General Best Practices

Follow the guidelines below when creating social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) content or posts that are publically accessible or intended for students or personnel. NOTE: Use this document in addition to the Basic Web Accessibility Cheat Sheet guidelines, which are not repeated here.

Content

- Provide contact information on your account page or a link to your course/website with contact information.
- Provide links to the social media platform’s accessibility tips and support, if possible.
- Provide sufficient color contrast.
- Use plain language: provide clear instructions, avoid undefined technical jargon, and spell out acronyms and abbreviations.

Hashtags

- Use CamelCase: capitalize the first letter of words in multiple word hashtags to help screen readers distinguish separate words (e.g. #AssessibleSocialMedia). This format is also easier for fully-sighted users to read.
- Place hashtags and “@mentions” at the end of posts. This improves screen-reader experiences.

Hyperlinks

- Open links in the same window. Doing so permits users to use the browser’s back button to return.
- Use link shorteners. Where descriptive links aren’t possible or convenient, a short URL is easier for screen readers to handle and helps reduce the character count for character-restricted platforms.
- Use descriptive links and short URLs consistently at the end of posts.

Images

- Provide alt text or image descriptions. If tools for alt text aren’t available, describe images with text where you post them. Consider manually preceding the text with “Image Description:” or “Photo Caption:” for clarity.
- Do not use text on top of or inside of images; it can’t be read by a screen reader.
- Do not use flashing, flickering, or blinking items (e.g. GIFs) unless they flash less than 3 times per second, and do not use saturated red colors for flashing content.

Video

- Accurately caption voice and vocals in video; do not paraphrase. Captions should be at least 95% accurate.
- Link to a captioned version of the file if captioned content is not possible in a social media platform.
- Prevent videos from playing automatically; allow users the choice to play the file.
Platform-Specific Tips

These guidelines will help improve accessibility in specific social media platforms and tools.

Blogs

- Use a simple, consistent layout and minimize the number of columns.
- Place blog rolls (rss feeds, etc.) on the right side-bar to ease navigation. Don’t place navigation or lists of links in the left side-bar OR insert a skip link on every page to bypass the list of links (see resources about skip links).

Facebook

Facebook now uses artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically write captions in what it calls Automatic Alternative Text. Although these are an improvement, they are far from perfect and cannot be edited.

- Use the “Say something about this photo” feature to type a caption before posting.
- For video, select Edit this video from Options and upload caption (.srt) files or link to a fully accessible version with accurate captions (at least 95% accurate, not YouTube’s automatic captions) on your YouTube channel.

Instagram

- Provide detailed image captions in text (there are no alternative text tools).
- Provide links to timestamped transcripts for videos.

Pinterest

- Describe pinned items and indicate the type of media (audio, image, or video with captions).

Tumblr

- Use the text post option instead of image post option, even for images. With the image option, text entered as captions may be read twice by screen readers.

Twitter

- Use [PIC], [AUDIO] or [VIDEO], prefixes before tweets with photos, audio, or video, respectively.
- Enable the Compose image descriptions setting for images.
- Link to captioned videos because image descriptions can’t be added to GIFs or videos.

Resources

*** UNR Workshops & Trainings on accessibility and instructional tools (http://bit.ly/UNRtrain) ***

These resources offer tips and techniques that will assist social media accessibility.

- Provide Skip Links – American Foundation for the Blind tips on web accessibility (http://www.afb.org/info/accessibility/tips-and-tricks/25#skiplink)
- EasyChirp – An accessible alternative to the Twitter.com website (http://www.easychirp.com/)
- Image Description Guidelines – Diagram Center guidelines and tips for specific types of images (art, chemistry, graphs, equations, maps, nutrition labels, etc.) (http://diagramcenter.org/table-of-contents-2.html)
- Link Shorteners – A list of link shorteners that use 301 redirects, which tend to be stable (http://bradsknutson.com/blog/25-url-shorteners-301-redirects/)