

# Creating Accessible Social Media Content

## Kutztown University Disability Services Office (DSO)

People use a variety of tools to access the internet. More than just the typical keyboard, monitor, and mouse, there are other assistive devices, such as screen readers, braille displays, text to speech software, and assistive listening systems. It is estimated that at least 15% of the world's population (about 1 billion people) experience some form of disability. This number can increase when you account for temporary (such as broken limbs or symptoms following surgery) or situational disabilities (such as noise, poor lighting, distractions, etc.).

Keeping your social media content accessible shows compassion – that you recognize exclusion, and you are presenting information in the clearest way possible. It also helps to maintain compliance with state and federal laws.

Below are some tips for making social media posts more accessible to all users.

### Tip #1: Make Text Accessible

- **Write in Plain Language.** Avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms unless they are appropriate.
- **Use Punctuation.** Assistive devices will pause for varied lengths at commas, periods, and other punctuation marks. It is helpful to use punctuation, as needed, to avoid the appearance of a run-on sentence.
- **Don't Overuse Caps.** Full caps can be difficult to read and misinterpreted by screen readers.
- **Use CamelCase for Multi-Word Hashtags.** Capitalize the first letter of each word to make hashtags more legible and help to prevent screen reader errors. Varied cases (to indicating mocking) are also difficult for assistive tech to interpret.
- **Put Hashtags and Mentions at the End.** Punctuation marks are read aloud by screen readers. Be mindful of how hashtags or @ mentions can disrupt your post.
- **Limit Emoji Use.** Emojis can be read aloud by assistive technology devices; you can find their descriptions on [emojipedia.org](http://emojipedia.org). These descriptions are unique and specific, but can vary across platform and/or operating system. Excessive emoji use is not advised, as assistive tech could read each one. It is also best to have emojis at the end of a post so as not to misunderstand the meaning of your text. On the other hand, ASCII Art is not accessible, so it shouldn't be used (Example: `\\_(\`)/\\_` )
- **Avoid Special Characters and Formatting.** Alternative fonts/characters may not be interpreted by a screen reader and are typically omitted. While trying to force formatting, such as adding spaces to give the appearance of two columns will still be ready line-by-line by assistive devices.

### Tip #2: Provide Descriptive Image Captions

Descriptive captions and alternative text (also known as “alt text”) allow people to visualize images when they can't see them. Several social media platforms use object recognition technology to provide automatic alternative texts; however, there are limits to its reliability. It's always better to add a custom description when you can.

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) provide specific fields for you to add alt text for images and GIFs. When it's not possible to add alt text, include descriptive captions instead.

When writing descriptive alternative text:

- **Write in plain language.** Avoid jargon, slang and technical terms unless they are appropriate. If using acronyms, add a space or period between letters (Example: U.S.A. is better than USA)
- **Convey the Context.** Focus on accurately describing what is seen in the image, rather than the length of the description. There is a difference between a description of “image of a chart” and “a bar chart illustrating annual increases in forest fires, peaking at 100 this year.” Also, consider positional information about the perspective of the view, or location of objects in the picture as they relate to one another.
- **Skip “Image of...” or “Picture of...”** as most screen readers will interpret that there is an image there already.
- **Mention identifiers** if it is important to understand the image. This could include color of objects, but also identifying information of individuals, such as skin tone (light, medium, or dark skin tone), if needed and appropriate. See [Emojipedia](#) to review their descriptions of emojis with different skin tones for reference.
- **Transcribe Text.** If the image has text in it that is central to its meaning, make sure to include it in the description.

### Tip #3: Include Video Captions

Closed captions are crucial for viewers with hearing impairments. They also enhance the viewing experience for people watching in their non-native language, or viewers in sound-off environments. Captions can even benefit children learning to read.

As with alt text, [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#) will autogenerate captions; however, these are not always accurate and should be edited before publishing. [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) currently don't support auto-captions, so you would need to upload a caption file. When editing captions, it is most helpful to break them with punctuation as you would natural language (correct capitalization, commas, periods, etc.), as those with hearing impairments often say it is most difficult to follow captions that seem like one run-on sentence.

### Tip #4: Color

Use color contrast of a minimum of 4.5:1 between the text and background color. There are online tools, such as [WebAIM's Contrast Checker](#), to check the contrast you are using, but in general avoid green and red or blue and yellow combinations, as they are difficult to read. Text over images can also be difficult to read, so consider using a solid background, if possible.

As some individuals may be color blind, it is best not to use color alone to convey meaning. It is also important to note that colors that may mean one thing in a particular culture, may not have the same implication in another culture.

Some marketing/social media managers will create hidden/private, “test” accounts that they can use to post and test content before making it publicly available.

When in doubt, each of the major social media platforms has information on their websites about accessibility and how to make sure your content is accessible to a wider audience using their tools.

- [Facebook Accessibility Help Center](#)
- [Instagram Accessibility Help Center](#) | [Instagram Alt Text Support](#)
- [Twitter Accessibility Help Center](#)
- [YouTube Accessibility Settings](#)
- [LinkedIn Accessibility](#)