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# COMMUNICATION

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TOOL 5: IMPROVING ONLINE  
ACCESSIBILITY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** Social Media
- 2** Do's & Don'ts of Social Media Accessibility
- 3** Designing and Using Accessible Websites
- 4** Webpage Accessibility Checks
- 5** References

# TOOL 5: IMPROVING ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY

## Who is this for

### High priority

- Direct managers
- Corporate cross-departmental managers

### Practical Information

- HR Professionals
- Marketing Specialists

### Useful to Know

- Executive and Senior management

## What guidance does it provide?

- Actionable methods to check and improve accessibility over multi-channel experiences (i.e., social media, applications, websites)

## Take-home points

- Please review all checklists when creating accessible social media posts, websites, optimizing applications
- Federally regulated entities are legally required to follow and meet the requirements of level AA conformance set out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, published by the World Wide Web Consortium <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2021/2021-215.htm>
- For additional information on how to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2 requirements, please follow the link [How to Meet WCAG \(Quickref Reference\)](https://www.w3.org/2019/04/wcag-quickref/) ([w3.org](https://www.w3.org/)).

## Social Media

Striving for inclusion paves the way for us to be innovative and create products, services, and experiences that are accessible to all people including those with disabilities and those with other life experiences. For instance, consider people who speak English as their first language and those who are learning English as a second language, or newcomers to Canada and people who were born in the country, or even the differences in understanding that arise between generations. All these intersectional life experiences, and more, impact a person's understanding and consumption of content on social media.

**Inclusive design approaches to social media increases accessibility. Without accessibility, you miss connecting with your full potential audience, and the valuable opportunities and insights that come with it.**

These guidelines are intended to help you create social media content that is accessible to all people. Remember, these recommendations provide an excellent starting point, but social media platforms and their unique features change frequently. It's best to check official product and software documentation regularly!

## Checklist

Here are some best practices for how to make you social media accessibility friendly:

✓ **Make text accessible.** Write in plain language, avoid jargon/slang/technical terms. Use inclusive language and avoid ableist language. Other tips and tricks include:

- Do no overuse caps
- Avoid saying “click here,” write what they're accessing by clicking the link
- Limit emoji use and avoid special characters
- Use an adequate font size
- Limit line length

✓ **Provide alternate descriptions for images (Alt Text).** Writing a good image description is like writing set or stage directions. Keep in mind, when writing a description what would be important for the person looking at the image to notice. To help convey content, mention colour, actions, and picture details, such as people or environment descriptions. Be sure to share humour, provide emotional/scientific/political context. Skip saying, “image of/photograph of” and transcribe the text.

✓ **Captioning of videos.** For video content, you should provide captions of audio. Captions can either be closed captions (i.e., text can be turned on/off) or open captions (i.e., text is embedded).





# SOCIAL MEDIA

✓ **Emojis and emoticons.** Be considerate of users on screen readers by using emojis in small amount and place spaces between them. Braille readers' software are not regularly updated to reflect emojis, so refrain from relying on emojis to convey the entire meaning of the post.

✓ **Grammar guidelines.** Write plainly and Keep sentences short. If the writing is too complicated, readers will not be able to use it. Plain language documented improves accessibility. One best practice is to choose words with 1-2 syllables more. This will help to choose simpler words and reduce ambiguity.

✓ **CamelCase Hashtags.** When writing hashtags that are made up of multiple words, use initial capitalization, also known as CamelCase.

Eg. WriteYourHashtagsLikeThis instead of #WRITEYOURHASHTAGSLIKETHIS or #writinghashtaglikethis - This helps eliminate accidental inappropriate word scrambling.

✓ **Representation.** Represent people with all kinds of levels of ability, including temporary disabilities like injury or limitations. This applies to all kinds of content — photos, videos, written, shared.

**“Over 1/10 Canadians with disabilities (11.7%) used a cellphone, smartphone, or smartwatch with specialized software or adaptation because of their condition” – Choi, 2021**

## Learn Best Practices and Common Pitfalls

Take a look at the following page for comprehensive examples of accessible social media usage. Discover effective strategies through our detailed do's and don'ts list, designed to help you create more inclusive content for all users.



# SOCIAL MEDIA - DO'S & DON'TS

## Good vs. Bad Social Media Posts [1]

### Do's & Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
<p><b>Alt-text descriptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a detailed description for images of company logos and brand marks. Don't simply say 'company logo'.</li><li>• In PDF's, include alt text for elements of design as well as pictures. (Includes text boxes, squares, abstract elements, etc)</li></ul>	<p><b>Alt-text descriptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't use vague descriptions like "company logo," or "brand mark." Be specific and describe the content and purpose of the image.</li><li>• Don't provide alt-text for purely decorative images.</li><li>• Don't make alt-text overly lengthy. Aim for concise descriptions that convey the essential information without overwhelming the user.</li></ul>
<p><b>Colour-contrast:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that text and background colours have a sufficient contrast ratio. The WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) recommend a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text (18pt and above or 14pt bold and above).</li><li>• Use high contrast colours to make text easily readable. For example, dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background is usually easier to read.</li><li>• Use contrast checking tools to test your colour combinations, like <a href="#">WebAim Contrast Checker</a></li></ul>	<p><b>Colour-contrast</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't assume that everyone perceives colors in the same way.</li><li>• Don't use text colours that blend into the background. Ensure there is a strong contrast between text and background colours</li><li>• Don't ignore the WCAG guidelines for contrast ratios. Ensure your color combinations meet the minimum required contrast ratios</li></ul>
<p><b>Photographs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Show proper representation of inclusion. Ex. hospital wheelchairs VS practical wheelchairs</li><li>• Be inclusive of everyone - race, genders, sexuality, nationality, etc.</li></ul>	<p><b>Photographs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't use photographs that are biased, derogatory, or presumptuous</li><li>• Don't make photographs too small or crowded within a graphic</li></ul>

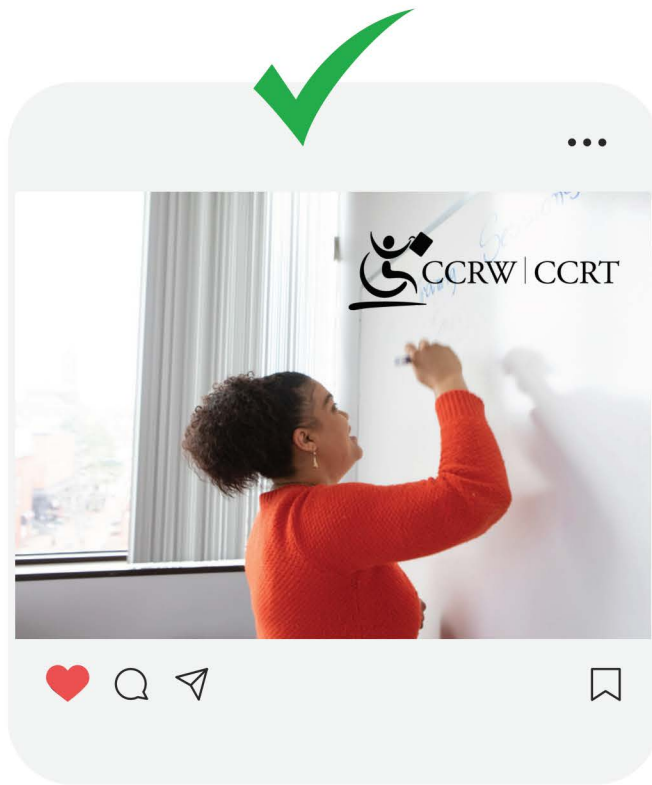


# SOCIAL MEDIA - DO'S & DON'TS

Do's	Don'ts
<p><b>Accessible Language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Always put the person first, not their disability</li><li>• Be concise. Keep your content brief and to the point</li><li>• Do use clear and simple language. Write in plain language that is easy to understand</li></ul>	<p><b>Accessible Language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't describe someone based on their disability</li><li>• Don't use language that puts down, or diminishes another individual</li><li>• Avoid using words or phrasing that are discriminatory, stereotypical or prejudice.</li></ul>
<p><b>Fonts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose fonts that are easy to read. Use sans-serif fonts like Arial, Verdana, or Helvetica, which tend to be clearer on screens.</li><li>• Use a font size that is large enough for comfortable reading. Generally, a minimum of 12pt or 16px is recommended for body text</li></ul>	<p><b>Fonts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid overly decorative serif or complex fonts that can be hard to read</li><li>• Don't use font sizes below 12pt or 16px. When font is smaller it becomes harder to read</li></ul>



## SOCIAL MEDIA - DO'S & DON'TS



Alt-text: CCRW staff smiling and writing on a white-board at CCRW's Moncton office.

- ✓ The contrast of the logo doesn't blend into the background
- ✓ The alt-text is descriptive and concise

Alt-text: CCRW Moncton office

- ✗ The contrast of the logo is poor. The logo and background are both white so the logo ends up blending into the background, resulting in poor visibility
- ✗ The alt-text is vague and doesn't paint a full picture of the photo





## Designing and Using Accessible Websites [2]

What is web accessibility? Web accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them. More specifically, all people can:

- Perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web
- Contribute to the Web

The Web is fundamentally designed to work for all people, whatever their hardware, software, language, location, or ability. When the Web meets this goal, it is accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, movement, sight, and cognitive ability.

Thus, the impact of disability is radically changed on the Web because the Web removes barriers to communication and interaction that many people face in the physical world. However, when websites, applications, technologies, or tools are poorly designed, they can create barriers that exclude people from using the Web. Accessibility is essential for developers and organizations that want to create high-quality websites and web tools, and not exclude people from using their products and services.

**Both Daniel Daffoe and Matt Queen work with RBC’s designers and developers, helping to establish core inclusive design principles internally — including by taking into account accessibility. Using a product design software system called RIG (RBC Interface Guidelines), they ensure designers and software developers are equipped with accessible components that integrate seamlessly into the bank’s digital products. In essence, they help ensure RBC’s digital banking products can be used by people of all abilities.**

**“It really brings together those of us who have become accessibility champions for the bank. For those who join in, it’s an opportunity to gain some knowledge of accessibility and bring it back to their respective teams. We share best practices on inclusive design and it’s sparked a genuine passion for digital accessibility and design across the bank.” – Daniel Dafoe, Senior Design Technologist**

Accessible design improves overall user experience and satisfaction in a variety of situations, across different devices, across ability and for older users. Accessibility can enhance your brand, drive innovation, and extend your market reach.



# DESIGNING AND USING ACCESSIBLE WEBSITES

Federally regulated entities are legally required to follow and meet the requirements of level AA conformance set out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, published by the World Wide Web Consortium <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2021/2021-215.htm>

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**Among persons with disabilities, 2.6% need a type of specialized software or other adaptation to access the Internet. Note, of those who required these accessibility features, 70% reported that they did not have all the specialized software or adaptations they needed. – Choi, 2021**

## Optimizing the Accessibility of Applications

It doesn't matter how superior the accessibility features on a mobile device are; if they aren't utilized properly by the Web or other applications, they are not accessible to users.<sup>3</sup> Making your app accessible means you must consider the range of challenges a customer may face, ensuring that as many people as possible can use it with as little or no barriers. This includes those with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive or learning difficulties, as well as deafness or hearing ability. [4]

Designing an accessible app means much more than simply making the design clearer. You must design an app that is adaptable to those throughout the spectrum and support those who need the app's extra, accessible functions.

For more in-depth guidance on how to make your app more accessible: [4]

- Create a simple, clear layout. The initial step is to ensure you have a simple layout. A cluttered design may overwhelm a user who then might give up on your app before they have begun to explore it.
  - Elements must be visible to those who may need to magnify the screen, your design must be responsive and adapt to various screen sizes. Text and call-to-action buttons must also appear at an appropriate size, with the option to enlarge.



# DESIGNING AND USING ACCESSIBLE WEBSITES

- Design a consistent navigation. You must design an easy-to-follow app with clear indicators. Navigation should have short task flows and be easy to find, as well as consistent throughout the different stages of using the app.
  - Navigation pointers –menu bars and search boxes – should also be consistently positioned in a similar format throughout your app. This will enable users to explore your app quickly and easily in a logical order with no confusion.
- Consider your text formatting. Uneven spacing, long sentences or paragraphs, italic fonts and the colour of text are just some design features you need to consider. Over-formatted text can be difficult for dyslexic users to read, as well as those with impaired vision, so make sure you keep your formatting simple and consistent throughout your design.
- Make audio and video accessible. When incorporating these elements, users should be able to pause or stop, adjust volume, and turn captions on and off. You may also need to consider adding audio description for users with visual impairments and subtitles and sign language for those who may be deaf.
- Consider colour. Colour palettes are a top priority when designing any app, as most businesses associate certain colours with their branding. To make your app accessible to colour-blind users, it's important to not solely rely on colour to communicate messaging. Also, ensuring proper contrast when using colours will provide proper visibility.
- Don't forget to test. There are many methods to approach the testing phase, for instance engaging with real users at random and asking them to test elements of your app or using digital tools that can offer detailed assistance on screen reading, similar to a beta test.

For further guidance, organizations can connect with Fable Engage to utilize people with disabilities for user research and accessibility training. Fable Engage uses the tools and services to easily conduct research and test your product with people with disabilities. Fable Engage enables you to collect video recordings, conduct user research, review prototypes, meet with experts, and test compatibility across assistive technology configurations. Please visit <https://makeitfable.com/> for more information.

## Become Champions of Accessibility [5]

The guidance provided here will help you to start assessing the accessibility of your web page. With simple steps, you can get an idea whether accessibility is addressed, in even the most basic way.





# WEBPAGE ACCESSIBILITY CHECKS

These checks cover just a few accessibility issues and are designed to be quick and easy, rather than definitive. A web page could seem to pass these checks, yet still have some accessibility barriers. More robust assessment is needed to evaluate accessibility comprehensively.

Checks	What to do	What to check for
Page Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the page's title (or listen)</li> <li>Look at the titles of other pages within the website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check that there is a title that adequately and briefly describes the content of the page</li> <li>Check that the title is different from other pages on the website, and adequately distinguished the page from other web pages</li> </ul>
Image Text Alternatives	Every image has alt with appropriate alternative text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the toolbar check alt text by selecting "images", then "show images". If there are images missing alt, a dialog box appears with the number of images missing.</li> <li>To check if alt text is appropriate, see if the text adequately conveys the information in the image</li> </ul>
Text: Headings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The page has a heading - in almost all pages there should be at least one heading</li> <li>All text that looks like a heading is marked as a heading</li> <li>All text that is marked as a heading is a conceptual section heading</li> <li>The heading hierarchy is meaningful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the toolbar, select "Information", then "View Document Outline"</li> <li>For non-visual checks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are headings listed? If there are no headings marked up, it will say "0 headings".</li> <li>Does the outline start with [H1] and follow a meaningful hierarchy?</li> </ul> </li> <li>For visual checks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare the Document Outline to the visual rendering of the page.</li> <li>Are the things that look like headings on the page listed in the Document Outline?</li> <li>Are there things in the Document Outline that aren't really headings?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Anything that is a functional heading should have a heading icon before it.</li> </ul>



## REFERENCES

- [1] Canvashot (2017, March 27). Can You Tell “Good” From “Bad” Social Media Content? Pigtail Media. <https://www.pigtailmedia.com/can-you-tell-good-vs-bad-social-media-hotel-content/>
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