic HTML and Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA)

- HTML Semantics and Accessibility Cheat Sheet
- How to Improve Web Accessibility with Landmarks