

# Five Strategies for Accessible Social Media



**Mindy Johnson**

Director of Digital Communications & Outreach at [CAST](#)

Twitter: [@min\\_d\\_j](#)

Email: [mjohnson@cast.org](mailto:mjohnson@cast.org)

[ATIA 2020 Session Description](#)

[Download a copy of the slides](#) (accessible PDF)

[Sign up for the CAST Newsletter!](#)

## Shareable Image

**Social Media Accessibility**

- Plain Language
- CamelCase Hashtags
- Image Descriptions
- Captioning & Audio
- Link Shorteners

Mindy Johnson | @min\_d\_j

[Download the Social Media Accessibility shareable image \(CC-BY-NC-ND\)](#)

## Image Description

Social Media Accessibility: Plain Language represented by a speech bubble, CamelCase Hashtags represented by a hashtag symbol, Image Descriptions represented by an icon of three people in a frame, Captioning & Audio represented by closed captioning & audio description icons, and Link Shorteners represented by the WWW abbreviation. | Mindy Johnson @min\_d\_j CC-BY-NC-ND

## Plain Language

Acronyms and abbreviations are everywhere in education. For less character-sensitive social media, consider spelling out acronyms and abbreviations where possible. It's also important to avoid jargon and academese. This not only increases the cognitive accessibility of your posts, but creates a more welcoming tone for your followers.

- [What is Plain Language?](#) from PlainLanguage.gov
- [Social Media: You Still Need Plain Language](#) from DigitalGov [video: 23:14]
- [Emoji Marketing Could be Excluding People from Your Conversation](#) from SiteImprove
- [Emojipedia](#): Emojis and their descriptions
- For fun: [Deciphering Academese](#) from PhD Comics

## CamelCase Hashtags

CamelCase (or PascalCase) is the practice of capitalizing the first letters of words in multiple-word hashtags. This not only helps screen readers distinguish the separate words in a hashtag, but also increases legibility for sighted people.

- For example: #CamelCase or #TheMoreYouKnow rather than #notcamelcase or #themoreyouknow
- Did you know? The official hashtag for accessibility is the numeronym [#a11y!](#) That's because there are 11 characters between the A and the Y in the word "accessibility."
- [Make Better Hashtags with CamelCase](#) from Josh Doody
- [How to Use Hashtags: How Many, Best Ones, and Where to Use Them](#) from the Buffer Blog

## Image Descriptions

Twitter mobile and web applications allow you to add descriptions to your images before you post them. So do Instagram and LinkedIn. Facebook and Instagram allow you to edit image descriptions after you post. When you can't describe using alt text, include

the image description in the post itself. Remember, text in images can't be read by a screen reader!

- [Making images accessible for people on Twitter](#) from Twitter
- [How do I edit the alternative text for a photo on Instagram?](#) from Instagram
- [How do I edit the alternative text for a photo?](#) from Facebook
- [Making LinkedIn Media More Inclusive with Alternative Text Descriptions](#) from Vipin Gupta of LinkedIn Engineering
- [Facebook's AI is Now Automatically Writing Photo Captions](#) from WIRED
- [Beyond Access: Facebook's Automated Image Descriptions and Disability Justice](#) from Disability Stories on Medium
- [15 Things to Know About Twitter's Alternative Text for Images](#) from Lireo Designs
- [Image Description Guidelines](#) from Diagram Center
- [How Blind People Use Instagram](#) from Tommy Edison [video: 2:11]

## Captioning & Audio

Make sure the videos you're linking to are captioned. If you're creating your own videos, make sure to caption them before posting. It's super easy! And if you really want to go the extra mile for accessibility, include audio descriptions for your video. Or better yet, when you create your video, make sure there are no elements in the video that require visual-only input. For example, read aloud any text in your video. Planning ahead is always better than retrofitting.

- Captioning Resources
  - [Great Captioning Overview Post](#) from PremiereGal & 3Play Media
  - [Module 3: How to Locate Captioned Videos and Create Your Own](#) from the AEM Center's New Educator Online Course
  - [Adding Captions to YouTube Videos](#) from Google
  - [Adding Captions to Vimeo Videos](#) from Vimeo
  - [Adding Captions to Facebook Videos](#) from Facebook
  - [Subtitles now available in iOS and Android](#) from Twitter
  - [Adding Closed Captioning to Videos on LinkedIn](#) from LinkedIn
  - [Good, Bad, and Ugly: Closed Captioning and Video Description](#) [video: 4:23]
- Audio Description Resources
  - [Disney's Frozen Teaser Trailer](#) [video: 1:35] - no audio description
  - [Frozen - Trailer with Audio Description](#) [video: 1:31] - no captions
  - [Intro to Audio Description](#) from 3Play Media [webinar recording]

## Link Shorteners

Link shortening services not only save you characters in your posts, but they help limit the raw characters a screen-reader has to read aloud. Customizing your short links can

also help sighted followers remember the links you post. Putting URLs at the end of your posts is also good practice.

- [Bit.ly](#)
  - [How to Create and Customize Your Bitly Links](#) from the bitly blog
- [TinyURL](#)
- [tiny.cc](#)
- [Ow.ly](#)
- [A Case For \(And Against\) Using Link Shorteners To Promote Your Content](#) from CoSchedule

## More Resources

Social media tools and apps change daily. We can't always keep up with each individual platform, but general accessibility guidance and awareness can help us make our posts (wherever we post) more accessible for our followers.

- [5 Easy Tips for Making Your Social Media More Accessible](#) by Mindy Johnson, guest post for AIM-VA
- [Social Media as a Professional Learning Tool](#) by Mindy Johnson, guest blog post for the Kennedy Krieger Institute
- [Federal Social Media Accessibility Toolkit Hackpad](#) (2017)
- [Social Media Accessibility from Queen's University](#)
- [Accessible Social Media](#) from Accessible U (University of Minnesota)
- [WebAIM: Screen Reader User Survey #7 Results](#) (2019)
- [Stella Young: I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much](#) from TEDxSydney [video: 9:10]
- [Luis Pérez: What losing my vision taught me about access](#) from TedEd Educator Talks [video: 12:32]