

Social media accessibility guide

At RCOT, we aim to create a culture of authenticity and belonging, where everyone is welcomed, celebrated, supported, recognised and valued. Social media has the power to bring people together — but if you don't follow best practices for accessibility, it also has the power to exclude. This guide shares ways to make your content accessible to ensure a smooth, inclusive experience for everyone on your social media channels.

Use accessible text

Things to do to make your social posts fully accessible:

- Use the automatic font provided on each social media platform. Don't change your font to something more creative, as the more creative fonts don't work well with assistive technologies.
- Always write your hashtags with CamelCase so that they're easier for screen readers to read. CamelCase is where you capitalise the first letter of each word in a hashtag, so #iloveoccupationaltherapy becomes #ILoveOccupationalTherapy.
- Always write in sentence case. Don't write in all caps as all caps makes it harder for words to be identified by their shape. Also, screen readers may also incorrectly identify words as acronyms.
- Always speak in plain English. There are [tools](#) out there that can help with this. There are no concrete rules for writing in plain English, but there are some general guidelines:
 - Always choose the simplest words possible.
 - Use short sentences. Split up long sentences in two when possible.
 - Only include details that make things easier to understand.
 - Write directly to your reader; this means writing from a second person point of view in many cases.
 - Use transition words to make relationships between ideas and sentences clear.
 - Use the active voice whenever possible.
- Don't use jargon or overly technical language. This will make your posts more accessible to people outside of or new to occupational therapy, non-native speakers or people who experience cognitive impairments.
- Present the most important information first. It's helpful for accessibility and gets your point across sooner.
- Include @ mentions at the end of your posts. This helps the flow of your post, especially for screen readers.

- Use special characters correctly, and in moderation. Screen readers know to not read all special characters aloud, like ampersands. But too many special characters in your text can result in a confusing experience for people who use screen readers.
- Use emojis sparingly. For people using screen readers, 🐱 translates to “Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes”. So if you post 🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱 they will get ‘Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes Grinning Cat Face With Smiling Eyes’.
- If you are using emojis, only use them at the end of sentences, don’t break up sentences with them.

Add alternative text (alt text)

‘Alt text’ refers to the text you can add as an alternative to an image or video, so that all elements of your post are accessible for visually impaired people using screen-readers. All RCOT accounts must add alt text to all images and videos without dialogue (GIFs and animations) that they publish.

Things to consider and do when writing your alt text:

- What is it that people need to know about the image or video? Add important context but remember to keep it short and to the point and to start with the most important part. 125 characters is considered a good amount, but don’t be afraid to use more if it paints a clearer picture.
- Don’t write ‘image of’ or ‘video of’ as it’s a given and takes up valuable characters.
- Don’t make assumptions about race, gender or motivations; simply describe the scene.
- Screen readers can’t read text shown on images or video, so it needs to be added into your alt text if it is not already mentioned in your post text.
- Include keywords, as alt text plays a part in your SEO rankings (how easy it is for people to search for your post). Don’t include emojis or links, just descriptive text.
- When writing alt text for video, the best place to add it is at the end of the post text. With channels such as X (Twitter) that have a character limit you can add it as part of a thread.

An example of good alt text:



Image-based example	Design based example
<p>Bad alt text: A photo of a boy taking his shoes off with their dog.</p>	<p>Bad alt text: A dark green background, the RCOT logo is at the top of the image. There are two illustrations: one shows people at a table with coffee and cake, the other shows a person brushing their hair.</p>
<p>Good alt text: After a dog walk, a person sits on the bottom stair taking their shoes off. Their dog stands next to them and their jacket is thrown over the banister.</p>	<p>Good alt text: Text reads 'Upcoming event title. 6 –7pm, Monday 1 January.' Illustrations show two people at a table with hot drinks and cake and a person brushing their hair.</p>

Make video accessible

Minimise background noise

When creating video content, it's important to make sure there is as little background noise as possible. This will help people with hearing and cognitive impairment.

Add closed captions

Add closed captions to all video content. A closed caption is text that is added on to video content to allow people who are deaf or hard of hearing to experience it. Unlike subtitles that just provide a language translation for those that can hear but don't speak the language, captions show what is being said along with descriptions of background sounds and speaker changes. There are platforms (like Canva and Vimeo) that offer free options that allow you to add closed captions to your videos.

Here are some generally established rules to follow around closed captions:

- Divide your sentences into two relatively equal parts like a pyramid (40ch per line for the top

line, a bit less for the bottom line).

- Always keep an average of 20 to 30 characters per second.
- A sequence should only last between 1 and 8 seconds.
- Always keep a person's name or title together.
- Do not break a line after conjunction.
- Consider aligning multi-lined captions to the left.

And here are some common methods people use to communicate via closed captions:

- **-Words**
A hyphen is a new speaker.
- **'Words'**
Single speech marks for narrator or person on phone.
- **"Words"**
Double quote marks is a speaker quoting someone else.
- **<Words**
Arrows point in the direction of off-screen speech.
- **w-w-words**
Hyphens between letters indicate a stammer.
- **(Words)**
Brackets for a whisper.
- **Words(!)**
Bracketed exclamation mark is a sarcastic statement.
- **Words(?)**
Bracketed question mark is a sarcastic question.
- **Words?!**
Question mark then exclamation mark for disbelief.
- **WORDS!**
All Caps then an exclamation for shouting.
- **..Words**
Two dots at the start, answering unheard speech.
- **word WORD word**
Caps word in a sentence is a stressed word.
- **Word...word**
Three dots in between words, a short pause.

- **Word word...**
Three full stops at the end, speech trails off.
- **Word word...
...word word**
Two dots at the beginning of a sentence after speech trailed off, marks the sentence has continued.
- **#Words#**
Hash symbols mark the start and end of singing.

Further resources

[Designing for Accessibility: Best Practices for Closed Captioning and Subtitles UX](#)

[How to ADD CAPTIONS to a video in CANVA](#)