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A Guide to Creating Accessible Social Media Content

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Why Accessibility Matters

Accessibility is the practice of making information, activities and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.

With an estimated 1 billion people globally living with some form of disability, making social media accessible is both a legal obligation and a moral one. It allows individuals with disabilities to engage equally, share their voices, and participate in online communities. Accessible content benefits everyone by being more usable, readable, and easy to understand.

Accessibility Best Practices include:

- Clear Communications
- Alt Text for Image Descriptions
- Videos with Captions and Subtitles
- Fonts, Font Size, and Colour Contrast for Images
- Camel Case for Hashtags
- Limited Use of Emojis and Emoticons

2.2 billion

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are approximately 2.2 billion people around the world who have some form of vision impairment ranging from mild to severe

5%

Approximately 5% of the population has disabling hearing loss

Clear Communications

Use clear, simple language

Write short sentences with concise wording to ensure ease of reading and quick comprehension. Avoid acronyms or jargon that may not be widely understood.

Use descriptive website links

Calls-to-action on social media posts are important in advising a viewer of next steps. To ensure confidence and fear of the unknown, it is useful to add a description to a website link, so users know what to expect when they click on it.

Avoid generic text like 'click here' or 'learn more'. Instead, provide context: Read our guide to accessible social media practices.

Format for readability

Space out your text with short paragraphs or bullet points to make it visually easy to read and less overwhelming.

Provide complete information

Add value by including all necessary details upfront. Avoid teasing or withholding important information your audience needs.

USEFUL TOOL
Writing tool (readability): https://hemingwayapp.com/

Alt Text for Image Descriptions

Alternative text (alt text) is a written description of an image for people who use screen readers or cannot see an image clearly.

Describe the essential information in the image. Imagine explaining it to someone who can't see it.

Think about the context of your image – describe why you have used it for your post

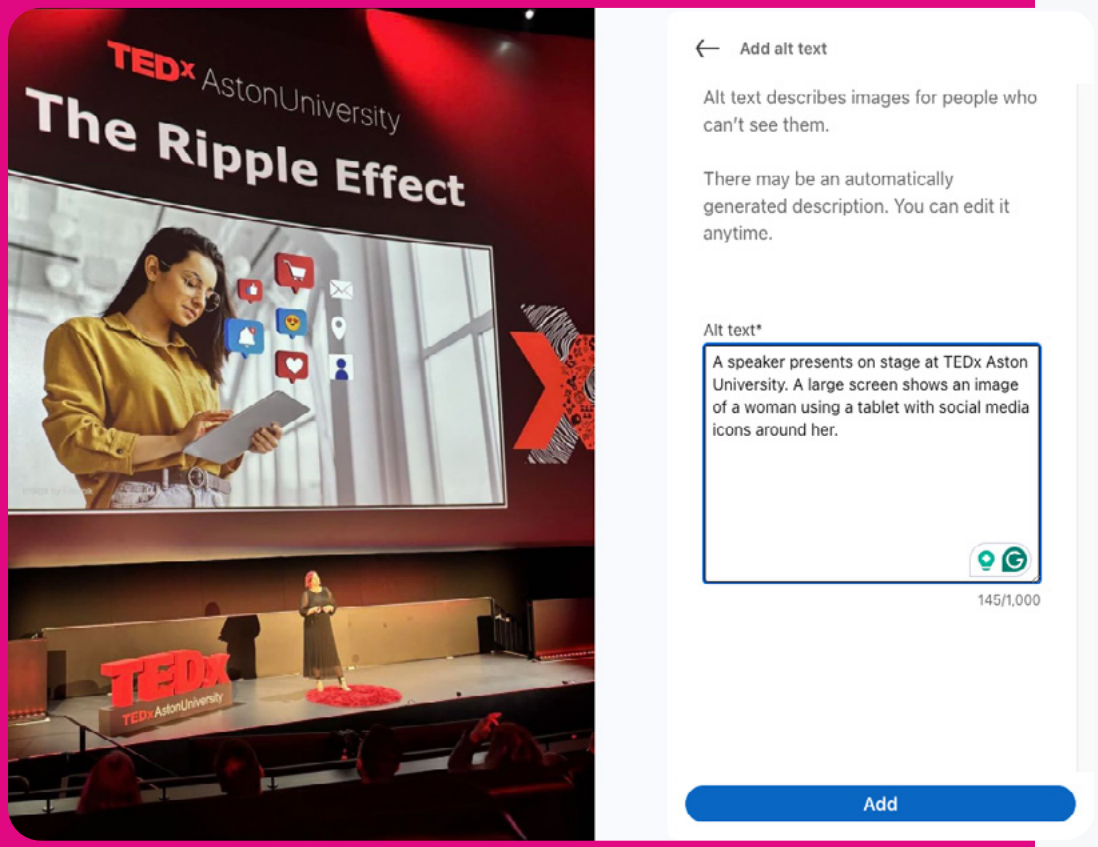
Be concise but detailed. Keep it under 125 characters for brevity and clarity.

There is no need to include 'image of' or 'picture of'

If the image includes text, eg a testimonial quote, you will need to add the text to the description

Use personal characteristic identifiers (eg age, gender, race) in the description when needed

Avoid emojis, emoticons, links and hashtags (they will not be clickable)



Screenshot from LinkedIn showing the addition of Alt Text when adding an image.

Most social media platforms and third-party scheduling tools have features which can be used for adding alt text before posting. They can often be edited to add later on.

It can also be useful to include your alt text image description at the bottom of the main post copy, so they can be clearly understood by everyone – not just those using a screen reader. This practice is also valuable for supporting social search, improving discoverability by providing additional context for algorithms, and ensuring inclusivity for users who may have difficulty viewing or interpreting images.

Please note: Alt text cannot be used to describe images on Instagram or Facebook Stories. You can add text onto your Story, and perhaps even hide it behind an image as screen readers will then be able to read it out. Stickers, such as Q&A and Location stickers, are also not currently accessible to screen readers. So, make sure you type text describing them, including the question you're asking (for example) onto your story.

USEFUL TOOL

Alt Text Generator: https://alttext.ai

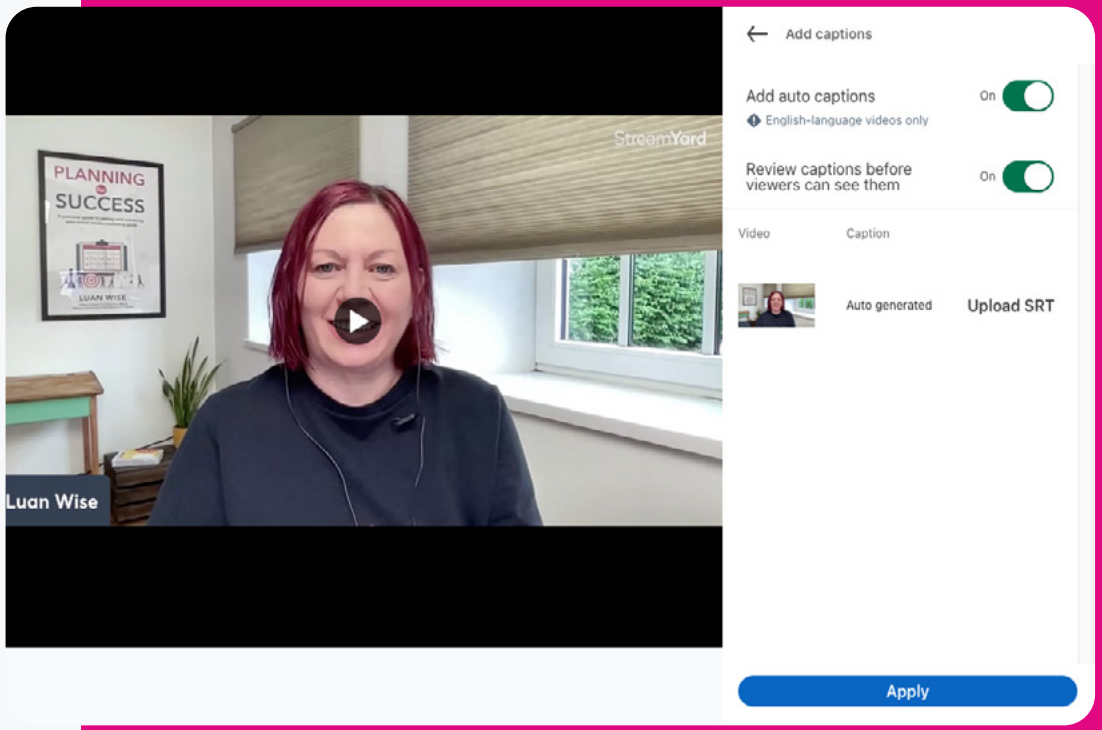
Videos with Captions and Subtitles

Captions and subtitles make videos accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or in noisy environments.

A **video caption** is text synchronized with a video that transcribes all audio elements, including dialogue and non-speech sounds, for viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing, unlike **subtitles**, which focus only on spoken dialogue.

Most social media platforms have auto-captioning features which can be used for videos. Review and edit captions if needed before sharing your post.

Motion can be challenging for users with certain sensory conditions; it can be useful to add a warning to a post that includes flashing or excessive movement.



Screenshot from LinkedIn showing the upload of a video file and the option to add captions.

Fonts, Font Size, and Colour Contrast

Many social media images contain text that can be difficult for people with visual impairments to read.

Font type: Stick to clear, simple fonts like Arial, Verdana, or sans-serif fonts

Font size: Use a large enough font (generally 14pt or larger) for readability

Colour contrast: Ensure high contrast between the text and background colour. You should also use high-contrast colours and large font sizes for text overlays in videos

Consider **use of patterns** on graphs to differentiate data elements

You might see some social media posts using **bold** and *italicised* text. These have been created using external sites. When they are copied into a social media platform they cannot be read as text by a screen reader. Any words in a 'fancy font' will get ignored.

USEFUL TOOL

Contrast Checker: https://contrastchecker.com/

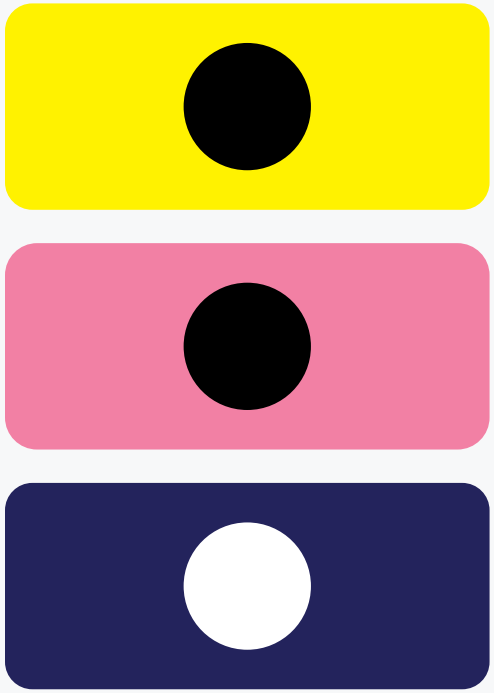
Recommended

Arial Verdana
Inter Roboto

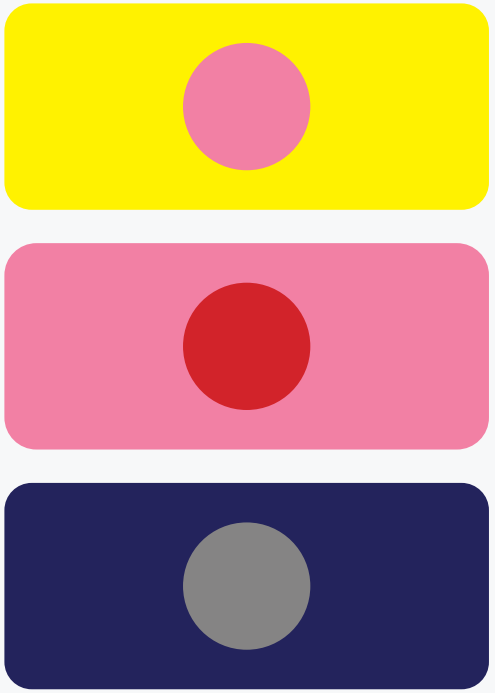
Poor for Accessibility

Brush Script MT
Modak LAMIRAN

Recommended



Poor for Accessibility



Limited Use of Emojis and Emoticons

Emojis can add personality to posts, but too many emojis or complex emoji patterns can make posts challenging for screen readers and people with cognitive disabilities.

An emoticon is the use of keyboard characters to represent facial expressions or convey emotions in text-based communication.

Examples of common emoticons:
Happy face: :) or :-)
Sad face: :(or :-(
Wink: ;) or ;-)

USEFUL TOOL
Emoji References: www.emojipedia.org

Use emojis sparingly. Keep them at the end of sentences when possible.

Consider screen reader interpretations.
For example, 🎉 will be read as 'party popper'

Never use an emoji to replace words

Avoid repeating or multiple emojis as they can disrupt readability and take time for a screen reader to communicate

Use emojis, not emoticons. Emojis have built-in alt text descriptions that can be read by screen readers. Emoticons are manipulated punctuation marks and will be read by screen readers as punctuation marks.

Camel Case for Hashtags

Camel Case is the practice of capitalising the first letter of each word in a hashtag, making it easier to read. #LikeThis

Screen readers cannot identify individual words in a hashtag without CamelCase. Ideally, place your hashtags at the end of your post so that they do not disrupt readability.

About Luan Wise

Luan Wise is a chartered marketer and fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (FCIM) with over 20 years' experience in agency, client-side and consultancy roles working across sectors including b2b and b2c professional services, higher education, manufacturing, learning & development and more.

A specialist in social media, Luan has trained thousands of business professionals across the world via open social media training courses and in-house programmes. She is a course instructor for LinkedIn Learning and an accredited lead trainer for Facebook and Instagram.

Luan is author of the 'Relax! It's Only Social Media' and 'Planning for Success: A practical guide to setting and achieving your social media marketing goals', 'Using Social Media for Work: How to maintain professional etiquette online' and 'Smart Social Media: How to grow your business with social media marketing'

If you're looking for support with social media content, get in touch via email: sayhello@luanwise.co.uk

For further information about Luan,
visit www.luanwise.co.uk or search @luanwise on: