

# 2026 Social Media Accessibility Guidelines

## General tips

This document is designed to guide individuals at the University of Michigan to ensure that content is accessible and can be used by anyone. All content should be created with accessibility in mind and in accordance with the most recent Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations and the university's Digital Accessibility guidelines. Some social media platforms may be more accessible than others, but there are general guidelines that should always be followed. This document provides general guidelines and a breakdown by platform to assist university social media communicators.

More information about digital accessibility at the University of Michigan is available at [Accessibility.Umich.Edu](https://accessibility.umich.edu).

## Alt Text

[Alternative \(alt\) text](#) is a short, detailed description of what is included in the media your account has posted. It is used as an explanation of what the photo or video is showing. Here are some best practices to consider when writing alt text:

- Do not start alt text with “An image of” or “Picture of...”
  - The assisted technology recognizes when there is a photo and will be promoted with alt text.
  - Use descriptive language to help guide the caption in the type of media presented (i.e. illustration, sketch, professional portrait, screenshot, graph or chart, cropped image, etc.)
- Keep alt text concise
  - It isn't necessary to describe every detail of the image. Focus on what is important in the context of the post (i.e. what information is conveyed visually that users might miss if they can't see the image).
  - With images of people, consider whether the audience will know this person by name (public figure, subject of the post).

## Closed Captioning

[Closed captioning](#) is a text equivalent for audio, occasionally including relevant non-speech information. Captioning is time-synchronized to display in real time with audio. Captioning in some platforms can be toggled on or off by users, or in other platforms may make sense to "burn in" to the video. Captioning should be provided for pre-recorded, posted video content, and live video content where possible. Captioning can be provided using automated tools or human captionists (sometimes referred to as Communication Access Realtime Translation or CART).

Here are some best practices to consider when providing captioning:

- For widely publicized media, or events, consider paying for human-provided captioning. The Disability Equity Office operates a fund which supports live captioning: [live captioning and American Sign Language services](#).

- For smaller scale events or media, consider the use of automated captioning tools. You should clean up automated captioning.
- The important components of effective captioning include:
  - Accuracy: captioning should be accurate
  - Completeness: captioning should be complete and include relevant non-speech information (NSI)
  - Synchronicity: captioning timing must align with audio
  - Placement: captioning should appear in a way to least obscure visual elements, or provide flexibility to users
  - Identification: captioning should identify speakers when speakers are distinct.

## Color Contrast

Color contrast is important to ensure that text content can be broadly perceived, including by individuals who have color vision deficiency. Digital accessibility standards provide specific ratios of color contrast that should be met for normal text (4.5:1), large text (3:1), and contrast differences between link text color and surrounding paragraph text (3:1). There are many tools available to [check color contrast](#), including the Colour Contrast Analyser. The University of Michigan Brand website also offers [branded accessible color combinations](#) and additional [guidance around accessibility](#), including how to make more accessible data visualizations that avoid the use of color alone, and maximize color contrast.

Here are some best practices to consider when assessing color contrast:

- The minimum ratio is just that — a minimum. Consider using greater contrast where possible.
- Design your color palette for different templates or platforms in advance to get in front of color contrast decisions.
- Use checker tools as you develop your own skills for assessing color contrast.

## Images with Text

Avoid using images of text where possible. In addition to searchability and graphical fidelity concerns, images of text may be impossible to perceive for some users with disabilities. If you do include images of text, such as when posting a flyer, include relevant information in the post description. This can be brief information and a web resource which houses the flyer information.

## Links

Use [descriptive hyperlink text](#) whenever possible. This involves embedding your link to a piece of text that meaningfully describes what the link is and where it will take users if they click on it.

Here are some best practices to consider with hyperlink text:

- Avoid link text that says "click here," "read more," or "learn more," without any indication of where the link will redirect users.
- Avoid using the full URL (<https://www.>) unless it is important for users to recall a short branded URL (like [umich.edu](https://www.umich.edu)).

- When providing a QR code to a resource, also use a short link, so that users have more than one way to access the resource. Use the [U-M URL Shortener](#) to create U-M branded short URLs and QR codes.
- Indicate if clicking on a link will cause users to download something, open a pop-up window, or some other unexpected action.

## Hashtags

Format hashtags with camel Case or Pascal Case and place at end of post. Camel Case involves using lower case for the first character of the first word and then capitalizing the first letter of each subsequent word. Pascal Case involves each word having the first character capitalized. Where possible, include hashtags at the end of a post. Avoid excessive hashtags and emojis where possible.

## Audio Description

[Audio description](#) provides information about visual elements of a video. This is especially important for people who are blind or low vision and cannot see the visual or text content within a video. Most social platforms have significant gaps in AD support, but there are several ways to provide effective audio description.

- Strategy 1: Provide descriptions of visuals within the original audio track. This is the recommended approach, and the most seamless way to integrate audio description into your video (without extending the runtime or needing to provide an alternative).
- Strategy 2: Briefly describe the video context in a text description (social media copy/post caption). This can go below the short, "one-line" caption for the post and can be labeled "Video Description:".
- Strategy 3: Include a link in the post caption to a fuller description, if necessary. This could be an alternate version of the video clip with AD, a longer text description in a document, the "full video" (if this is a clip/snippet), a news article or webpage with more context, etc.

For short-form video clips, a very brief description is often sufficient. Focus on what is most important for the audience to understand the general visual context. Depending on the type of video (interview, promo/ad, informal edits), every visual detail doesn't usually need to be described. If "on-screen text" appears (indicating a speaker's name, introducing the concept/title of the video, etc.) that must be captured in the AD.

Audio description examples can be found at: [Adp.Acb.Org/Samples.Html](http://Adp.Acb.Org/Samples.Html)

## Social Media Platforms

### Facebook

Facebook offers a range of accessibility features within the platform to provide an inclusive experience for users. These should be applied when using the platform. Learn more from Facebook's Accessibility Help Center: [Facebook.com/Help/Accessibility](https://www.facebook.com/help/accessibility)

#### Alternative Text/Image Descriptions on Facebook

To add alt-text to your image(s) on a Facebook post:

1. Click the “**edit**” button that appears in the top left corner of the photo(s) or graphic(s) you upload to Facebook to post.
2. Click “**alternative text**” in the dropdown menu that will appear on the left-hand side, toggle custom alt text, and add in your image description. Note that while Facebook automatically provides alternative texts for images, we highly recommend providing your own alternative text to ensure complete accuracy and full context for the image.

#### Adding Alt Text via Meta Business Suite

When posting or scheduling a post through Meta Business Suite, you can also add custom alt text to your images.

1. After uploading a photo, click the pencil icon titled “**edit photo**” that appears just to the right of the section in which you uploaded your images.
2. Click “**alt text**” at the bottom of the left drop down menu, and add in your alt text in the text block that appears on the right side of the window.
3. Once you've completed writing your alt text, click the blue “**apply**” button in the bottom right of the window to save.

#### Adding SRT Files to Facebook Video Posts

All videos that require SRT caption files should be uploaded and posted through the Meta Business Suite.

1. After uploading your video and adding your post caption, click the blue “**next**” button on the bottom right of your screen, which will bring you to an editing timeline. If you don't have edits, click “**next**” again.
2. On this final screen before posting, there is a section titled “**Closed captions & translations.**” Within that section, click the checkbox next to “**Closed captions**” and then hit “**settings**” on the right side of the row.
3. A pop-up window will appear, which will give you the option to upload your SRT file. Once it's uploaded, which will only take a few seconds, click save and your SRT file will be applied to your video post. If you only click the “closed captions” checkbox without

actually uploading your SRT, your video will only have the Facebook automatic captions, which are prone to inaccuracies.

4. Facebook only accepts SRT files that have the file extensions “.en\_US.SRT”. Simply change the file extension manually on your desktop before uploading to Facebook.

## Instagram

Instagram offers accessibility features for some parts of the platform while others are not fully accessible. Learn more below and from Instagram’s help center: [Help.Instagram.Com](https://help.instagram.com)

### Alternative Text/Image Descriptions on Instagram

To add alt text to your single photo posts and photo carousels on Instagram, begin by drafting a new post.

1. After selecting your photo(s), and hitting “**Next**” in the bottom right corner twice, you’ll arrive at the screen in which you add a caption for your post. Scroll down and select “**More options**” at the very bottom of that screen, and then scroll down and select “**Write alt text**” at the very bottom of the following screen.
2. Each photo will show on the left side of your screen, with a space to their right for you to add alt text to each photo individually.
3. Once you have added alt text to each of your images, select done in the top right corner, and proceed to post.

If you forget to add alt text to your photo(s) before posting, Instagram allows you to add it after the fact. To do so, navigate to your post and click the ellipses in the top right corner, and then click “**Edit**” in the pop-up menu. This will bring you to a screen in which your images are seen side-by-side. On the first photo, click the “**Aa**” button on the bottom right corner, which will lead you to a screen where you can add alt-text to all of the photos in your posts. Once you have added alt text to each of your images, select “**Done**” in the top right corner.

### Adding Alt Text via Meta Business Suite

This process is the exact same as posting to Facebook via Meta Business Suite: When posting or scheduling a post through Meta Business Suite, you can also add custom alt text to your images. After uploading a photo, click the pencil icon titled “**Edit Photo**” that appears to the right of the section in which you uploaded your images. Then, click “**Alt Text**” at the bottom of the left drop down menu, and add in your alt text in the text block that appears on the right side of the window. Once you’ve completed writing your alt text, click the blue “**Apply**” button in the bottom right of the window to save.

### Closed Captions on Instagram Reels

While Instagram currently does not offer the ability to add caption files to Instagram Reels, you should still ensure Reels always have the Instagram-provided closed captions turned on.

1. Begin by drafting a new Reel post like you would typically do. After selecting your video files, and hitting “next” in the bottom right corner twice, you’ll arrive at the screen in which you add a caption for your post.
2. Scroll down and select “more options” at the very bottom of that screen.
3. On the next screen, make sure the bottom three options “Enable closed captions”, “Translate closed captions” and “Translate stickers and text” are each toggled on.

### **Instagram Stories and Accessibility**

As of April 2026, Instagram currently does not offer the ability to add alt-text or caption files to photo or video content on Instagram Stories.

### **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn has many accessibility features and a Disability Answer Desk to assist users. Learn more from LinkedIn at: [LinkedIn.Com/Accessibility](https://www.linkedin.com/accessibility)

To add alt text to images on LinkedIn, follow these steps:

1. Compose a post, select add media and upload a photo.
2. Select **ALT** to add Alt text.
3. Save by clicking “**Add**” and then “**Next.**”

### **Adding Closed Captioning to Videos**

To add closed captioning to a video on LinkedIn:

1. Compose a new post, select add media and upload a video.
2. Select “**CC**” at the bottom of the upload screen.
3. Turn off the “**Add auto captions**” option.
4. Select “**Upload SRT**” and choose the file.
5. Click “**Apply.**”

### **YouTube**

Improving accessibility on YouTube starts with accurate captions and clear descriptive text. While YouTube does not provide a traditional alt text field, creators can ensure accessibility by

refining auto-captions, using high-quality caption files, and adding descriptive context in titles and descriptions.

### **Creating & Editing Auto-Captions and Adding SRT Files:**

1. Open YouTube Studio and select the video you want to edit.
2. Navigate to “**Subtitles**” in the left-hand menu.
3. For auto-generated captions, click “**Edit**” to review and correct spelling, punctuation, speaker identification, and timing. Ensure captions are properly formatted for readability, breaking up long sentences as needed.
4. To add an SRT file:
  - Click “**Add**” under the Subtitles section and choose “**Upload file.**”
  - Select “**With timing**” if your SRT includes timestamps.
  - Upload your finalized .SRT file, then review and save.
5. Using an SRT file ensures captions are accurate, properly timed, and compliant with international accessibility guidelines, while allowing viewers to turn captions on or off and adjust their appearance.
6. Save your updates to apply the changes to the video.

### **Use of SRT Files:**

Closed captions in .SRT (SubRip Subtitle) format are required to allow viewers to turn captions on or off, customize their appearance, and ensure compliance with international accessibility guidelines. Using an SRT file provides accurate, well-timed captions that meet accessibility standards and improve the viewing experience for all audiences.

### **Adding Alt Text–Equivalent Descriptions:**

1. In YouTube Studio, go to the video’s “**Details**” page.
2. Write a clear, descriptive **Title** that reflects the content of the video.
3. Use the **Description** field to summarize key information, including important visual elements not fully explained through audio.
4. Add additional context for charts, demonstrations, or on-screen text so all users can understand the content.
5. Include a transcript when possible to further support accessibility.
6. Click Save to apply your changes.

## **X**

X, formerly Twitter, has accessibility features which should be considered usability best practices. Learn more in the X Help Center: [Help.x.Com](https://help.x.com)

### **Adding Alt Text**

How to add alt text:

1. Compose a post, attach a post, and click “**Add description**” on desktop or “**+ALT**” on mobile.
2. Describe the image and click save. You can click the description again to edit it.

Things to note:

- While the limit for a description is 1,000 characters, the best practice is to keep it much shorter than that at about 125 characters.
- X provides an option for an ‘image description reminder’ that will tell you when image descriptions are missing so you can add the descriptions before posting. Once you turn on this setting, it will be enabled for your account across all platforms.
- X shows an **ALT** badge, which lets all users know when someone has added a description to their image. To read the image description, select the **ALT** badge and the image description will appear.
- Descriptions should also be applied to GIFs. X shows labels similar to ALT badges on all GIFs that have descriptions. The process for adding the description and viewing them is the same as adding alt text.

## **Adding Closed Captioning to Videos**

Closed captioning needs to be added by the user on X. Automatic captioning is not reliable. University of Michigan users should add captions to all videos on X accounts.

How to add closed captioning:

1. Order a SRT file for your video from a university approved vendor.
2. Compose a post, upload a video, select “**Upload caption file (.srt)**”
3. In the pop-up, select “**Upload captions**” and choose the SRT file from your computer
4. Select done.
5. Under video, the name of the language of your captions will show.

Things to note:

- This feature is only available on the web version of X.

## **Threads**

### **Alternative Text/Image Descriptions on Threads**

To add alt text to your photo posts on Threads, begin by drafting a new post. Once your photo(s) are loaded into the drafted post, click the ellipses in the bottom right corner of each photo, then click “**Add alt-text**”. If posting multiple images, this has to be done for each photo.

## Threads & Video Caption Files

As of April 2026, Threads currently does not offer the ability to add caption files to video content on the platform.

## Sprout Social

Including alt text when scheduling posts in Sprout Social helps ensure content is accessible to all audiences and supports search optimization. Alt text can be added to images across supported platforms, including X, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Threads.

### How to Add Alt Text in Sprout Social (Compose):

1. Open the “**Compose**” window in your Sprout dashboard.
2. Select the social media profiles you plan to publish to.
3. Upload your image(s) in the media section.
4. Click the pencil icon on the image to open editing options.
5. Select “**Add Alt Text**” (or “**Add Descriptive Text**,” depending on the platform).
6. Enter a clear, concise description of the image (up to 1,000 characters for most platforms).
7. Click “**Save**.” An indicator will confirm that alt text has been added.
8. Complete scheduling by selecting a date and time, then click “**Schedule**.”