

Accessibility and Social Media

Why do we need accessible content?

Everyone should have equal access to the same information, but everyone experiences content on the web and social media differently. Some may also need the assistance of adaptive devices.

As we rely more heavily on social media platforms for the most up-to-date information and announcements, we must ensure content published on all university social media channels is accessible and follows the guidelines set out by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

How can I make my social content more accessible?

Inclusive language

Fairness and sensitivity are vital components of all communications. Language must be respectful, free of stigma and avoid terminology that stereotypes, patronizes or inadvertently slights any person or group. Distinction with regard to physical attributes and abilities should be avoided unless it is contextually necessary.

The [Editorial Style Guide pages on our Brand Central website](#) can assist you with crafting messages. You can visit the Ontario Tech Accessible Documents Guidelines for more details suggestions for inclusive writing.

Alt text

Alt text (or alternative text) is used to describe images and graphics to followers. Alt text enables screen readers users to engage with your material.

A few things to consider:

- Alt text should be concise and meaningful, but be descriptive for it to make sense.
- Different platforms allow for different character lengths, is preferred.
 - Review Character lengths for each, and if it does not conform to these limitations explore other options for dissemination.
- Use proper punctuation and grammar so the text can be read in a more human way by a screen reader (e.g. Camel Case).

Captions

Captions are the on-screen text descriptions that show a video's dialogue, its speakers, and describe other sounds that are otherwise inaccessible. Captions are timed with the video's images so that viewers have access to the audible content regardless of whether they receive that content via audio or text. All video content at Ontario Tech must have captions.

Captions can be either open or closed. Open captions are always in view and cannot be turned off as they are graphics within the video file, whereas closed captions can be turned on and off by the viewer and are controlled by the platform where the video is published. Open captions are burned into the file during production or can be applied using third-party software and apps like [MixCaptions](#) or [Handbrake](#).

Most social media platforms allow you to upload a SubRip file (also known as an SRT) that includes the timing and text for captions. You can create these files manually inside of your video production software (like Adobe Premiere) or you can create and download the files that are generated from auto-captions on social media platforms like YouTube and then upload the file to other channels.

Emojis

Emojis add colour and fun to social media posts, but can create difficulties for those with a variety of disabilities, including screen reader users. To increase the readability of your content, emojis should be used in moderation and be placed at the end of sentences or social posts wherever possible.

Hashtags

Hashtags help us find content related to a certain topic or track a certain campaign or event. To ensure clarity of message, always use Camel Case in your hashtags. This means using an uppercase letter to identify each word in the tag (ex.: #OntarioTechGrad). A positive side effect of this is that it also improves its readability for anyone who encounters your content.

Platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram don't always recognize Camel Case in hashtags, and will convert them to all lowercase if you select them from the auto-populated list provided. Please ensure where you can that they are Camel Cased if using a hashtag in that way.

ASCII art and unicode fonts

ASCII character artwork or unicode fonts are sometimes used to make social content more engaging or aesthetically appealing. Although they are attractive to some of your followers, they present a pretty significant accessibility challenge to others.

The meaning of ASCII art is conveyed through an image created out of individual characters and an adaptive device will translate the literal meaning of each character rather than the picture as a whole. Using unicode fonts for the content of your posts may make them completely unreadable on some devices or to a screen reader, leaving a follower with no context to your post.

Avoid using these if at all possible in your social content or plan to have alternate formats available within your post. This could be creating an image to upload of the ASCII art created complete with the alt text to explain the nature of the graphic or adding unformatted text to your post for screen readers.

Colour contrast

Graphics created for social media channels should also follow AODA standards and if at all possible, follow Ontario Tech's colour palette, which has already been optimized for compliance. The colours and standards for those can be found under the [colour guideline section of Brand Central](#).

Links in your posts

Links in your posts will generally create a social card, which pulls the description and a thumbnail image from the page you are referencing. When published on Twitter, the url is then removed and you have the ability to remove the url after the social card appears in either Facebook or LinkedIn post composers to ensure it does not interfere with the clarity of your post/message. Whenever possible, please use the social card over adding another image as it will contain greater detail for the user to understand what the link is about and removes the need for shortening a url.

If you need to include a url without a social card, you can use a link shortener like [bit.ly](#) but consider using options that allow for customization so the user better understands what the link is about. If it is a link to a university-owned page and will be referenced multiple times on social or in print, consider [making a request to the web team](#) for a short link redirect created inside of our CMS.

How do I publish accessible content on my platforms?

Twitter

Adding alt text

1. Click on the tweet compose button

2. Attach your photo(s).
3. To insert alt text, click add description or press the edit button on top of the image.
4. Type your description of the image and click the Save button. To edit the description, re-open the Add description dialog prior to posting the Tweet. The limit for alt text is 1000 characters.
5. Repeat for each image in your tweet before publishing.

Alt text also needs to be added to gifs by updating the description after the file is inserted into a tweet using similar steps as above.

NOTE: Twitter does not allow for updates to alt text after a tweet has been published.

Adding captions to videos

1. Click on a video within your Media Studio library.
2. Select the Subtitles tab in the pop-up window.
3. Select the text language of your subtitle file from the dropdown menu.
4. Click the Upload button and select the SRT file from your local computer.
5. The file is now associated with your video.
6. Alternatively, you can upload a video with open captions, where the captions are burned onto the video itself so that it is visible to all users.

NOTE: To update the file, click the Pencil icon next to the subtitle file on the video in the Media Studio library.

Facebook

Adding alt text to images in a post

From your Facebook page

1. Click Photo/Video at the top of your page
2. Select the photo you want to add.
3. Hover over the photo and click Edit.
4. Select the Alternative Text option from the left-hand menu. It will present you with the radio button options to select automatically generated text or a field to enter custom alt text.
5. Write your alt text in the box click Save in the bottom left.

From Creator Studio

1. Click Create New and select Create Post.
2. Click the add photo button and select the file(s) you want to upload.

3. When the files have been uploaded, they will appear in the media section.
4. Click the pencil icon next to the photo you want to edit.
5. The bottom of the menu shows an Alt text option where you can enter your description of the photo and then click save.
6. Repeat this process for all photos uploaded to the post.
7. Fill in the rest of the fields required for the post and click publish (or schedule).

To change the alt text of a photo

1. Click the photo to open it.
2. Click the three dots in the top right and select Change Alt Text.
3. Click Override generated alt text or change the alt text in the text box. You can also click Clear to change your edited alt text back to the automatically generated text.
4. Click Save.

Adding captions to video

NOTE: caption files must follow the name.en_US.srt format for Facebook to recognize them.

From your Facebook Page

1. Click Photo/Video at the top of your Page's timeline, then select a video from your computer.
2. Once your video has uploaded, click Video Options on top of the video preview.
3. Under Add Captions, select whether you'd like to auto-generate captions or upload a SubRip (.srt) file.
4. When you have finished your captions and filled in all other required fields, click next and publish (or schedule).

Through Facebook Creator Studio

1. Click on Create New and select upload video.
2. Once your video has uploaded, select the Captions option on the right side of the create post menu.
3. Select whether you'd like to auto-generate captions, write the captions yourself or upload a SubRip (.srt) file.
4. When you have finished your captions and filled in all other required fields, click next and publish (or schedule).

To change captions on a video already posted

1. Find the post on your Page's timeline
2. Click the three dots in the top-right corner.
3. Select Edit Post and follow the steps outlined above.

LinkedIn

Adding alt text

1. From the post box, click the Photo icon.
2. In the pop-up that appears, select the photo you would like to share from your files.
3. On the top right corner of the image preview, you will find an Add Alt Text button.
4. A new screen will appear with a text box for you to enter 300 characters of alt text.
5. Click Save and then click Done to continue editing the post caption before publishing.

Updating alt text on images

1. Locate the post on your page and click the three dots in the top right corner.
2. Select Edit Update from the drop down menu.
3. Edit Alt Text will appear over the post's image and you can change the text in the text box as you see fit.
4. Click save on the image and then save on the post.

Adding captions to videos

1. From the post box, click the Video icon.
2. In the pop-up that appears, select the video you would like to share from your files.
3. From the video preview that appears, scroll down to find the option for Video Caption File (SRT only).
4. Click Select Caption to attach a SRT file and confirm your selection and select done.
5. Add any additional text and click Post.
NOTE: captions can not be updated after posting.

Instagram

Adding alt text to images

1. Start a new post by taking a photo or uploading a photo (or multiples).
2. Choose a filter and edit the image, then tap next or the checkmark.
3. Select the Advanced Settings at the bottom of the screen.
4. Tap Write Alt Text.
5. Write your alt text in the box and tap Done or the checkmark.
6. Publish your post as you normally would.

Updating alt text on images

1. Go to the photo and tap the three dots on the top of the post.
2. Tap Edit.
3. Tap Edit Alt Text in the bottom right.

4. Write the alt text in the box and tap Done or the checkmark.

Adding captions to videos

There is no option to add captions to video feed posts inside of the Instagram platform. Captions should be burned into the file in this case during the editing process or consider using a third-party app to add auto captions to your file.

Using auto captions for IGTV

1. Start your IGTV post by selecting your file and tapping Next.
2. Select a cover image from files or a frame of your video and tap Next.
3. Tap Advanced Settings at the bottom of the screen.
4. Toggle Show Captions on and tap Done.
5. Enter the other details for your post and then tap Post.

Auto captions may take some time to generate and can not be edited. You may choose to burn in your captions to your file before uploading to ensure transcript accuracy instead of using the auto-caption feature

Adding auto captions to Instagram stories

1. Start a new Instagram story by selecting a file or recording a video.
2. Tap the sticker icon on the top menu and select the captions sticker from the menu.
3. Once captions have been generated, you will see text on the screen.
4. Tap the text to edit it for accuracy and tap done when completed.
5. Choose the font, style and colour for your text to display on the screen and tap done.
6. Move the text to the area of the screen where you want it to appear and alter the size of its appearance as you see fit, while maintaining readability
7. Tap the arrow to choose where to publish your story.

Note: if using music in your stories, please add the sticker with one of the lyric options.

Adding auto captions to Instagram reels

1. Create a new reel by adding the files required for the video and editing the audio, timing and effects as needed before tapping preview.
2. Tap the sticker icon and select the captions sticker.
3. Once captions have been generated, you will see text on the screen.
4. Tap the text to edit it for accuracy and tap done when completed.
5. Choose the font, style and colour for your text to display on the screen and tap Next.
6. Move the text to the area of the screen where you want it to appear and alter the size of its appearance as you see fit.
7. Tap next and fill out the caption and choose the publishing destination for your reel before tapping Share.

TikTok

Adding captions to videos

1. Make your TikTok video as you normally would and proceed to the screen where you can add Sounds, Effects, Stickers and more.
2. Select the option to add auto captions from the menu on the top right side.
3. After the captions are generated, tap the pencil icon to edit your captions to ensure they are accurate and select save when you are finished.
4. Select the Next button and proceed with publishing your TikTok.

YouTube

Adding captions to videos

1. Click the create button and upload a video from your files.
2. Add your title, description, thumbnail, and set your video's language to English on the first tab before clicking Next.
3. On the Video Elements tab, select Subtitles and Add.
4. Upload your SRT file or manually enter the captions through the editor.
5. Click done and proceed through the next two screens to publish your video to your channel.

Auto captions

1. If a caption file is not uploaded or created, YouTube will automatically caption your uploaded video.
2. To edit your captions, go to the content section of your channel, find the video you want to edit captions for and press the pencil icon to see its details.
3. On the left side there is a Subtitle menu option that will list the caption files associated with the file.
4. If there are only auto captions, it will display as automatic and say duplicate and edit on the right side.
5. In the editor, press edit timings to ensure the time code is displayed next to the text.
6. Edit the text as needed and click publish when you are finished.
7. To download the edit SRT for use on other channels, simply click the three dots on the right side of the caption file and select download SRT.

Where can I get more information or assistance?

For questions regarding creating and maintaining accessible content on your social channels, please email the [Accessibility Working Group](#). Additionally, please contact us if you require this information in an alternate format (aoda@ontariotechu.ca).

The [social media team](#) in Communications and Marketing is also available to help if you require assistance with creating accessible content or accessing accessibility features on your social channels.