# Top tips for accessible social media

## Social media and websites

Blind and partially sighted people use different tools to read online materials, such as screen readers, which read text out loud, and magnification. Screen readers cannot read out images unless you provide an accurate image description; avoid sharing any written information as screenshots or images without accurate image descriptions alongside them, otherwise they will not be accessible.

**Write in plain English**

Use clear simple language with short sentences. Concise wording helps with ease of reading and quick comprehension. Avoid using acronyms and jargon that is not widely known.

**Avoid animation**

Don’t rely on videos that auto-play, animations or anything with flashing or excessive movement. Motion can be challenging for users with certain vestibular conditions.

## Hashtags

Capitalise the first letter of every word in a hashtag, so screen readers can read them out correctly, and magnification users can see them more clearly. So, instead of saying #generalelection, use #GeneralElection.

## Emojis

Limit the number of emojis you use. Text-to-speech software reads out emoji, which can be time-consuming for screen reader users. The software also reads out the official name of the emoji, which may be different to your intended use or context, so don’t rely on emojis to replace words.

## Videos and GIFs

Use gifs sparingly. They can be distracting for some people with learning difficulties.

All videos with speech must have captions. Headliner is a great free app for this. Captions of white text on black backgrounds are easiest for blind people to read. Videos don't need to be audio described, if they are audio-led. This means that the audio must be as important as what's on screen. The video should send the same message, both audibly and visually. If audio-led is not possible then add a Video Description.

Ensure videos have high quality audio and use a transcript, or a British Sign Language interpreter during live broadcasts.

## Image descriptions

Image descriptions ensure the information in any image you share is understood by all your constituents. Websites and social media platforms often offer ways to insert a description of the image, which can be read out by a screen reader.

Use a good colour contrast ratio between the foreground and background on images that include text; you can search for an online colour contrast analyser to check the contrasts. Add an image description, which includes text from the image in your website copy or social media post. Alternatively, link to a webpage with all the information within the image.

### Describe broadly what your image shows, thinking about which details are most important to the people you're trying to reach. Example: [Image description: I'm discussing local issues with constituent Sophie on a bench in a park. I am a woman dressed casually, Sophie has long brown hair and glasses on.]

## Adding image descriptions and alt text

### Twitter: image descriptions

* Write your tweet and when you add a picture, you’ll notice “Add description” pops up in white writing on the bottom right of your image. Click on the button to insert your description.

### Facebook: alt text

* Facebook can automatically add generated alternative text for images. You can override this with your own description, which will be more accurate.

### Instagram: alt text

* Scheduling: Write your caption first and then describe the image below in square brackets to separate it from the rest of the post.

When posting a grid / feed image natively, click on ‘Advanced settings’ and then select ‘Accessibility’. You'll then have the option to ‘Write alt text’. Insert your image description into the alt text section and in square brackets in your caption.

* Instagram Stories: Instagram Stories does not have the option to add image descriptions, but you can add these manually as part of the story. You could also post images as short video clips with voiceover.

### LinkedIn: alt text

* Select “Add alt text” above the image when you post.
* Only available on desktop at the moment. When posting on a mobile device, add a description to your post copy.

### Post copy screen readers: top tips

* Use a URL shortener (like bit.ly) to customise links and minimise the number of characters.
* Only use one link per social media post.
* Don’t overuse capital letters.
* Accessible copy is simple copy, and simple copy is effective copy.

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