

Scrolling Without Barriers: Practical Accessibility Tips for Social Media

Making social media more inclusive without slowing down your workflow



Scrolling Without Barriers: Practical Accessibility Tips for Social Media

Link to slides: bit.ly/iaap-scrolling





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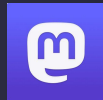
Education

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Today's Agenda



- Accessibility in social media communication
- Why accessible content improves clarity, usability, and reach
- Common accessibility barriers across social platforms
- Practical techniques for images, video, hashtags, emojis, and layout
- Real-world examples: common mistakes and better approaches
- Five quick improvements you can apply immediately
- Questions & discussion

Why This Matters

Why Are We Talking About This Now?

Broader Reach

Accessible content helps more people access, understand, and engage with your message.

Rising Expectations

Audiences increasingly expect digital content to be inclusive and usable by everyone.

Growing Awareness

Regulations such as the European Accessibility Act are bringing accessibility into everyday business and communication conversations.

Tip: Accessibility is increasingly becoming both a communication expectation and a legal requirement.

European Accessibility Act (EAA)

The **European Accessibility Act** is an **EU directive** aimed at improving the accessibility of products and services across member states—especially for people with disabilities.

Who Must Comply?

- ▶ All businesses and organizations operating in the EU that offer covered products or services
- ▶ Microenterprises may be exempt, but public-sector and most private-sector services must comply





ALLY CATS

Disability Is Not One Thing

- Permanent
- Temporary
- Situational
- Episodic

Context Changes Needs

Device

Accessibility can vary depending on whether someone is using a phone, tablet, laptop, screen reader, keyboard, or voice input.

Environment

Lighting, noise, movement, or limited connectivity can affect how easily someone can see, hear, or interact with a site.

Fatigue

Pain, illness, or simple end-of-day exhaustion can reduce precision, focus, and tolerance for complex interactions.

Cognitive load

Stress, multitasking, or information overload can make memory-heavy or complex tasks much harder to complete.

Accessibility Is Communication



Why Social Media Is Different

Why Accessibility Gets Missed

Fast publishing cycles

Most posts are visual, which means information often lives inside images or videos that may not have alt text or captions.

Multiple platforms

The priority is usually getting content out the door, not reviewing it for accessibility.

Limited training

Platforms themselves are inconsistent. Some support alt text well, while others hide the feature or apply it unevenly.

Hidden accessibility features

Teams may have brand guidelines and editorial calendars, but not accessibility checklists

Why Accessibility Matters on Social Media

First Impressions Matter

Social media is often the first place people encounter an organization, event, product, or service.

Barriers Block Access

Accessibility issues can prevent people from accessing important information or participating fully.

Better for Everyone

Inclusive content is easier to understand, navigate, and use across a wide range of situations and devices.

Tip: Accessibility barriers can turn a simple interaction into a missed opportunity.

Accessibility Foundations

Accessibility and the POUR Principles

Perceivable

Content must be available to multiple senses.

Operable

Users must be able to navigate and interact.

Understandable

Content must be clear and predictable.

Robust

Content should work across assistive technologies.

Common Accessibility Barriers in Social Media

- Images without alt text
- Videos without captions
- Information conveyed only by color
- Hashtags that screen readers cannot interpret
- Emoji-heavy posts
- Text embedded in images
- Poor color contrast
- Fast-moving GIFs

Images and Alt Text



Why organizations use images

- Higher ROI
- Enhancing content
- Cues for orientation

Accessible Images

Images can be major barriers when they are not accessible.

Accessible images benefit:

- Screen readers
- Speech input devices
- Speech enabled websites
- When images turned off in their browsers
- SEO (Search engine optimization)

What Good Alt Text Does

Purpose

Describe why the image matters in the context of the post.

Context

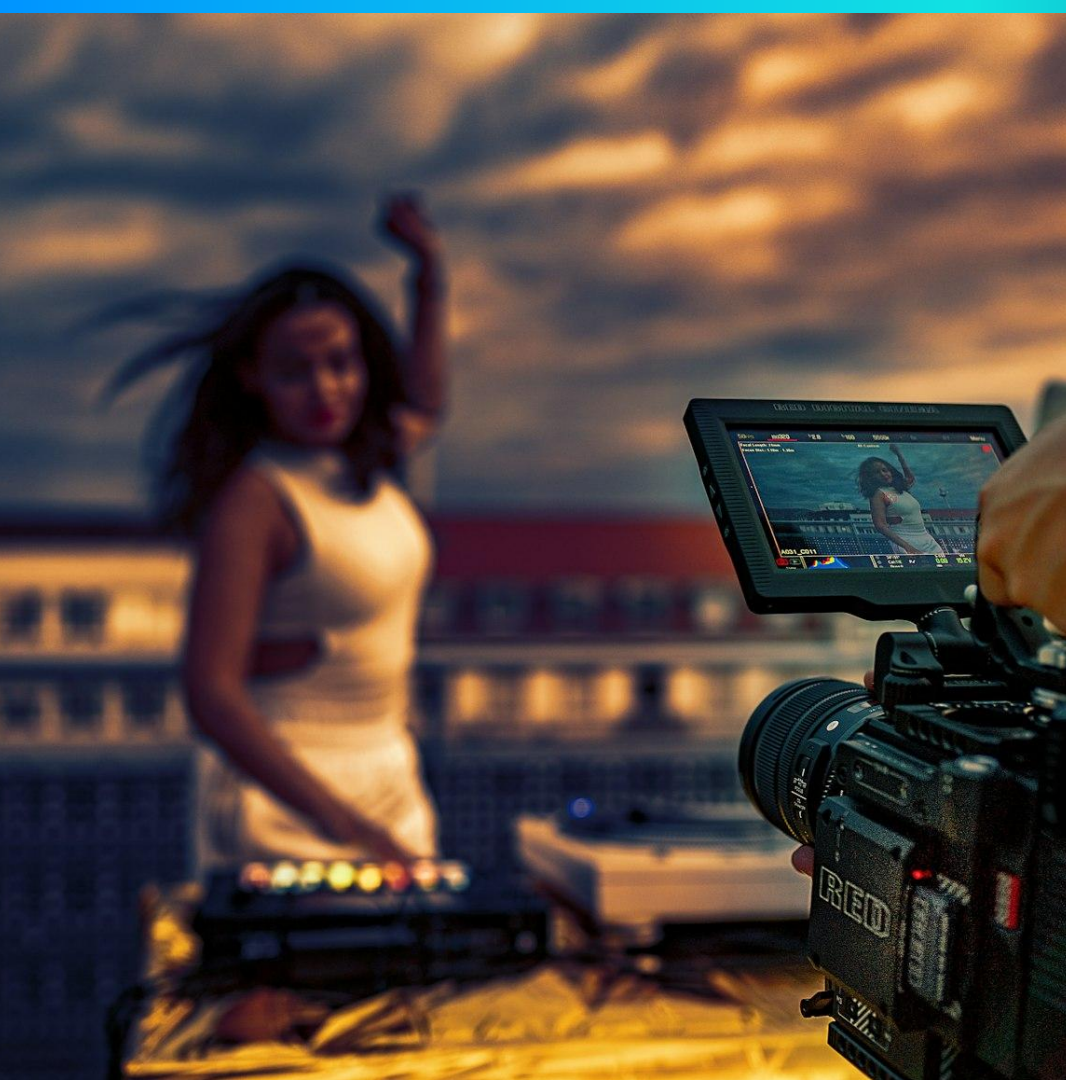
Ensure the image description aligns with the surrounding content.

Meaning

Communicate the key takeaway rather than cataloging everything in the image.

Tip: Alt text should communicate **purpose and meaning**, not just appearance.

Video Accessibility



Videos Dominate Social Media

Video dominates social media, generating significantly more engagement and shares than text-only content.

Videos Dominate Social Media

- **Massive Engagement:** Tweets with videos receive 10x more engagement than text-only tweets.
- **Conversion Power:** 85% of consumers say video has helped them make a buying decision.
- **Time Spent:** Short-form video has seen a 75% increase in global consumption
- **Viral Reach:** Social platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube collectively account for over 60% of product discovery

Accessibility considerations include:

Captions

Provide text for spoken dialogue and important sounds so users can follow video content without audio.

Transcripts

Provide a text alternative to audio content that can be read, referenced, translated, and searched.

Audio clarity

Ensure spoken content is clear and understandable while improving caption and transcription accuracy.

Playback controls

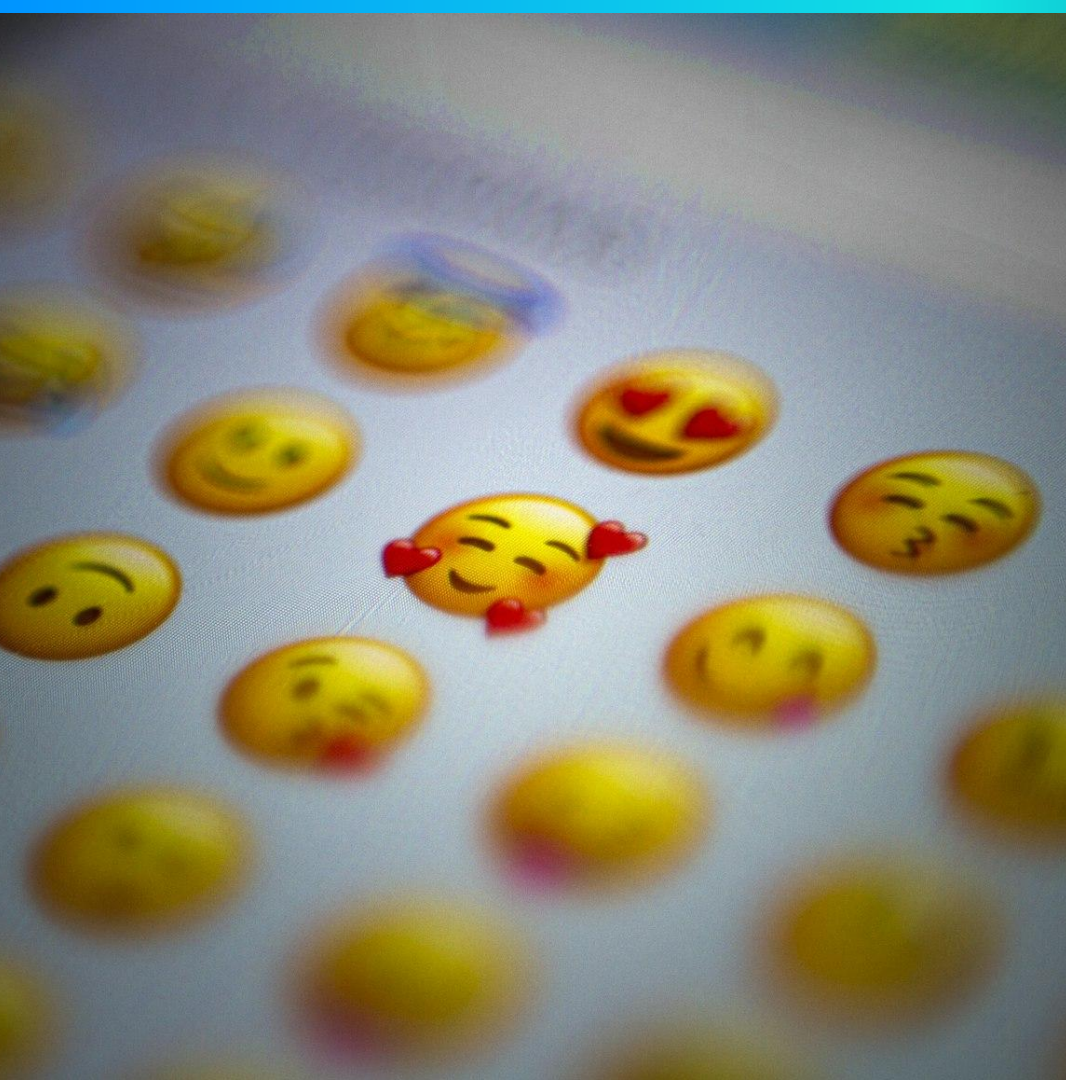
Give users control over video playback so they can pause, replay, or adjust content as needed.

Why Captions Matter

Captions support many users:

- Deaf and hard-of-hearing users
- People watching videos without sound
- People watching videos with background noise
- Non-native speakers
- Search and indexing

Hashtags and Emojis



Emoticons in tweets, emails, etc

- Use in moderation
- Don't use emojis to replace words
- Don't use them in profile names or titles

Capitalize multi-word hashtags

Easier to parse

- #blacklivesmatter => #BlackLivesMatter
- #socialmediaaccessibility => #SocialMediaAccessibility

Avoid ambiguity

- #dadscare => #DadsCare
- #whoremembers => WhoRemembers
- #expertsexchange => #ExpertsExchange

Acronyms

- #BLM
 - Black Lives Matter
 - Bureau of Land Management
- #ADA
 - Americans with Disabilities Act
 - American Dental Association

Layout

Structuring Social Posts

Short paragraphs

Break content into smaller chunks to improve readability and reduce cognitive load.

Logical line breaks

Separate ideas clearly to make posts easier to scan and follow.

Clear language

Use straightforward language that is easy for a broad audience to understand.

Avoid dense blocks of text

Use spacing and structure to make content more approachable and readable.

Writing Accessible Posts

Accessibility Mistakes and Better Approaches

Common Mistake #1: Event information only inside image



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 **Accessibility Talks**

Aria Winning, Son? How to Achieve Accessibility Wins on Your Next Project

Overwhelmed by the task of making your project accessible? Come learn how two developers have seen firsthand how tangible and accessible accessibility can be.



K-LEIGH MARBURY
(she / her)
Front-end Developer
Freelancer



IRENE DOBBS
(she / her)
Developer
Bounteous

AllyTalks.com Join the discussion October 25th, 1 PM (ET)

Fix: Event info only inside image - Add alt text

Cancel

Drafts

Post




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+ ALT

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i Alt text describes images for blind and low-vision users, and helps give context to everyone.

Anyone can interact ▾

Labels ▾



GIF



English

281



Add alt text



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Descriptive alt text

Alt text

2000

Save

Fix: Info only inside image - Include context in the post

Cancel

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Conduct for the #Drupal project.

Posts Replies Media Videos Likes Feeds Starter Packs Live

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In the commercials I notice some people wake to the smell of fresh coffee brewing, I wake to the smell of my cat's ass as he sits on my face.

Aria Winning, Son? How to Achieve Accessibility Wins on Your Next Project

...

Fix: Event information only inside image - Add context



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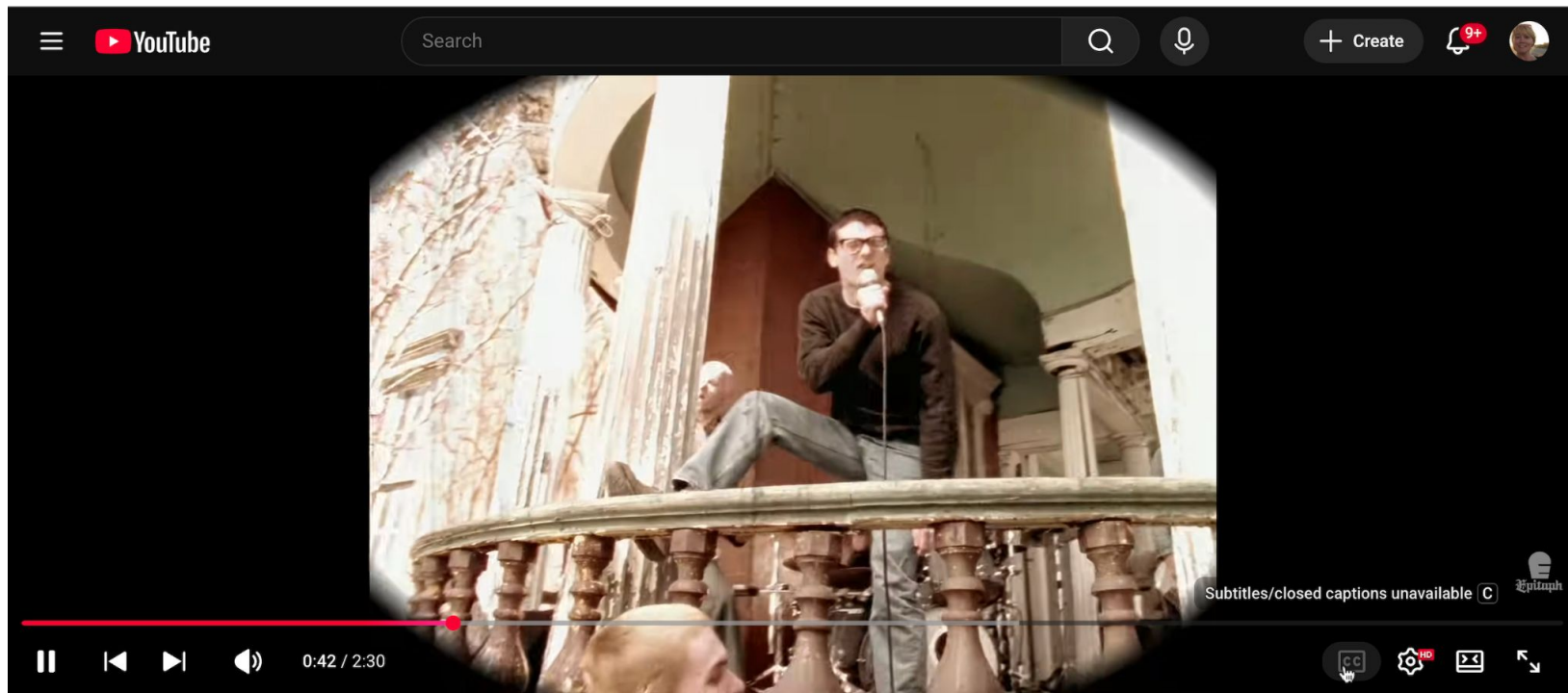
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...

Common Mistake #2: Video with no captions



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the YouTube logo, a search bar, and icons for search, microphone, create, and notifications. The video content shows a man with glasses singing into a microphone on a balcony. The video player controls at the bottom include a progress bar, play/pause, skip, volume, and a 'Subtitles/closed captions unavailable' message. The video title is 'Descendents - "When I Get Old"' and the channel is 'Epitaph Records'.

Descendents - "When I Get Old"



Epitaph Records ✓
3.96M subscribers

Subscribe

👍 9.6K



➦ Share

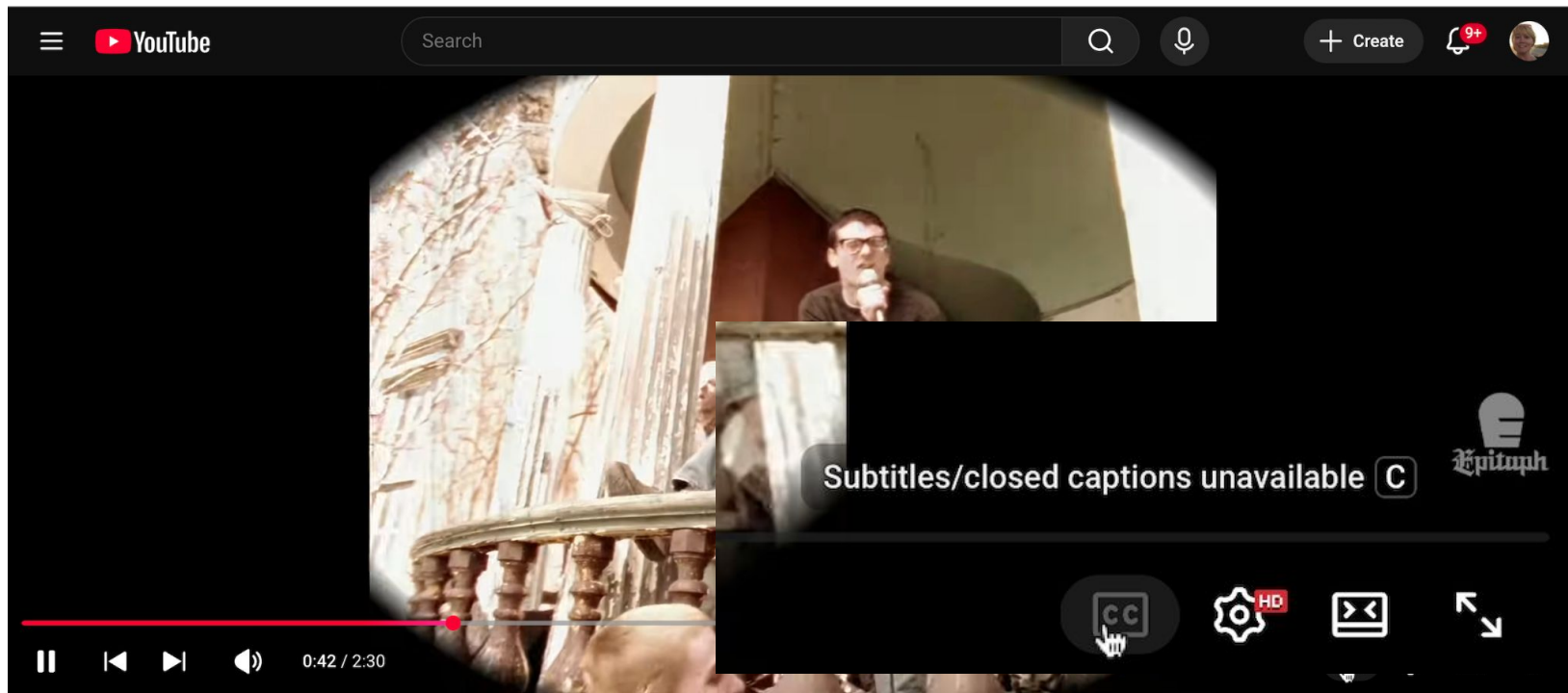


Mix - Descendents - "When I Get..."



Mixes are playlists YouTube makes for you

Common Mistake #2: Video with no captions



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the YouTube logo, a search bar, and icons for search, microphone, and create. The video player itself shows a scene with a man in a dark shirt and glasses, possibly a performer, in a room with a large, ornate wooden staircase. A semi-transparent black box with white text in the center of the video area reads "Subtitles/closed captions unavailable" followed by a small 'C' icon. Below the video, there is a progress bar showing the video is at 0:42 of a 2:30 duration. At the bottom of the player, there are icons for play/pause, volume, and a closed captions icon (CC) which is highlighted with a mouse cursor. Other icons include settings, full screen, and a share icon.

Descendents - "When I Get Old"



Epitaph Records ✓
3.96M subscribers

Subscribe

👍 9.6K



➦ Share



Mix - Descendents - "When I Get..."

Mixes are playlists YouTube makes for you



Common Mistake #3: Video with bad captions



Катя

@farmfeatures



How to spell Benedict Cumberbatch according to BBC subtitles



Common captioning mistakes

- Poor color contrast or readability
- Awkward line breaks
- Failure to caption meaningful sounds
- Auto-generated captions left unreviewed
- Captions that appear too quickly
- Transcript-Style Captions

Tip: Great captions are often boring. They are easy to read, easy to follow, and never compete with the content itself

Fix: Video with no captions - Add captions

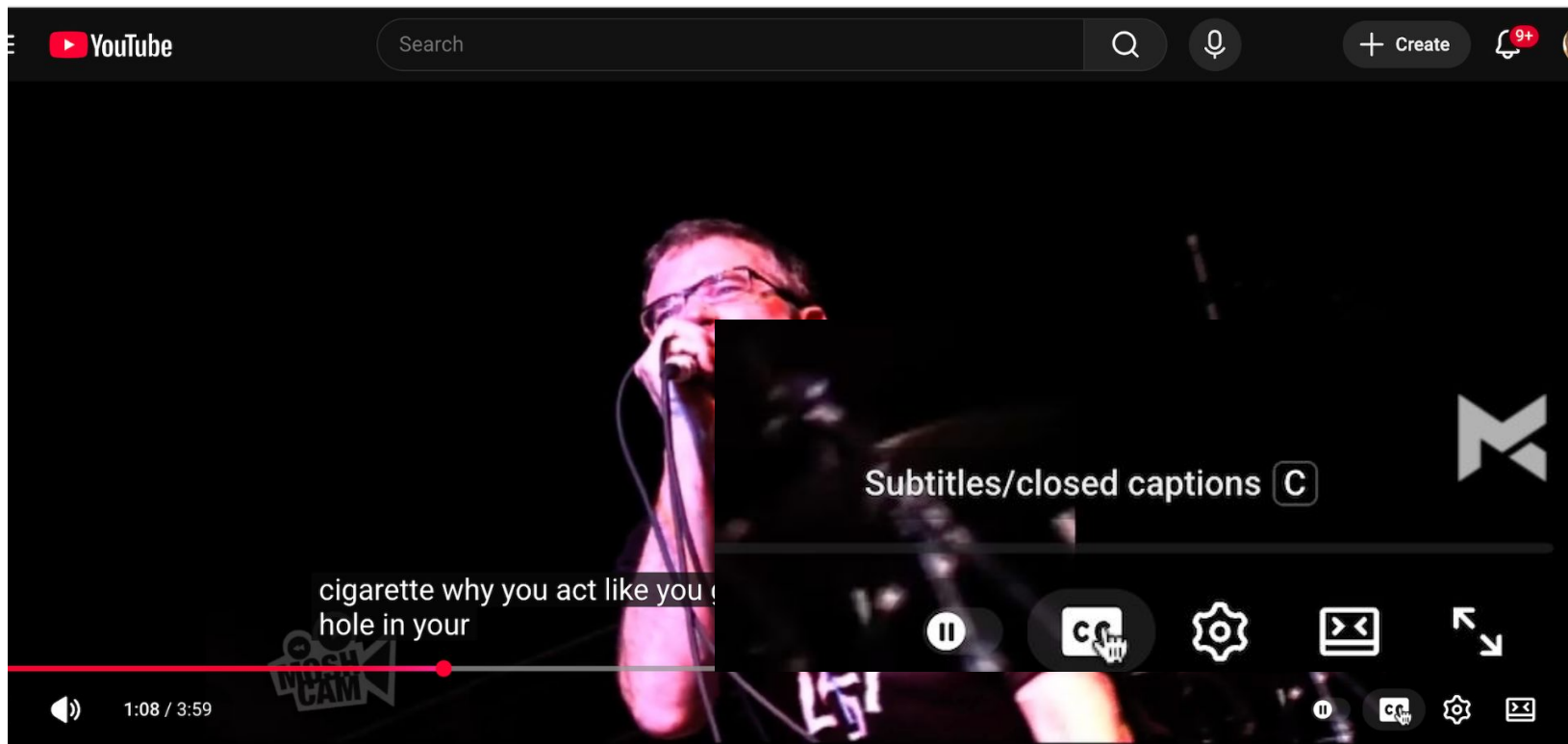


scendents - Sour Grapes (Live in Sydney) | Moshcam

- All
- From Moshcam
- Melodic Hardcore
- Pe

A youtube video of Milo from the
Descendents singing for 60 is
now available

Fix! Video with no captions - Add captions

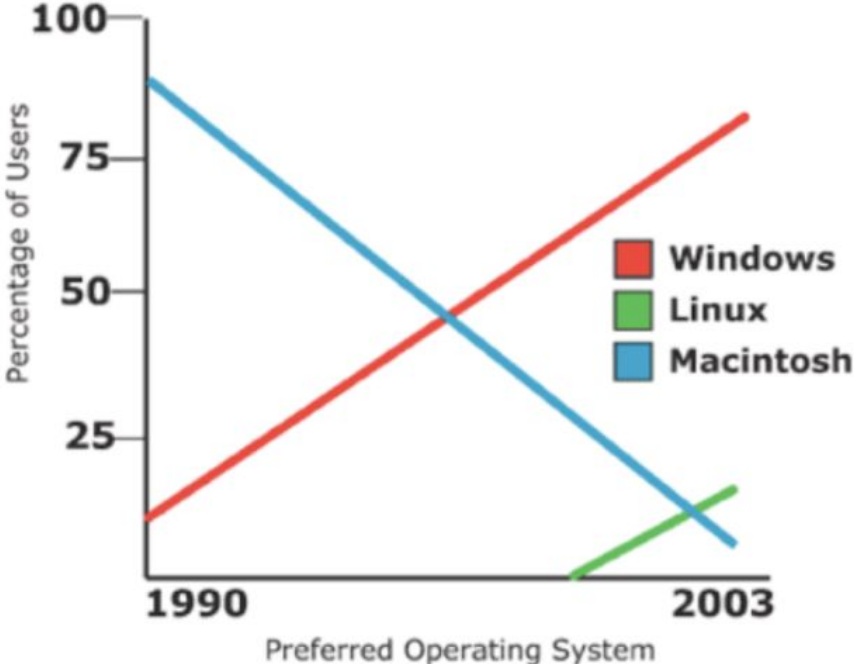
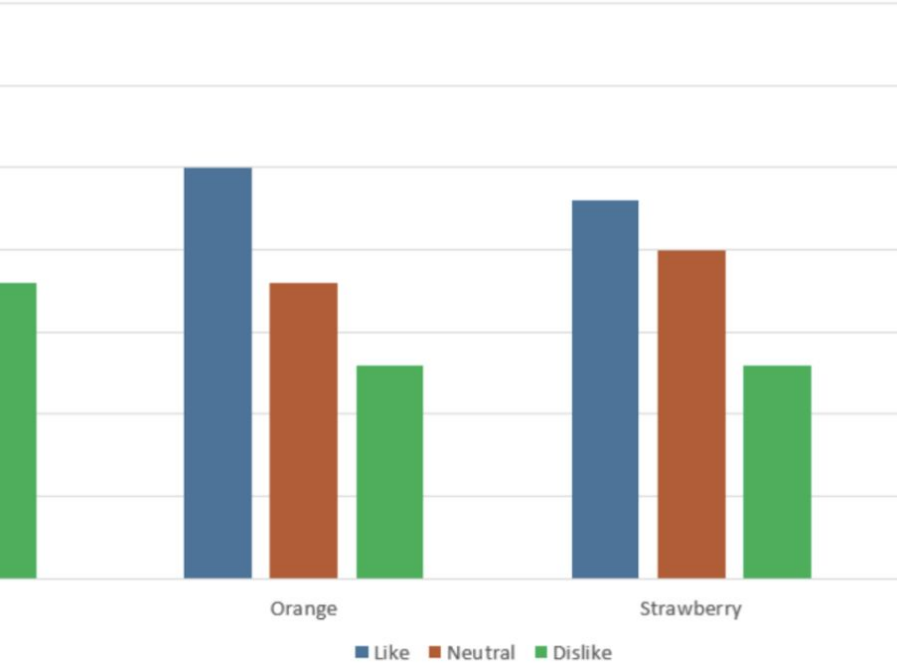


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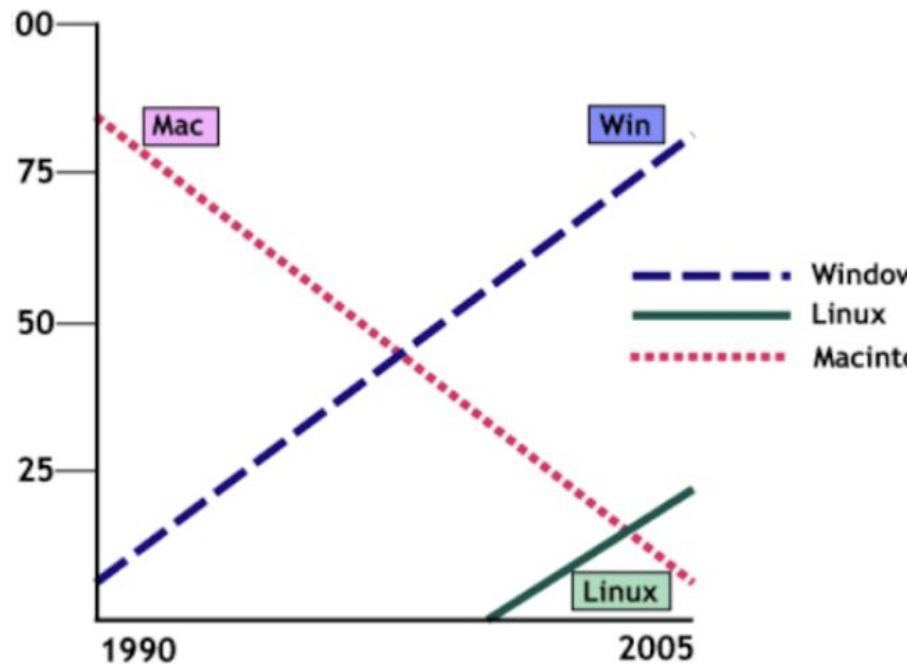
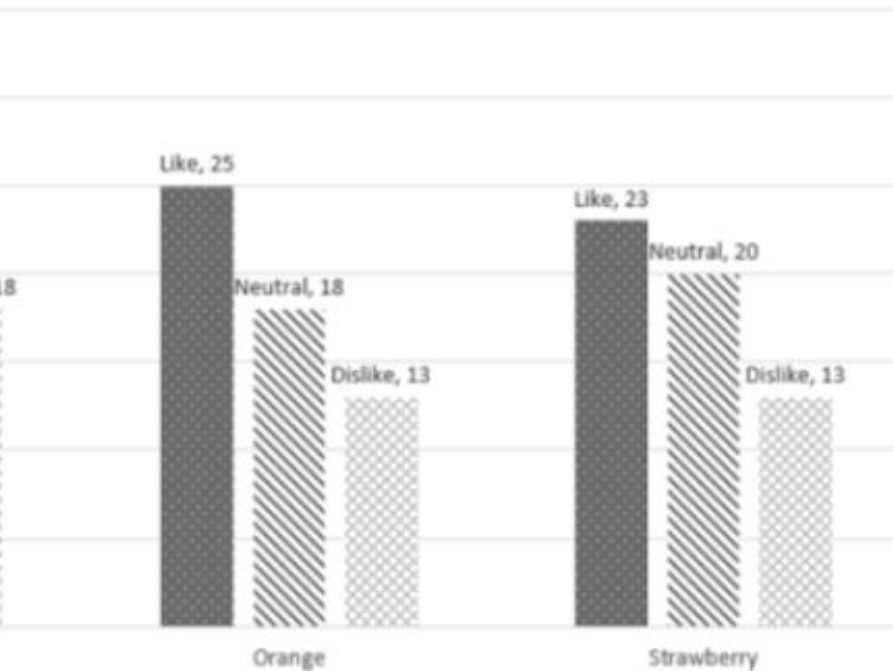
Common Mistake #4: Color-only communication

Fruit Preferences



Fix: Color-only communication - Add texture

Fruit Preferences



Common Mistake #5: Poor color contrast

A solid red square containing the text "This is very poor color contrast" in black. The text is centered and consists of three lines.

**This is very
poor color
contrast**

A solid yellow square containing the text "This is very poor color contrast" in white. The text is centered and consists of three lines.

**This is very
poor color
contrast**

Fix: Poor color contrast - check with tools

A solid red square containing white text. The text is centered and reads "This is better color contrast".

**This is
better color
contrast**

A solid yellow square containing black text. The text is centered and reads "This is better color contrast".

**This is
better color
contrast**

Common Mistake #6: Cumberstone emojis and hashtags



volkswagenchick



volkswagenchick My 🐱 Spot is the #best 🌻.

Look how he smells the 🌻🌻🌻 flowers 🌻🌻
🌻.

#bestcatever

29s



Be the first to like this

29 seconds ago



Add a comment...

Post

Fix: Cumbersome emojis and hashtags – limit use and placement



 volkswagenchick ...

 volkswagenchick My cat Spot is the best.

Look how he smells the flowers.

[#BestCatEver](#)

18s



Be the first to like this
18 seconds ago

 Add a comment...

[Post](#)

Accessibility Without Slowing Down

Accessibility Mistakes and Better Approaches

The Biggest Myth: Accessibility Slows Content Creation

Myth: Accessibility is extra work

Accessibility feels like extra work when it is treated as a final review instead of part of content creation.

The Biggest Myth: Accessibility Slows Content Creation

Myth: Accessibility is extra work

Most posts are visual, which means information often lives inside images or videos that may not have alt text or captions.

Reality: Rework is what slows teams down

Building accessibility in from the start is often faster than fixing issues after publication.

Before You Publish?

AI Can Help, But Verify

Helpful

- Draft alt text
- Generate captions
- Summarize transcripts

Still Needs Humans

- Context
- Accuracy
- Tone
- Meaning

Tip: AI can accelerate accessibility work, but it cannot determine intent.

Why Good Teams Still Miss Accessibility

Which of these is the biggest challenge in your organization?

- Lack of awareness
- Time pressure
- Missing processes
- Platform limitations
- Competing priorities

Build Accessibility Into Existing Workflows

Content Creation

- Draft post
- Select media
- Write with clarity

Content Review

- Check alt text
- Review captions
- Verify readability

Publishing

- Final accessibility check
- Confirm platform settings
- Publish and monitor

Tip: Accessibility can fit into workflows that already exist.

Progress Over Perfection

Start Small

Focus on high-impact content rather than trying to fix everything at once.

Build Habits

Incorporate accessibility into everyday content creation and publishing workflows.

Make Progress

Measure success by reducing barriers, not by achieving perfection.

Tip: Alt text should communicate **purpose and meaning**, not just appearance.

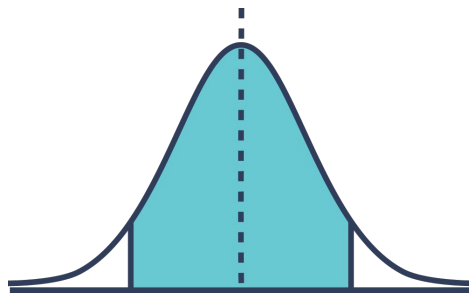
If You Remember Nothing Else...

Five Things You Can Do Today:

- Add alt text to images
- Review auto-generated captions
- Use CamelCase hashtags
- Keep key information outside images
- Structure posts for readability

// When you call something an edge case,
you're really just defining the limits of
what you care about. //

— Eric Meyer





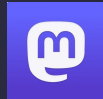
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Thanks!!



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Additional Resources

- ▶ [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- ▶ [Accessibility Fundamentals for Open Source Contributors](#)
- ▶ [ADA COMPLIANCE](#)
- ▶ [Writing Effective Alternative Text](#)
- ▶ [W3C - Resources on Alternative Text for Images](#)
- ▶ [European Accessibility Act \(EAA\)](#)