

Ten Tips for Everyday Digital Access

Melanie Thornton, Coordinator of Access and Equity Outreach
University of Arkansas Partners for Inclusive Communities

Email: mthornt@uark.edu

What is Digital Accessibility?

Digital accessibility involves the creation of websites, mobile applications and electronic documents that can be easily navigated and understood by a wide range of users.

Principles of Digital Access

Perceivable by everyone:

- Visual components are accessible to those who are blind or have low vision—good contrast, clear and adequate size text, text alternatives for images.
- Audio components are accessible to those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind—captions for videos, transcripts for audio files.
- Information is as intuitive and clearly written as possible.
- Those who use assistive technology can assess content.

These are the principles that apply to the design of the things we will talk about today. There are additional principles that apply to web design.

Typical Barriers to Digital Access

- Videos without captions
- Videos that are purely visual
- Images with no alt text
- Poor contrast
- Links that are not descriptive
- Not using heading levels appropriately
- Drop-down menus that require a mouse to operate

Who is excluded by Inaccessible Digital Design?

- People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- People who are Blind or with Low Vision
- People who are DeafBlind
- People with Motor-Related Disabilities
- People with Dyslexia
- People who are Color-Blind

Email Accessibility

1. Use meaningful subject lines.

Using clear and meaningful subject lines makes it easier for people who use assistive technology and those with learning disabilities to more quickly determine the nature and importance of the message.

Examples:

- **Instead of** “Need Your Assistance” use “Your Assistance with Budget”
- **Instead of** “Question” consider “Question about Service Animals”

2. Don't send an image as your email message (unless you add alt text).

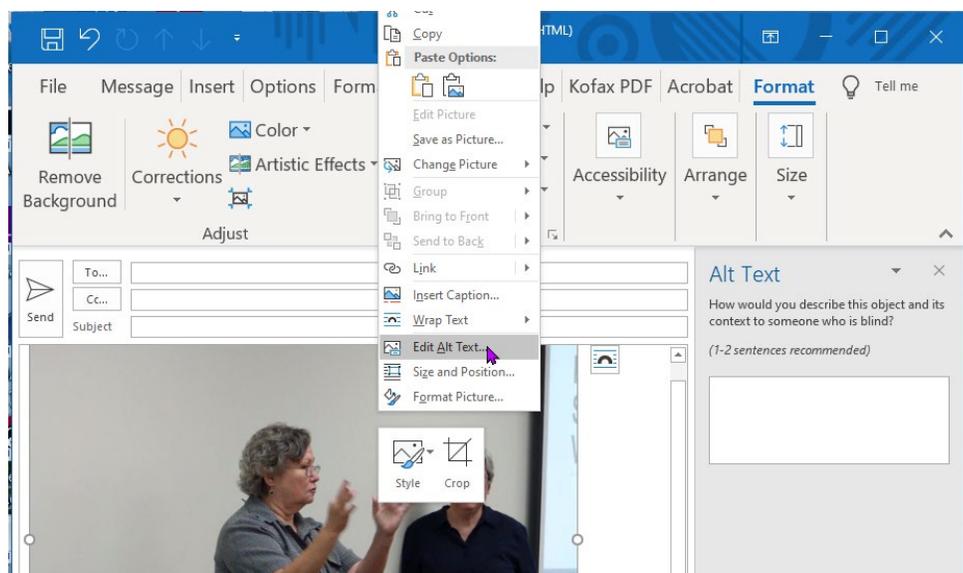
Sometimes people send a message about an event that is purely an image. This makes the entire announcement inaccessible to people who are blind. Instead, include all of the text about the event in the email as well as attaching the image.

If you include images in your email or email signature, you can add alt text to them using MS Outlook.

- Alt text can be added to images in MS Outlook.
- Some other email apps may allow this.
- Some email apps allow you to edit the HTML.

Adding Alt Text in MS Outlook

- Insert image
- Right click on image
- Choose Edit Alt Text
- Write the alt text in the box that appears in the right-hand panel



Adding Alt Text to HTML

- Look for ``
- Add `alt="..."`
- ``

Describing Image in the Message

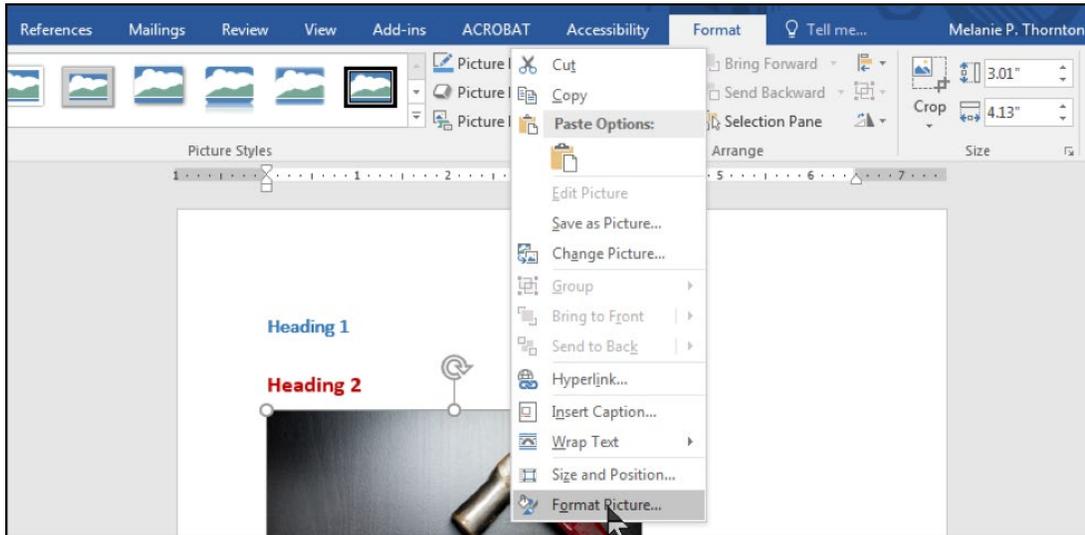
If neither other option is available:

- Insert the image, then describe it below:
 - Include all of the text information
 - Describe any images that are relevant

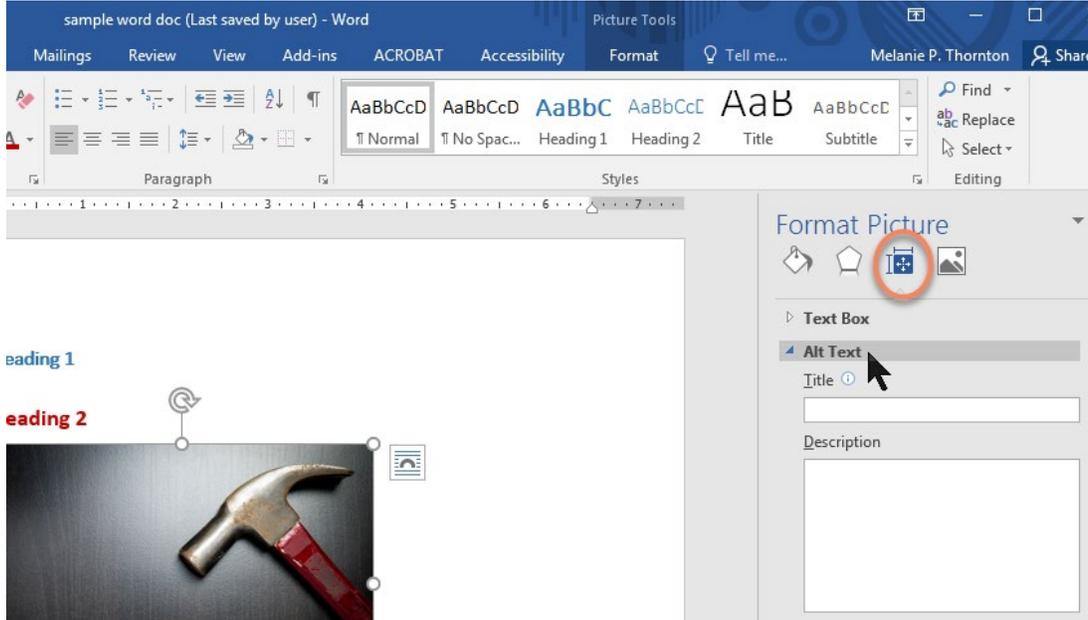
MS Word Accessibility

3. Add alt text to images.

A screen reader cannot discern the contents of an image. Alt text provides a way to make the contents of the image accessible to a blind person who is reading your document. To add alt text, right click on the image and choose **Format Picture** from the context menu. (In newer versions or on Mac, choose **Edit Alt Text**.)



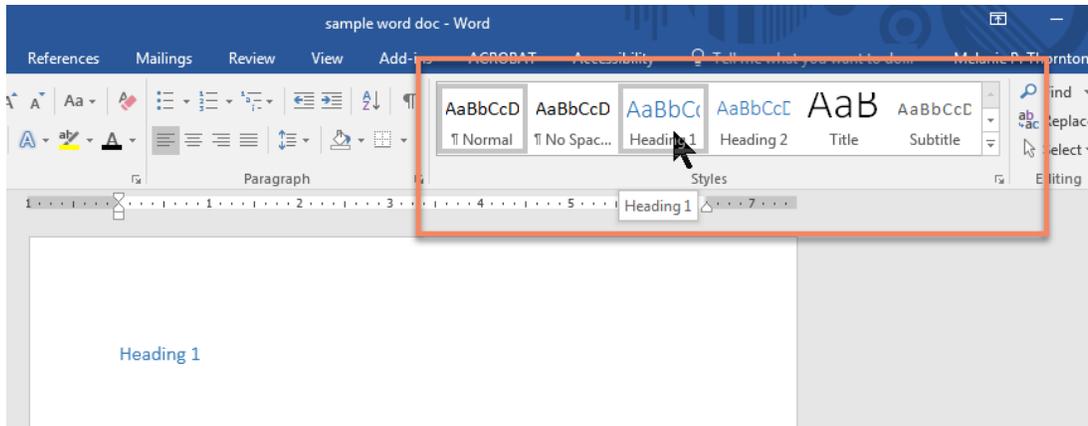
The **Format Picture** dialog box should appear to the right of your document. Select the **Layout and Properties** tab and then select **Alt Text**.



Type a description of the image in the box labeled **Description**. There is no need to type “image of” or “picture of.” Simply describe what is in the image. The image used in this tutorial, for example, could be described as “A hammer and an egg side by side on a table.”

4. Use headings properly.

To apply a proper heading, highlight the heading text and select the appropriate heading from the styles group on the home tab.



You can also use keyboard shortcuts.

- Mac: Command + Option + 1 (or heading level)
- PC: Control + Alt + 1 (or heading level)

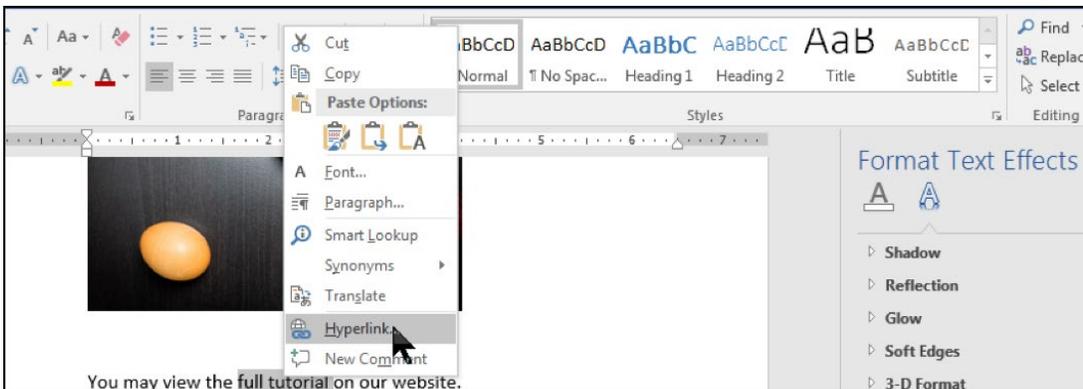
5. Create Meaningful Links.

- Instead of: <https://exploreaccess.org/post-1231413413134134134/>
- Use this: [Latest Post: Creating Meaningful Links](#)

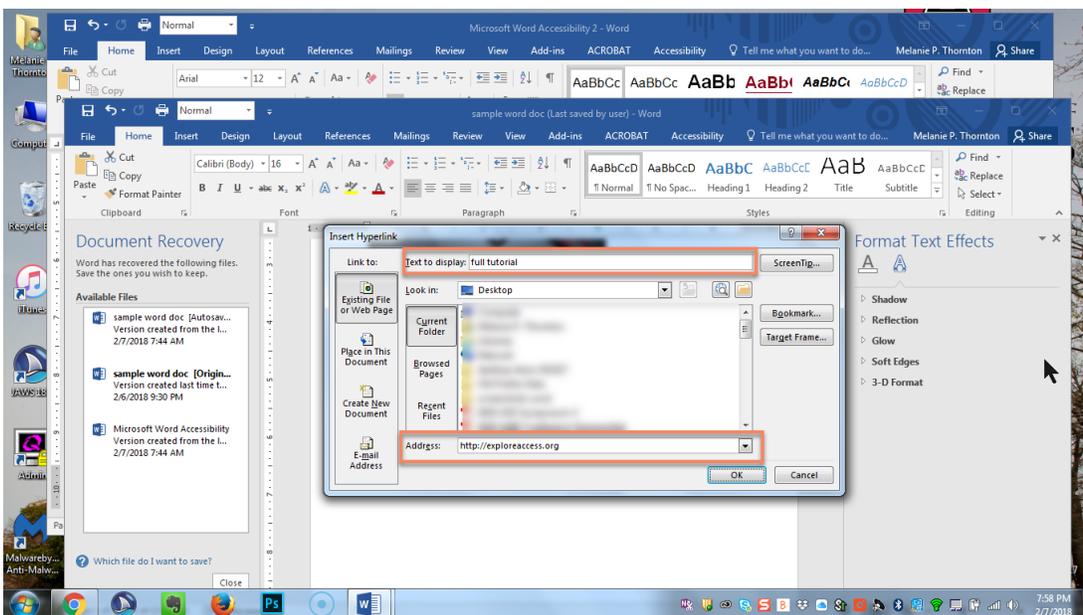
- Instead of this: [Click here](#) to learn about accessible documents
- Use this: [Learn more about accessible documents.](#)

- Instead of this: Annual Report ([PDF](#), [DOC](#))
- Use this:
 - [Annual Report \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Annual Report \(DOC\)](#)

To create a hyperlink from the text, highlight the text you want to use for link. Right click on the highlighted text. Choose **Hyperlink** from the context menu.



When the dialog box appears, make sure the text that you want to be included in the hyperlink is correct and add the URL below.

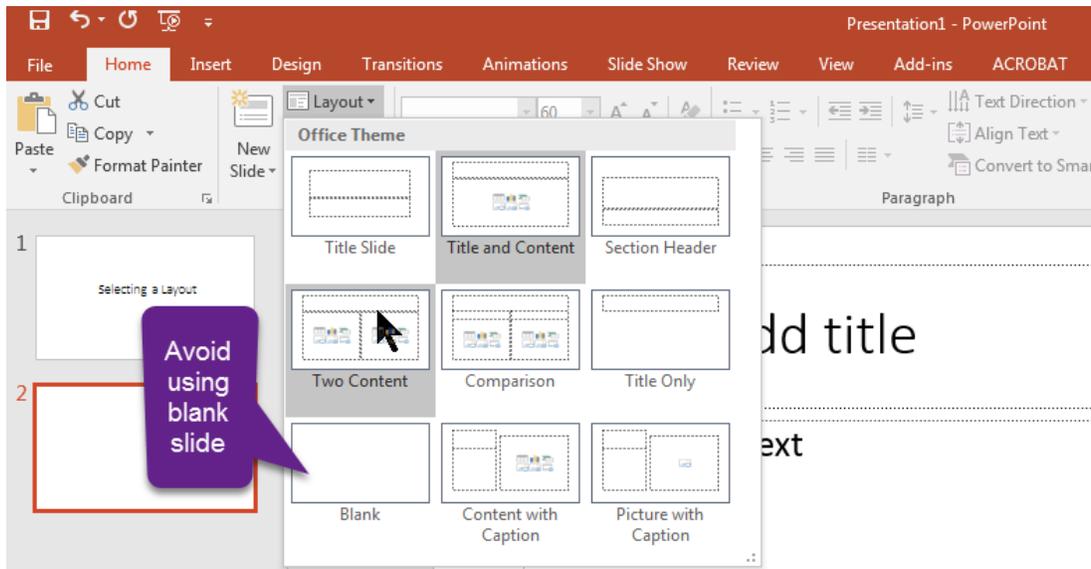


PowerPoint

6. Choose the correct slide layouts.

One of the most important things you can do to create more usable slides is to choose a template that suits your content, rather than beginning with a blank slide and adding text boxes to your slide. Why is this important? A simple way to provide the content of a PowerPoint presentation in a more accessible format is to export the text content from the Outline View. When slides are designed by starting with a blank slide and adding text boxes, the content does not appear in the Outline View and will therefore not be exported.

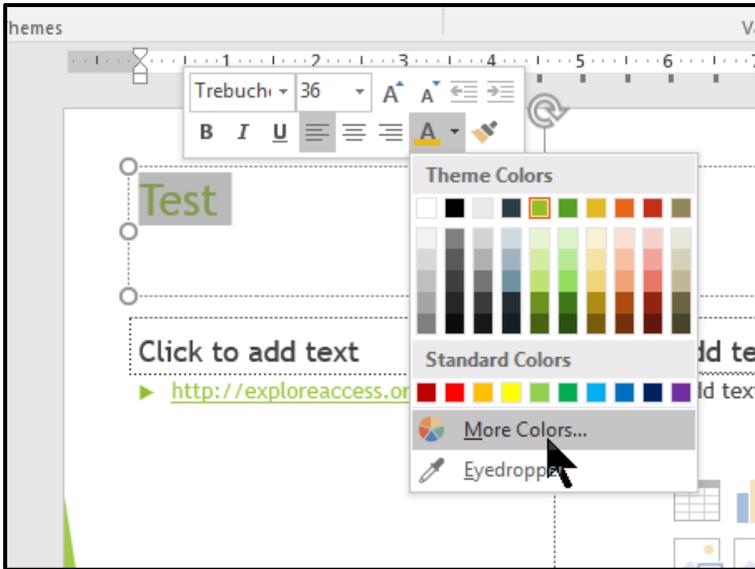
To change the layout of a slide, select that slide and then from the **Home** ribbon choose Layout and find the layout that best matches your content.



7. Provide good contrast.

The World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) provides guidance on the minimum level of contrast considered to meet accessibility standards. Based on these guidelines, contrast should be 4.5 to 1 or better. Those numbers mean very little without a way to measure contrast. There are several excellent online tools that you can use to analyze color contrast. First, though you have to determine the RGB color code for the colors you are checking.

Let's check the default colors on one of the design themes within PowerPoint. Highlight the color of the text you want to check.

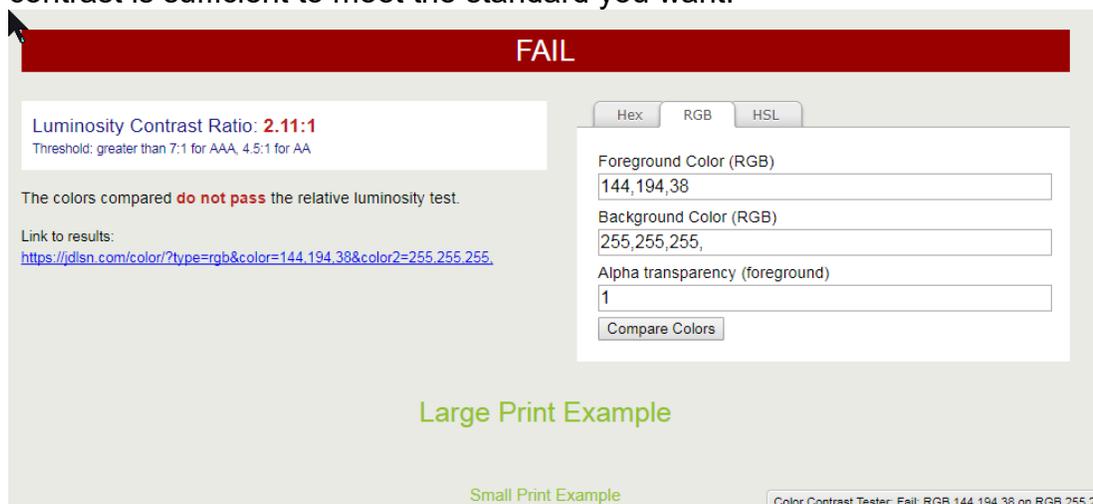


When the font style dialog box appears, select the down arrow to the right of the font color button. Next, select **More Colors**. Choose the custom tab and you will see the RGB color codes for the text you have highlighted. You will want to record those numbers.

Next, you'll need to find a color contrast analyzer. There are several options online but not all accept RGB codes. One that does is the **Color Contrast Tester** by Joe Dolson. It can be found at: <https://www.joedolson.com/tools/color-contrast.php>

Select the **RGB** tab and enter the codes.

When you select **Compare Colors**, the contrast tester will let you know if the contrast is sufficient to meet the standard you want.



In this case, there is insufficient contrast between the white background and the light green text.

8. Use a Unique Heading for Each Slide

Titles allow a screen reader user to easily navigate a slide presentation. It is important that each slide have a unique title. When similar content continues on more than one slide, you might add “continued” after the title or if you have more than one slide with similar content add numbers to the title.

Social Media

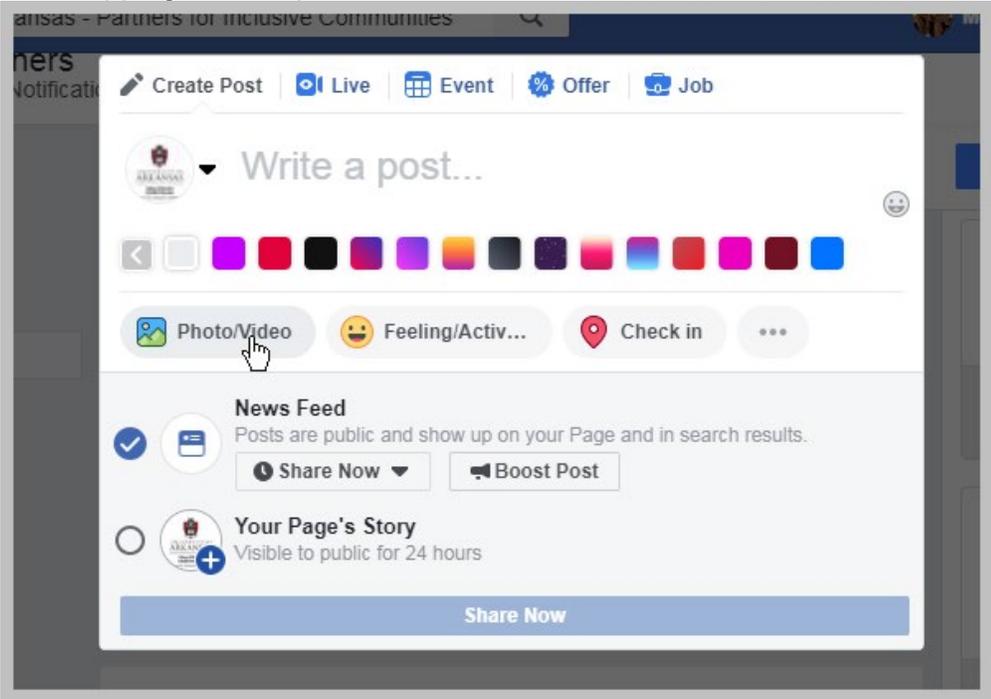
9. Add Alt Text to Images on Facebook.

Facebook has a feature that auto-generates a description of images, but it is, of course, limited by what object recognition technology can recognize about the image. The information that is auto-generated is typically very vague and sometimes inaccurate. For example, the automatically generated text for the following photo is “1 person”.

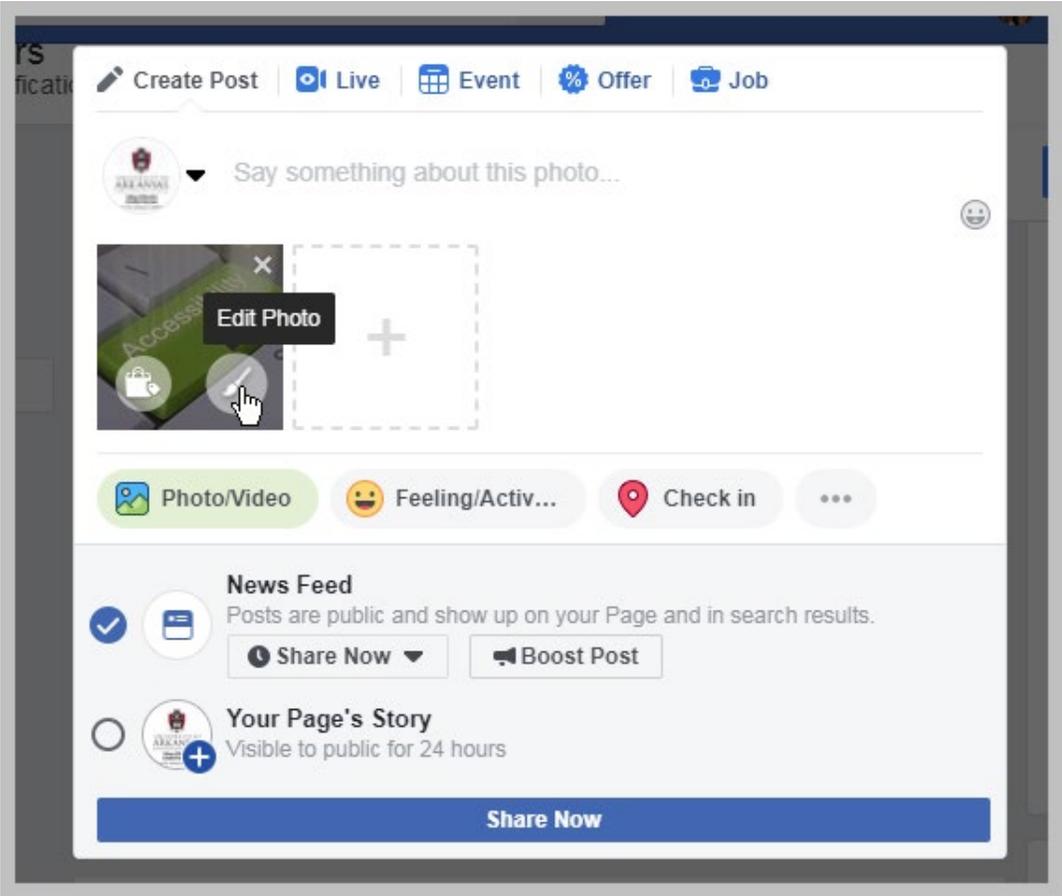


To provide accurate descriptions, you can add your own descriptions or for images that were uploaded previously, edit the automatic descriptions.

Upload your photo by either selecting the **Photos/Videos** button or dragging and dropping into the post window.



Scroll over the thumbnail of your image and select the paint brush to **Edit Photo**.



Select the **Alt Text** option to the left of the image.



Write the **description** of the image in the text box to the left of the image.



Select the **Save** button at the bottom right of the window. Add the text that you want to add to your post and post the image.

Your photo or meme now has a description that can be accessed by screen reader users.

10. Use Camel Case for Hashtags

Camel case refers to capitalizing the first letter of each word.

- Instead of: #disabilityinclusion
- Use: #DisabilityInclusion

This makes it a bit easier to discern the words.

Additional Resources

[Explore Access: Creating Accessible MS Word Documents](#)

[Explore Access: Creating Accessible MS PowerPoint Presentations](#)