



**Inclusion
Scotland**

Accessible Social Media Guide

Introduction

This short guide will give you some hints and tips on how to make your social media more accessible. The guide focuses on the three social media platforms we use:

-  • Twitter
-  • Instagram
-  • and Facebook

This is not the end of the story on accessible social media. There are lots of other ways to make your social media more accessible for disabled people. There might be things that make social media more accessible for you, that are not covered in this guide. If there are, we would love to know about them. Please get in touch with our Communications and Information Worker, by emailing info@inclusionscotland.org or call 0131 370 6700 (type talk calls welcome).

Hashtags

Make sure you capitalise the first letter of each word in hashtags so that screen reader software reads out each word separately. It also makes them **#EasierToRead!**

Keep hashtags to a minimum as people using assistive technologies or keyboard tags to navigate can find it difficult to get through them.

Images and videos

Visuals are effective because they help people understand and remember more information more quickly. Social media posts with images or videos are increasingly common and get more engagement. This means more likes, comments and shares.

However, image and video posts are not accessible for many disabled people. Below is information on creating accessible images and videos for your social media posts.

Colour contrast

Colour contrast is the difference between two colours. The best print and background colours will depend on impairment. For example, dark print on a pale background is best for people with dyslexia. However, for people with some kinds of visual impairment, a pale print colour on a dark background is best. As a rule high contrast makes it much easier to read. For example:



this is low contrast



this is high contrast

Black and white create the highest contrast possible so if you are unsure stick to that!

Image descriptions

Image descriptions provide written information about non-text content like photos or graphics. Text descriptions of images also allow information to be presented more easily in other formats. Why is this more accessible?

- Screen readers can't interpret images and must rely on text to read out loud the information on the page to people who are blind or visually impaired.
- Some disabled people with cognitive impairments understand text better than images.
- People who use voice recognition software need text alternatives for controls that are displayed as images so they know what to say to activate the control.
- Keep images or photos containing text in them short enough to cover in an image description

Why? Imagine you have created a flyer for an event you are organising with lots of images and text describing the event. Or you have written up your thoughts on a topic in the notes app on your phone. You share the information as a photo or screenshot on social media and now realise it's impossible to describe all the text in the image in the image description!

Tips on writing image descriptions

You don't have to say 'image of' or 'photograph of'. This is because screen readers already know that there's an image. Just describe what the image is conveying - what you want the user to understand from seeing it.

Don't overthink it. Make it as short as possible while describing the message of the photo. Any description is better than no description. Opinions on the best kind of description may differ!

It's ok to mention colour if it's relevant to an image! Many screen-reader users are partially sighted and use descriptions to clarify blurry images.

Personalise descriptions for personal social media accounts. You don't have to be impersonal when describing the image! For example if you share a picture of your cat you could write: 'My cat, Misty, holding a toy mouse'.

Keep it objective for organisational accounts. For example if you are describing a group of people talking together at an event you could write: 'Group of disabled people sitting at a table discussing our new housing report.'

When describing people, don't assume! If you are describing photos or representations of people try not to assume anyone's identity, for example gender identity. Say 'a person dancing' instead of 'a woman dancing'.

The exception is if identity is relevant to the meaning of the image. For example, if you post: 'Tired of going to conferences where the speaker line-up looks like this' with a photo of a group of white men. A helpful description would be: '8 headshots of featured conference speakers that are all white men'. An unhelpful one would be 'headshots of featured conference speakers'.

Image descriptions on Twitter

To get image descriptions on Twitter go to the Twitter app and find '**settings and privacy**' > '**accessibility**' and tick '**compose image descriptions**'. You will need to do this on each device you use your account on.

There will then be a field when you add an image to a tweet that reads '**Add description**'. You won't see the description after you've added it to an image, but it has become a part of the image information that screen readers use.

We will all forget an image description occasionally. A good way to be reminded is to follow the Twitter account @PleaseCaption: <https://twitter.com/PleaseCaption> If you haven't added a description to your image you will be reminded by the account after you post!

Image descriptions on Instagram and Facebook

Facebook and Instagram use Automatic alternative (alt) text. Alt text uses object recognition technology to provide a description of a photo. Keep in mind that this description will only be read if someone is using a screen reader to access Facebook or Instagram.

On Twitter, a post can only have up to 280 characters. On Facebook there is not a limit to how much you can write in a post. You have much more space on Instagram too, you can write up to 2200 characters. This is important because not everyone that will find an image inaccessible will use a screen reader. So we would suggest adding image descriptions to the text of all Facebook and Instagram posts with images!

As the image description will be part of the post it's helpful to write 'Image description' and put the description in brackets to separate the description from the rest of the post. For example this post from our Instagram account:



Really?? Spot the problem here.

Anyone come across similar accessibility fails?

Seen by Scottish Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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[Image description: sign on a wall that says 'accessible toilets downstairs']

Video subtitles and captions

Subtitles or captions make videos more accessible for deaf and hard of hearing people. What is the difference between captions and subtitles?

Captions:

- Display all audio information including sound effects or music.
- Identify speakers.
- Are displayed in the same language as the audio.
- Can either be “closed” (able to be turned on or off by the user) or “open” (on all the time).

Subtitles:

- Display only spoken content.
- Are often (but not always) in a language other than the language of the audio.
- Can be turned on or off by the user.

Sadly, there is not yet an easy way to add subtitles to videos on social media. You can add a written summary of what is said in the video. For example, this is easy to do on Instagram stories. You will just need to add the text with the words said in a video before you upload the video to your Instagram stories.

If you have an iPhone and £5 to spend, there is an app called Clipomatic you can buy. Clipomatic is a smart video editor that turns everything you say into live subtitles so you don't need to write anything out yourself!

When creating videos for an organisation you can get videos translated into British Sign Language (BSL). Find a company that does professional British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting to translate your content so it is accessible for Deaf people. They will also add captions or subtitles to your video.

More information

There are not dedicated pages on accessibility for Twitter and Instagram (as far as we have found) but there is a page on Facebook accessibility:

 <https://www.facebook.com/help/accessibility>

Our tips on image descriptions are based on a great thread from Twitter user @RobotHugs you can read the full thread on Twitter which has lots of examples of image descriptions:

 <https://twitter.com/RobotHugsComic/status/949324465191694337>

'Colors on the web' has more information about colour contrast:

 <http://www.colorsontheweb.com/Color-Theory/Color-Contrast>

For instructions on how to add image descriptions on Twitter go to:

 <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions>



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