

Social Media Accessible for All – Instagram

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Accessible Social Media

This article will showcase some of the ways Instagram has been designed to be accessible to people with disabilities, thereby enabling everyone to easily share and access contents.

The article is part of a Nafath series that addresses different ways major social media platforms implement the fundamentals of accessibility and universal design to their websites and apps. At a time when the use of these platforms has become increasingly, taking the place of traditional media outlets, it is important to ensure that there are ample resources out there to enable the disabled community to access them and use them at par with the rest of the world.

About Instagram

Launched in 2010, Instagram is an American photo and video-sharing social networking service that allows users to upload photos and videos, which can be edited with filters and organized with tags and location information. Posts can be shared publicly or with pre-approved followers. Users can browse other users' content by tags and locations, and view trending content. Users can like photos and follow other users to add their content to a feed.

As of 2019, Instagram has more than one billion active users and is the 4th most downloaded app of the 2010s. Its global reach is undeniable. Therefore, ensuring that people with disabilities can access it is an important part of creating an inclusive digital ecosystem.

Instagram Accessibility

Seeing that Instagram is primarily a visual medium, most of the accessibility features that are built in address the needs of the blind, and persons with low vision. With over 285 million users with visual impairments around the globe, an accessible Instagram will undoubtedly have a profound impact on this community.

In addition to those features embedded in the app itself, Instagram has designed its platform in a way that makes it compatible with a variety of assistive (AT) and access technologies. This is primarily done through the implementation of WCAG standards, thereby organizing and labeling the features of the app in a manner that makes it easier for AT users to use.

Screen Reader Compatibility

Instagram is designed in a manner that enables screen reader users to easily access the app. This means that through activating the VoiceOver feature on iOS or Apple computers, a blind person can navigate the entirety of the app through audible cues. This facility is also available for Windows (JAWS or NVDA) and Android (TalkBack) platforms.

Alternative Text

Also known as alt text, alt tags or alt descriptions, alternative text is the written copy that appears in place of an image on a webpage if the image fails to load on a user's screen, either for a technical reason or if the user cannot see the image due to their disability. This alternative text feature helps screen-reading tools describe images to visually impaired readers.

Captioning

Users can also leverage the alt text feature to caption video posts by using the post's description field. Captioning is useful to both users with visual and hearing disabilities. For both, it provides a description of what is going on in the video, content which is usually delivered through a combination of moving image and sound. Users can see if a video has sound by clicking on the video, and playing it, where in the lower right-hand corner, there will be an "X" if there is no sound in the video or a speaker icon if there is.

To view and edit the alternative text for an image before posting it on Instagram:

1. **Start** by taking a photo or uploading an existing photo to Instagram.
2. **Select** a filter and edit the image and tap Next.
3. **Tap Advanced settings** in the lower portion of the screen.
4. **Tap Write Alt Text.**
5. **Write** in the box your alt text and tap **Done**.



To alter a photo's alt text after you have posted it on Instagram:

1. **Go** to the photo and tap on **three dots** above the picture.
2. **From** the list tap **edit**
3. **Tap Edit Alt Text** in the bottom right.
4. **Write** the alt text in the box and tap **Done**.

