

February 2025

Inclusive Communication and Engagement

DSS: **Online Training Course—Module 4**



Transforming
Energy
Access



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GDI Hub, Team, Housekeeping

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Feedback, Triage Clinic

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Disclaimer

This material has been funded by UK Aid from the UK government, however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

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Introduction

Global Disability Innovation (GDI) Hub accelerates ideas into impact for a more just world—for disabled people, and all people.

41+ countries | 37 million people | 100+ partners

Growing new technologies & ecosystems | Supporting & scaling innovations |
Strengthening systems | Pioneering research | Sharing knowledge | Building
partnerships | Taking risks



**Bringing together world leading academic research
and practice-led delivery to address global challenges**

Disability and disability inclusion

- **1 in 6 people (16%) globally have a disability**, 80% live in LMICs.
- **Key enablers:** Disability confidence, engaging people with disabilities, accessibility, reasonable accommodations, disaggregated data.

Disability innovation

- Energy access innovation could **directly influence ‘powering AT’**.
- Developing affordable and sustainable adaptations or alternatives for the 22 energy-based WHO-listed priority assistive products presents a high-impact opportunity.

Inclusive Design benefits everyone:

- Places people at the heart of the design process.
- Delivers results ‘with’ and not ‘for’ .
- Responds to diverse needs.

Suggested actions for TEA partners:

- Conduct disability inclusion **training and awareness workshop** for all staff.
- Explore **partnerships with disability innovators/ businesses.**
- Conduct **Accessibility Audits** for your business assets (physical, digital, and communication)



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Introduction to Inclusive Communication

Why inclusive and accessible communication?

- Promotes equity and fairness and **creates a level playing field** where all voices are valued and heard.
- **Prioritizes** those who have been historically excluded or underrepresented.
- Ensures that individuals with disabilities, linguistic differences, or low literacy can **fully participate** in conversations, decision-making, and events.
- Removes barriers to understanding, leading to **better outcomes** in education, healthcare, and civic participation.



Source: UN Photo by Manuel Elias.

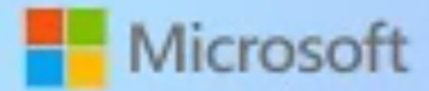
Best practices for creating inclusive, easy-to-read materials

- Use clear and simple **language**
- **Structure** content logically
- **Limit information** per sentence or paragraph.
- **Provide definitions** for necessary technical terms.
- Choose **accessible formatting**
- Provide **multiple formats**



Source: NHS

Why make digital tools accessible?



**/ONE
DEV/** Question

**// Why is it important to make
my apps accessible?**



Rachel Kang

Best practices for creating accessible digital content

Mainstream inclusive design as an attitude and process

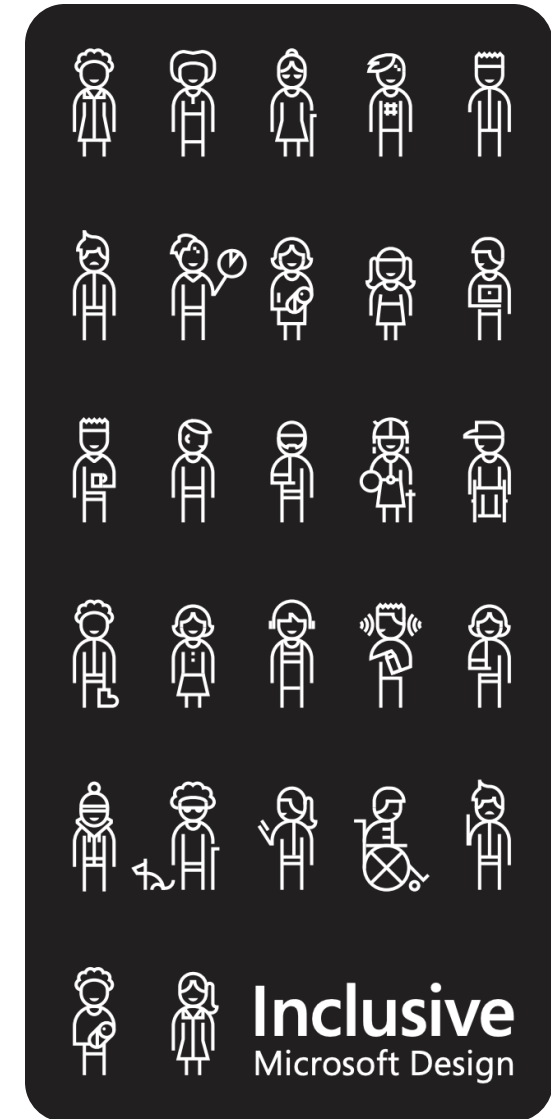
- To ensure content (information) is perceivable and usable for the widest audience without the need for additional adaptation.

Test your digital communications and outreach material for screen-reader compatibility

- To structure documents in order, with title, headings, and alt text.

Add captions and transcripts

- To make audio and video content accessible for people who prefer or need to read the information.



Source: Microsoft Design

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Inclusive Language in Practice

What is inclusive language?

Use of words, phrases, and expressions that are **respectful, accurate, and considerate** of all individuals, regardless of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, cultural background, or other identities. It **avoids stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory terms** while fostering equality and belonging.



Common myths in disability-related language

Myth	Reality	Best Practice
"Person-first language is always correct"	Many people, particularly within the disability rights movement, prefer identity-first language (e.g., "disabled person") as it reflects pride in their identity and challenges the idea that disability is inherently negative.	Ask individuals or communities about their preferences and follow their lead.
All disabilities are visible or obvious	Many disabilities, such as chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, or neurodivergence, are invisible but just as valid.	Avoid making assumptions and recognize that disabilities can be visible or invisible.
Disability is always negative	Many people with disabilities view disability as a natural part of diversity, not something inherently bad.	Avoid value judgments and focus on accessibility, empowerment, and inclusion.

Common pitfalls in disability-related language

Pitfalls	Why is it problematic?	Best Practice
Using euphemisms for disability	Euphemisms can come across as patronizing or dismissive of the lived realities of people with disabilities.	Use straightforward, neutral terms like "disabled person" or "person with a disability."
Describing disability as a tragedy or something to "overcome"	These phrases frame disability as inherently negative or something to be pitied.	Use neutral and factual descriptions , like "uses a wheelchair," and avoid framing disability as a limitation.
Overusing terms like "inspiration"	It reduces the individual's achievements or existence to their disability, ignoring their personhood and agency.	Celebrate achievements for their merit , not as exceptional solely because of a disability.
Ignoring the role of cultural context	Different cultures and communities may use or reject certain terms.	Research community-specific preferences and respect cultural differences in language use.

Key take-aways:

- Respect individual and community **preferences**.
- Use **straightforward**, neutral terms.
- Avoid stereotypes, euphemisms, and **pity-based** language.

Disability is an evolving concept. Stay informed.

Be open to learning.

4

Tools and Strategies for Accessible Content

1

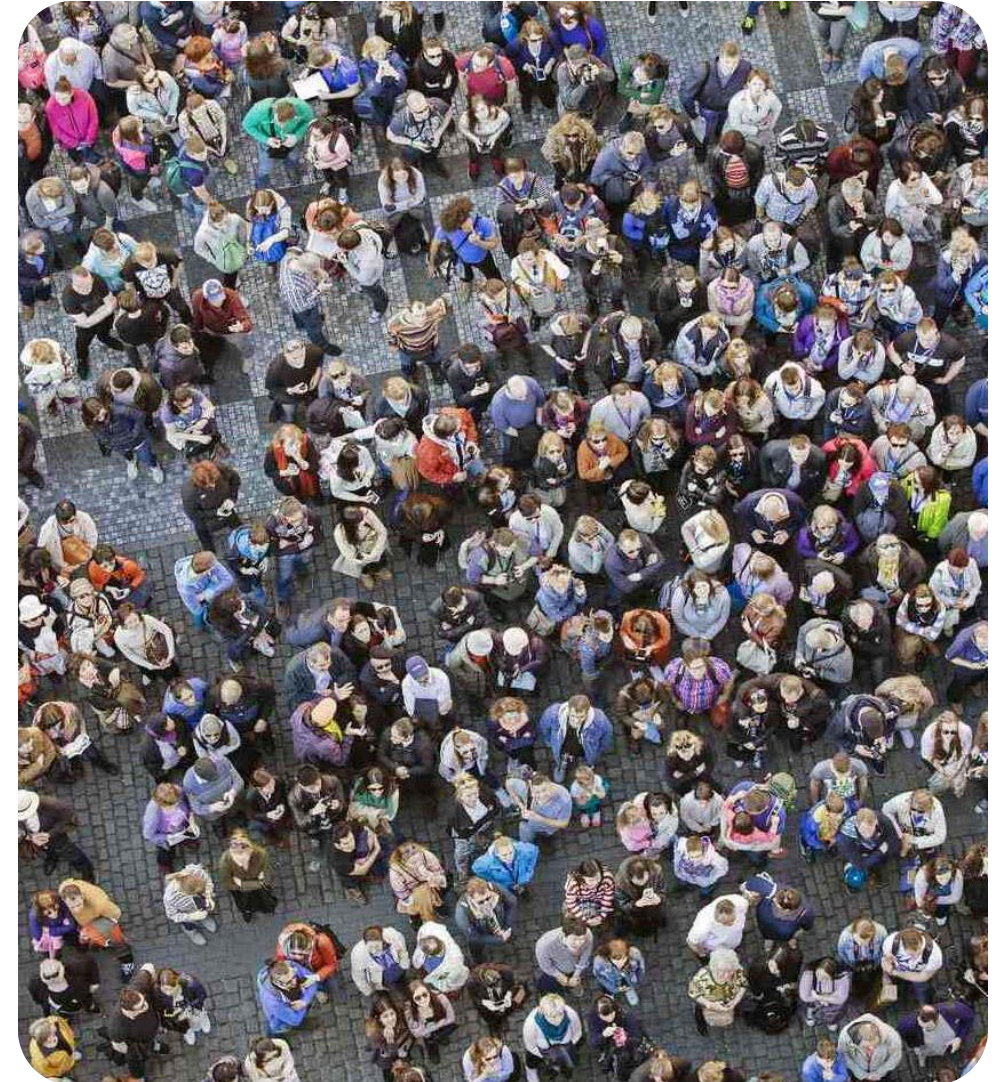
Microsoft Word

2

Websites and Social Media

3

Events and Activities



4.1. Microsoft Word

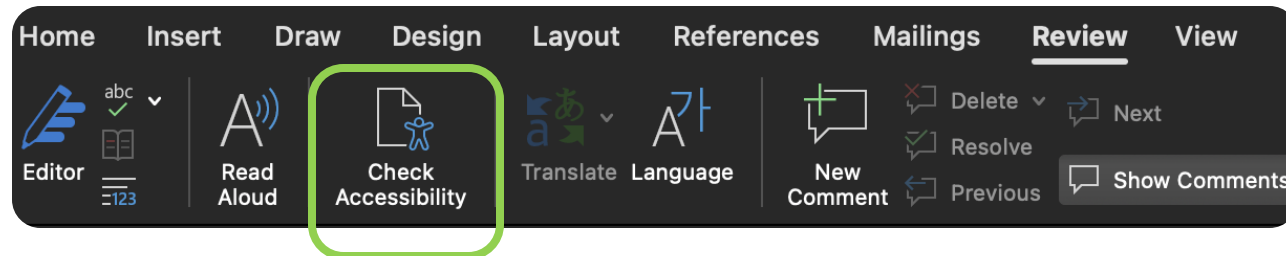
Priority accessibility tools/features:

- **Microsoft accessibility checker:** Identifies and suggests fixes for key accessibility issues.
- **Alternative text (Alt text):** Add descriptive text which conveys the meaning and context of a visual item (images).
- **Heading styles:** Use structured headings for better navigation.
- **Header row or column:** Tells screen reader users how to read tables.



Reviewing your document for accessibility

- Under "**Review**," select "**Check Accessibility.**" This program identifies problems such as inappropriate heading structures and missing alt text and offers solutions.



Accessibility

Inspection Results

Errors

- > Missing Object Description (196)
- > Image or Object Not Inline (2)

Warnings

- > Check Reading Order (1)
- > Hard-to-Read Text Contrast (6)

Intelligent Services

- > Review Auto-Generated Description (90)

☒ Keep accessibility checker running while I work

Additional Information

[Read more about making documents accessible](#)

Errors

- Missing Object Description**
This is where you have not added ALT Text to a picture, table, chart, SmartArt or shape and Word thinks that there needs to be ALT Text.
- Image Object Not Inline**
When adding pictures, shapes etc, for a screen reader to read them properly they should be inline with text – not floating or top.

Warnings

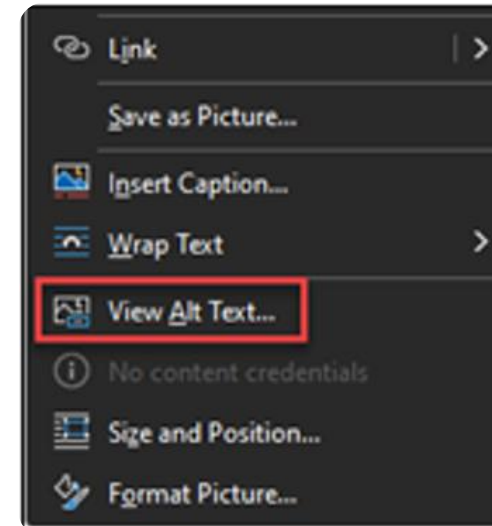
- Check Reading Order**
If you have tables in your document this looks at the tabbing order to make sure it makes sense to a screen reader
- Hard to Read Text Contrast**
Sometimes we choose colours that are not easy to read. This will highlight them and offer you the option to change them.


Intelligent Services


- Review Auto-Generated Description** – this will

Adding alternative text (alt text) (1 of 2)

- Right-click on an image > choose the **"View Alt Text"** option from the context menu.
- You will be taken to the **"Alt Text" popup**. In this popup, add alternative text that clearly and completely describes an image.
- Select the **"Mark as decorative"** checkbox in the "Alt Text" pane if an image is used purely for decoration.
- Avoid using terms like **"Image of..."** or **"Graphic of..."** when providing alt text.



 **alt**="yellow apple"

 **alt**="hand reaching for a yellow apple hanging from the tree"

Adding alternative text (alt text) (2 of 2)

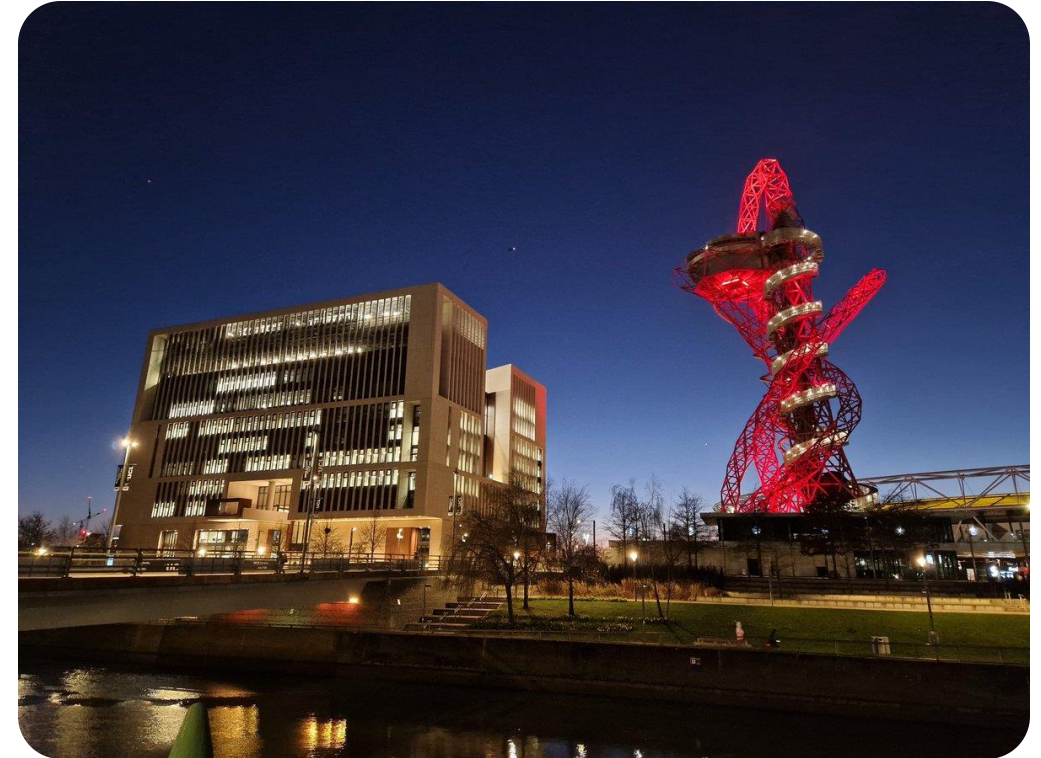
Example of how to write Alt text for this image:

Correct way:

The ArcelorMittal Orbit tower illuminated in red against a deep blue evening sky, next to the Marshgate building with its windows glowing from interior lights. A canal and pedestrian bridge are in the foreground, reflecting the city lights.

Wrong way:

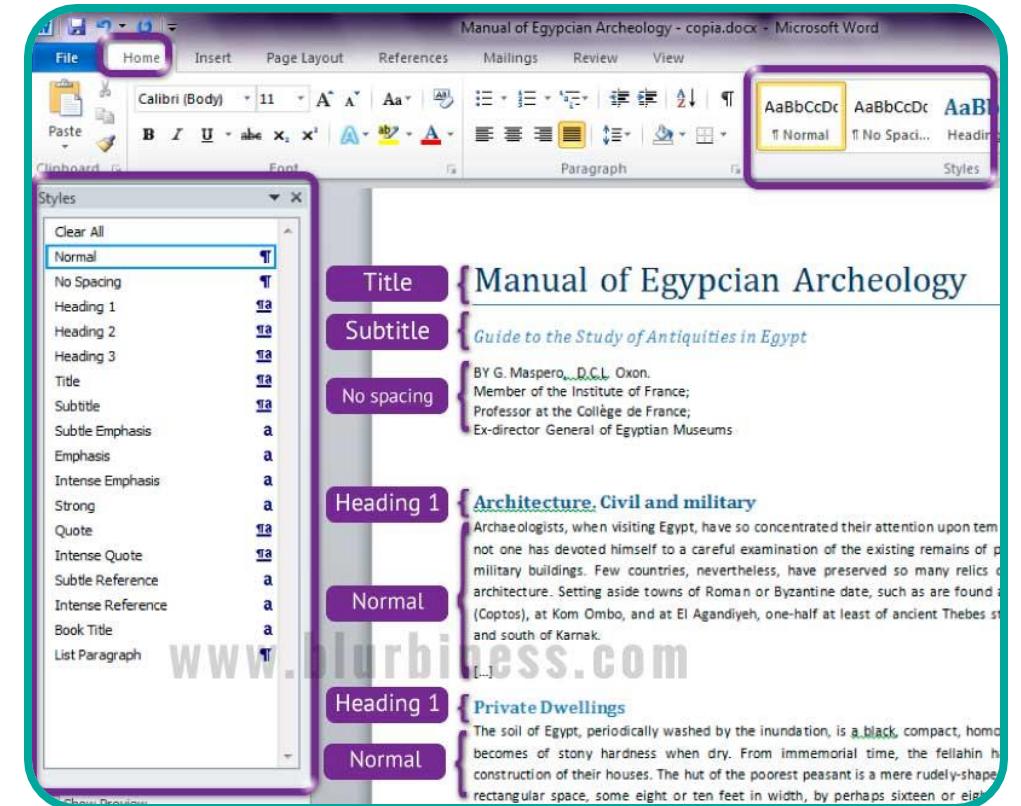
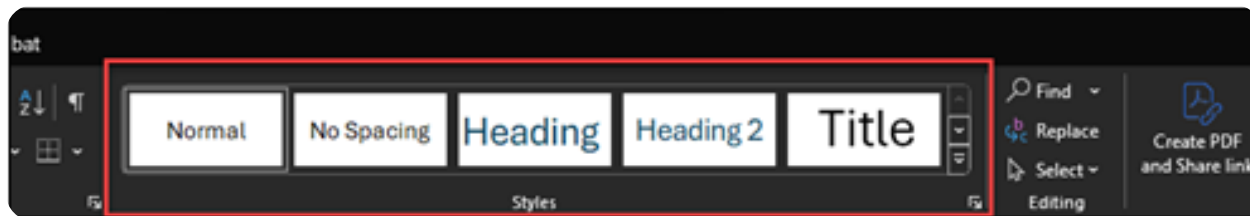
A building and a tower at night.



Source: UCL

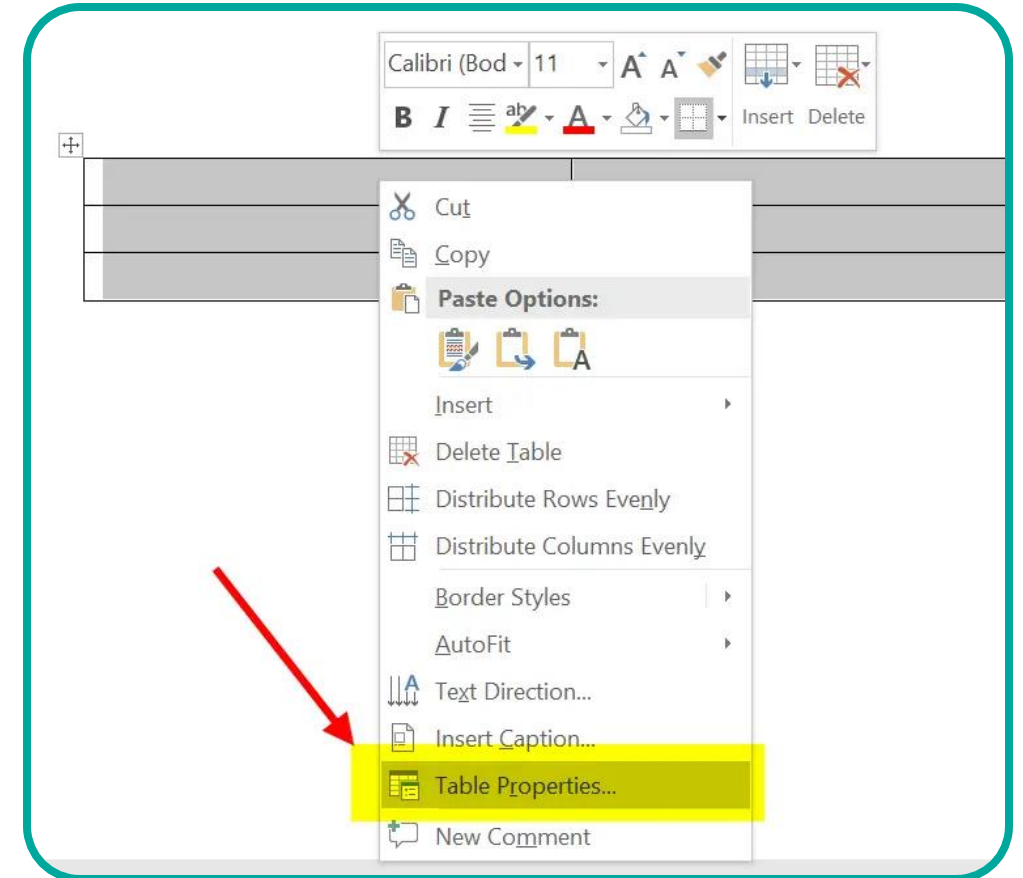
Using heading styles

- Organise your content and **make it visually coherent** using the available heading styles.
- Go to the **“Home” tab > “Styles”** group and choose a style that matches the page structure and content.
- **Avoid** formatting the text using font size, colour, and weight, as these will not convey the same meaning as the “styles”.



Inserting header row and column for tables

- Open the “**Tags Panel**,” expand the table and ensure it is correctly tagged using **<Table>**, **<TR> (table row)**, **<TH> (table header)** and **<TD> (table data)**.
- Use **table properties** to mark the first row as a header row for easier navigation.
- **Table layout** should be preferably plain. **Merged cells and embedded tables**, which might confuse a screen reader, should be avoided.



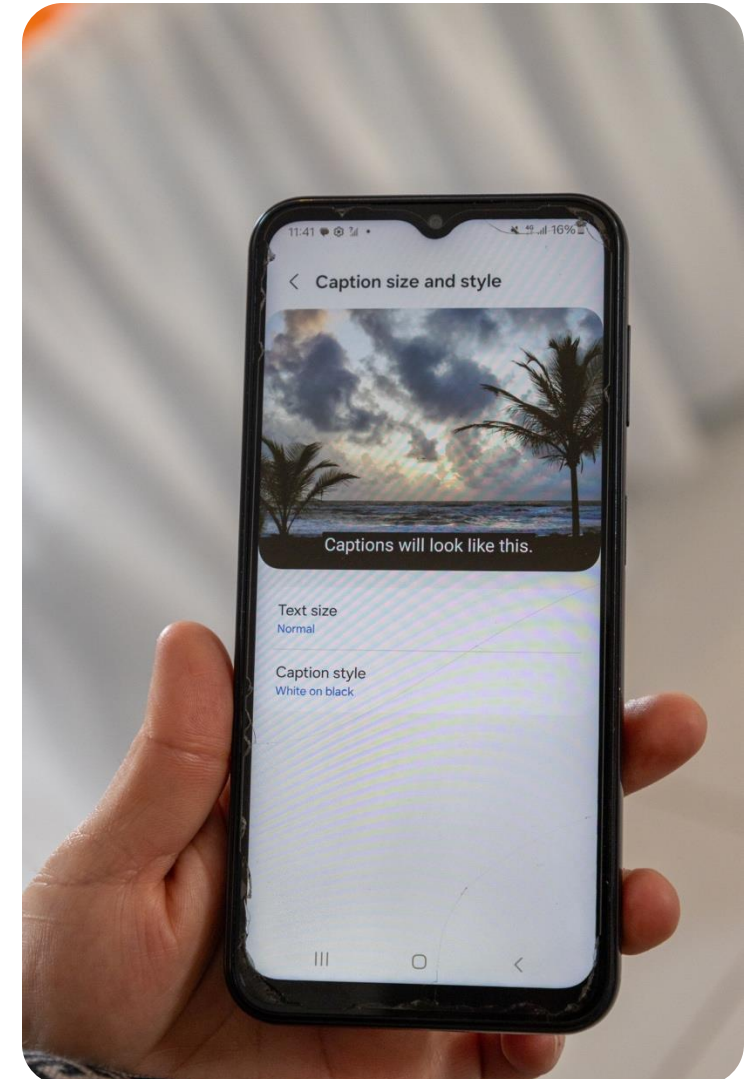
Demonstration 1

GDI Hub team to present a live session on creating accessible word documents, using the above discussed tools/features.

4.2. Websites and social media

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
provide four principles for making digital content
accessible to all, including people with disabilities:


- **Perceivable:** Information must be presented in a way that users can perceive (e.g., providing text alt text for images and captions for videos).
- **Operable:** Users must be able to interact with the content, including navigation via keyboard or assistive devices.
- **Understandable:** Content should be easy to understand, with clear instructions and navigation.
- **Robust:** Content must be accessible across a range of devices, technologies, and assistive tools.



Source: GDI Hub, 2024

Priority accessibility tools/features:

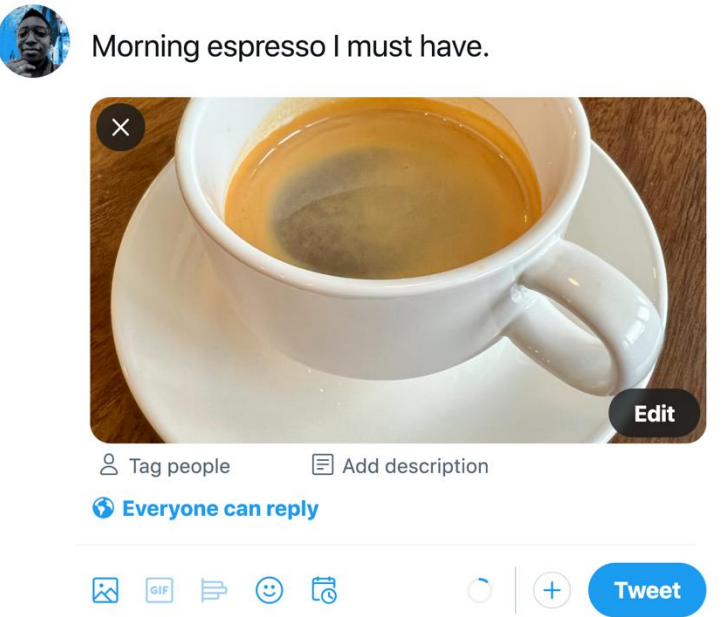
- **Colour contrast:** Ensure contrast between text and background colours to improve readability.
- **Font sizes:** Use scalable fonts (e.g., at least 16px for body text on websites) and allow users to zoom in without losing functionality.
- **Video captions:** Include captions for all video content to ensure accessibility for people with hearing impairments. Provide transcripts for audio and video files.

 <H1> <label>	Structure content using HTML5		Create an adaptive layout
	Develop for keyboard	Headline	Use a readable font size
 <alt>	Describe images with an alternative text		Make large clickable actions
Contact Us	Use meaningful links		Provide subtitles and transcripts for video and audio
	Provide good color contrasts		Give users enough time to complete an action

Using alt text and screen-reader-friendly heading styles are critical.

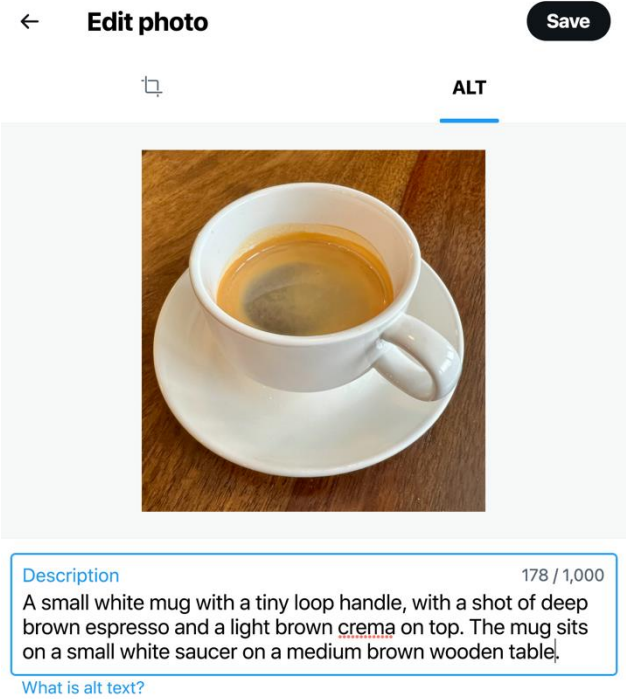
4.2. Websites and social media

Adding ALT text on an X, post



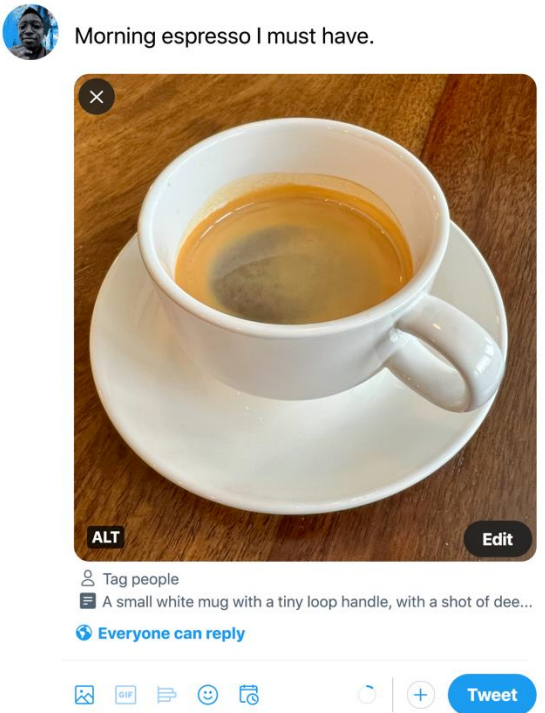
Source: X help page

After uploading an image to a post, select **add description** underneath the image.



Source: X help page

Select **Save**. An ALT badge will appear in the corner of the image. ("ALT" is the abbreviation for alternative text, which is the technical name for image description.)

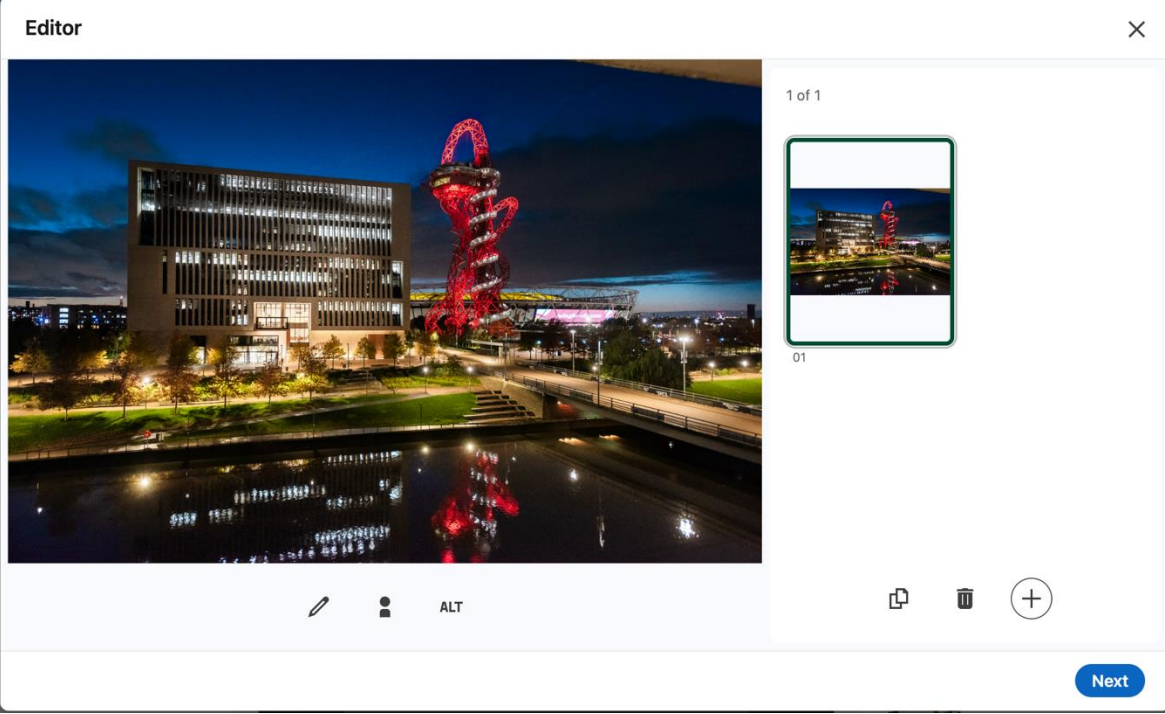


Source: X help page

Select **post**. When someone selects the ALT badge, the image description appears on screen.

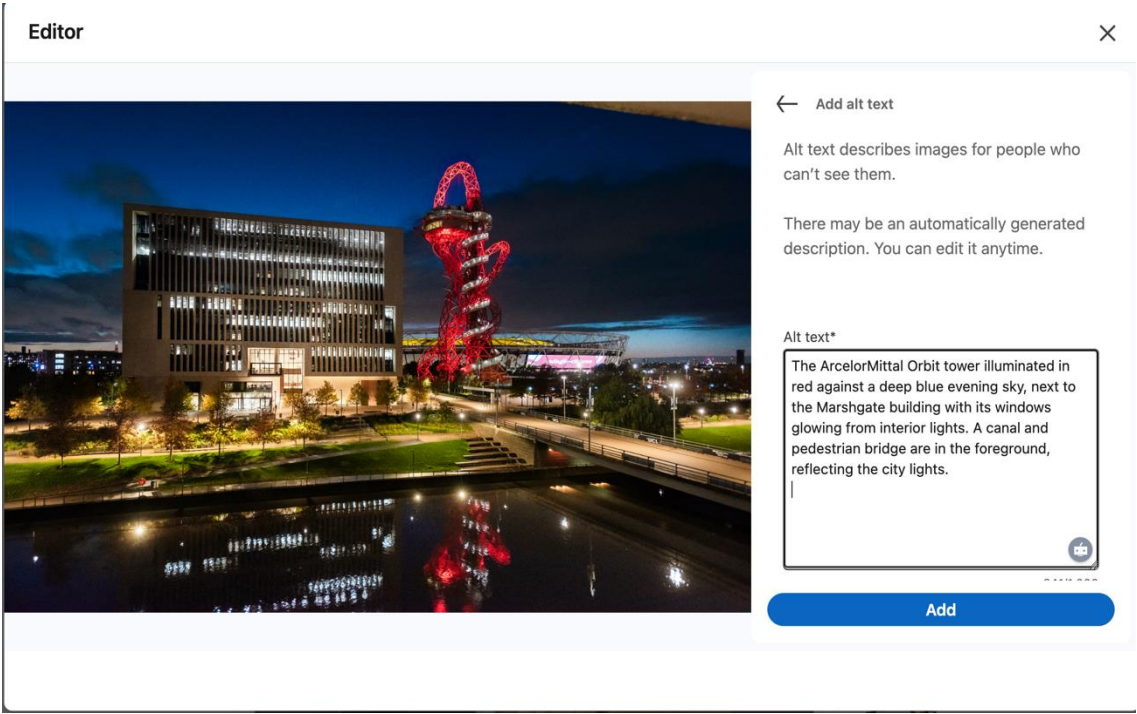
4.2. Websites and social media

Adding ALT text on a [LinkedIn post](#)



Source: GDI hub LinkedIn

After uploading an image to a post, select **the ALT description** underneath the image.

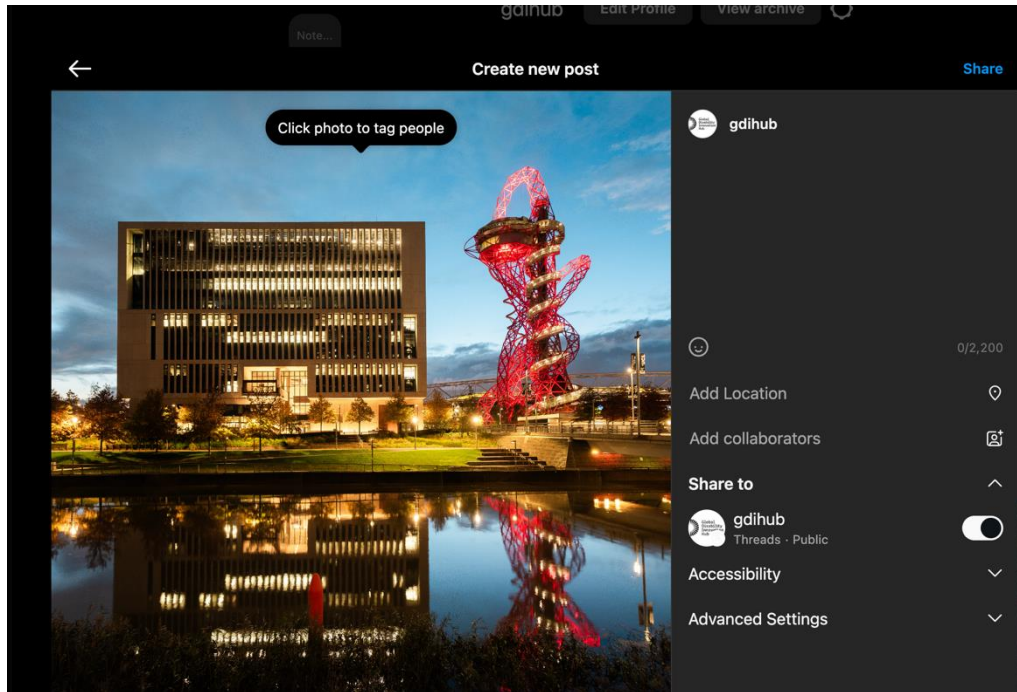


Source: GDI hub LinkedIn

Write your ALT text then select **Add**.

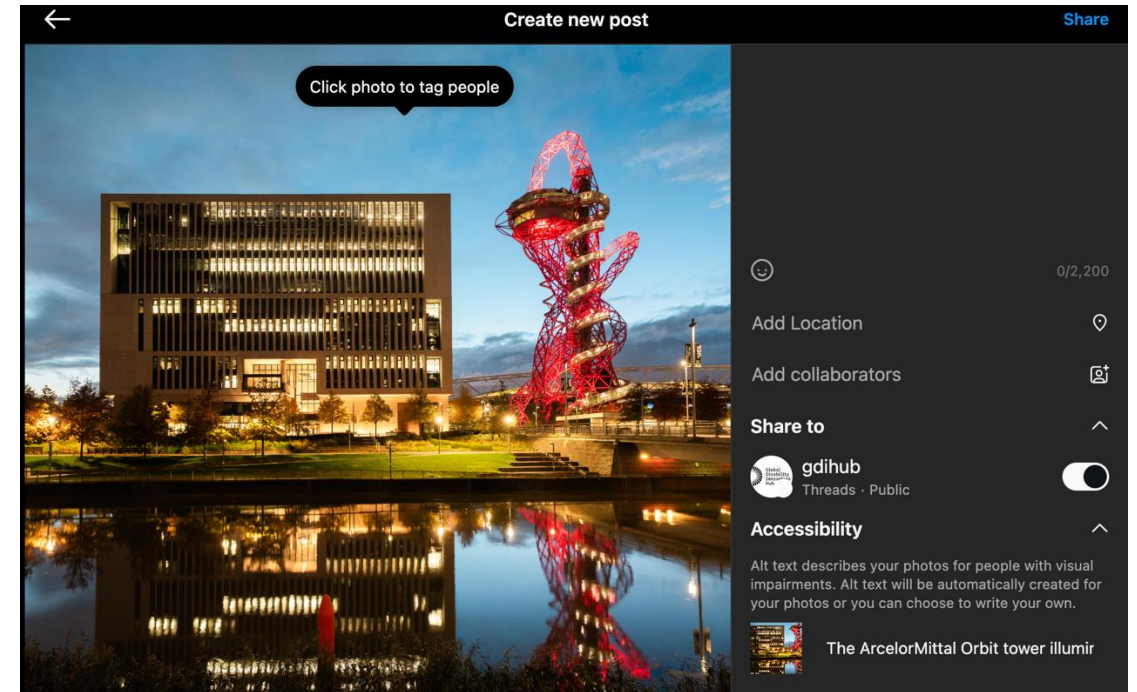
4.2. Websites and social media

Adding ALT text on an [Instagram post](#)



Source: GDI hub Instagram

After uploading an image to a post, select **the Accessibility tab** next to the photo



Source: GDI hub Instagram

Write your ALT text then select **share which on the top right of the image.**

4.3. Events and activities

Hosting inclusive events (in-person or online) require thoughtful planning and attention to the diverse needs of participants, to ensure...

- **Accessibility for all**
- **Diverse representation**
- **Inclusive communication**
- **Inclusive engagement**
- **Productive feedback**



Key points for consideration

Accessibility for all

- Ensure the venue (in-person) or platform (virtual) is **accessible**.
- Provide captioning, sign language interpretation (relevant to the audience), and screen-reader compatible information/presentation.

Diverse representation

- Ensure speakers and moderators represent **diverse experiences/abilities**, and the content reflects and respects different identities.

Clear and inclusive communication

- Offer materials in **multiple formats** (e.g., large print, braille, audio).

Inclusive engagement opportunities

- Design activities and discussions to **allow equal participation**.

Proactive planning and feedback

- Conduct **pre-event checks** for accessibility and **gather feedback** post-event to improve future inclusion efforts.



Source: UN Photo by Manuel Elias.

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Summary and Next Steps

Inclusive communication creates a level playing field and enables equal participation

- Create easy-to-read materials with **accessible formatting** tools/features.
- Always **test your digital communication** material for ‘accessibility’.

Inclusive language is respectful and considerate

- **Respect preferences** of individuals and communities.
- **Avoid stereotypes**, euphemisms, and pity-based language.
- Disability is an evolving concept. Stay informed. **Be open to learning.**

Mainstream basic accessibility tools for digital content, across your operations

- Microsoft accessibility checker, alternative text, heading styles, colour contrast, font sizes, video captions, transcripts, etc.

Triage clinics and technical assistance:

TEA Partners can now **book one-hour appointments** with the GDI Hub team to discuss any questions or ideas on disability inclusion and innovation. 1-2-1 technical assistance support is also available from the GDI Hub team.

Thank you!



Scan the QR code to book
your slot or email
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