

IABC Webinar Responses

What is the title of your upcoming book and when should it be published? I'd love to pick up a copy!	3
What is the best practice regarding text on an image or graphic on social media?	3
Where should emojis be placed in text when used? Before or after a sentence?	3
Meta offers an auto-generated alt text/descriptive text. Is this reliable, or should social media managers write their own?	4
Can you clarify the appropriate use of capital letters? Digital style calls for AM/PM instead of a.m. p.m. -- which one is recommended for accessibility?	4
Can you do something like "Click here to register for this webinar."	4
If a photo is really just decorative (stock photo of people smiling at the camera) is that something to add alt text to? I generally lean on, is the photo adding to the communication?	4
We struggle with infographics. The visual content can be dense (tables, charts, etc.) and can be hard to capture in alt-text. Suggestions?	5
Can tables be built directly into the website as text vs. an image?	6
Are there any training courses, programs, certifications that you recommend for communications professionals?	6
I have a question about an active offer for accessibility accommodations for webinar or virtual event invites. Are they necessary?	7
Is there ever too much when it comes to Alt Text? Or things to shy away from? I work with an organization that has clients who are dealing with everything from vision loss to brain injuries, hearing loss, etc.	7
Would providing alternative formats for infographics and the like be suitable?	8
And what about PDFs? These are the bane of my existence.	8

For images that are not necessary, just enhance for those without visual limitations, should we still add alt text? E.g. lines our outline boxes dividing sections.....9

What role do you see AI playing the realm of accessibility?9

Any recommendations on resources that help school communicators interpret the new WCAG 2.1 AA update? I’ve attended several webinars now, and it seems like there are a lot of gray areas. For example, where schools stand with booster clubs/PTOs that may post/disseminate information or communicate with parents on behalf of campuses and programs. Are they found by the new update? Who carries the burden if WCAG 2.1 AA isn’t met and there is a complaint? (Just an example) 10

Are there research reinforcing the benefits of accessibility best practices to businesses vs. not using these best practices?..... 10

What is the title of your upcoming book and when should it be published? I'd love to pick up a copy!

Thank you! The name of our upcoming book is "Accessible Communications: Create Impact, Avoid Missteps and Build Trust," which is now available for pre-order on Amazon!

- [Amazon Canada](#)
- [Amazon U.K.](#)
- [Amazon U.S.](#)

What is the best practice regarding text on an image or graphic on social media?

First and foremost, keep it simple and minimal. Use concise text that delivers the message at a glance. Too much text can overwhelm viewers and clutter the image.

You'll also want to ensure there is high contrast. Use text colours that strongly contrast with the background (e.g., white text on a dark background) to make the text easy to read for everyone, including individuals with sight loss.

Another thing to consider is your font. Go for sans-serif fonts that are easy to read. Avoid overly decorative fonts that can be hard to decipher, especially on smaller screens.

Finally, you want to avoid placing text over busy backgrounds. If the background image is complex, use a solid-coloured overlay or text box to make the text stand out.

Where should emojis be placed in text when used? Before or after a sentence?

For accessibility, emojis should be placed at the end of a sentence, after the punctuation. This placement ensures that the text remains clear and readable for everyone, especially for users relying on screen readers.

Why? Screen readers often read emojis by describing them (e.g., "smiling face"). If emojis are placed before the sentence, they can disrupt the natural flow of reading and comprehension.

Also, by placing emojis at the end, you prevent them from being mistaken as part of the initial words, which can be confusing for quick readers or those with cognitive disabilities.

Meta offers an auto-generated alt text/descriptive text. Is this reliable, or should social media managers write their own?

While Meta's, or any, auto-generated alt text can be a good starting point, it's not entirely reliable. AI-based tools often miss critical context or provide generic descriptions that lack the detail or nuance necessary for true accessibility. Social media managers should always aim to write their own alt text to ensure the description conveys the intended meaning and context of the image.

Can you clarify the appropriate use of capital letters? Digital style calls for AM/PM instead of a.m. p.m. -- which one is recommended for accessibility?

You want to avoid all-caps for large blocks of text. The reason is that all-caps can be challenging for many users to read, especially those with cognitive or visual disabilities. Screen readers may also interpret all-caps differently, reading them letter by letter, which disrupts the flow for users relying on these tools.

There are different schools of thought when it comes to page titles and headings. While gov.uk guidance suggests sentence case helps readability, using title case (e.g., "Accessible Design Tips") can help some users quickly scan content.

As for the time, always use a.m. and p.m. when indicating morning or evening to enhance accessibility and improve understanding for all readers.

Can you do something like "Click here to register for this webinar."

We would recommend saying something like, "Register for this webinar today," and hyperlink it that whole phrase.

If it's on LinkedIn or another social platform, we would recommend, "Register for this webinar today on our website: [link]."

If a photo is really just decorative (stock photo of people smiling at the camera) is that something to add alt text to? I generally lean on, is the photo adding to the communication?

It really depends on context.

If the photo is on social media, even if it seems "decorative," it's often being used to grab attention or create engagement. In this case, you'd add alt text. Assume the image contributes to the communication, even subtly. Provide a brief description like, "Group of people smiling at the camera," so users relying on assistive technologies are not left out of the full experience.

Now, decorative images on a website don't necessarily need to be removed, especially if they align with your brand's visual identity or contribute to the overall aesthetic of the site. While these images might not provide direct context or meaning, they can play a significant role in creating a cohesive and engaging user experience for sighted users. However, their inclusion raises important questions about purpose and value.

If an image serves no functional or emotional purpose, neither enhancing the user's understanding nor contributing to the "feel" of your brand, it may be worth reconsidering its presence. Excessive or unnecessary images can slow down page loading times, distract from key messaging, or complicate the user experience.

Ultimately, the decision should balance accessibility, branding, and user experience. For truly decorative images, ensure they are marked correctly in your website's code (e.g., using `alt=""`) to signal to assistive technologies that these elements can be skipped. This way, your site remains accessible while maintaining its visual appeal and brand integrity.

We recommend asking yourself this: Does this image add value or meaning to the communication? If yes, write alt text. If not, you can skip it—but only where it's appropriate, like on a website where it's clearly decorative.

We struggle with infographics. The visual content can be dense (tables, charts, etc.) and can be hard to capture in alt-text. Suggestions?

Infographics can be tricky because they pack a lot of visual information into one space, but there are ways to make them more accessible without losing their impact. Start by providing a clear and concise alt text description that summarizes the main takeaway or key message of the infographic. For example, instead of describing every single detail, you could say, "Infographic showing the rise in social media usage from 2020 to 2025, highlighting a 30% growth among Gen Z."

For dense details like tables, charts, or complex visuals, consider including a text-based alternative. This could be a description in the body of the post, a linked webpage, or a caption that explains the data in full. Many platforms

also allow you to include a longer description or link to an accessible version of the infographic.

Another option is to break the infographic into smaller, digestible pieces, like individual charts or sections. Each piece can then have specific alt text describing just that part of the information. This not only makes it easier for assistive technologies to interpret but also makes the content more flexible for sharing across platforms.

The key is to focus on what's most important for your audience to understand and offer additional context in a way that's easy for everyone to access. This way, you're not sacrificing clarity or accessibility.

Can tables be built directly into the website as text vs. an image?

For accessibility, it's better to build tables directly into a website as text rather than using an image. Text-based tables are inherently accessible to screen readers, which can navigate the table structure, read headers, and associate them with the corresponding data, as long as they're formatted to read from left to right. This ensures that users with sight loss can fully understand the information. They're also searchable, indexable by search engines, and allow users to find information quickly using browser search functions like Ctrl+F.

However, if a table contains complex visual elements that can't be recreated with HTML, using an image may be necessary. Also, tables should be used to present data, not arrange large blocks of text. Large tables of content can break responsive design, making mobile access harder for everyone.

Whenever possible, build tables directly using semantic HTML tags such as <table>, <th>, <tr>, and <td>. This approach ensures that all users, including those relying on assistive technologies, can access and navigate the data efficiently and effectively.

Are there any training courses, programs, certifications that you recommend for communications professionals?

Matisse (matisse@matissenelis.com) and Lisa (lisa@lisariemers.com) both offer training on various areas of digital accessibility. We recommend connecting with us to learn more!

The [International Association of Accessibility Professionals](#) (IAAP) also have webinars, sessions and certifications that you can look into for accessibility core competencies, accessible documents and accessible web development.

Lisa has a [selection of accessibility resources](#) that was shared in the presentation on her website.

I have a question about an active offer for accessibility accommodations for webinar or virtual event invites. Are they necessary?

Yes, including an active offer for accessibility accommodations in webinar or virtual event invites is not only necessary but also a best practice. It ensures your event is inclusive and signals to attendees that their needs are a priority.

An active offer, like "Please let us know if you require accessibility accommodations, such as live captions or ASL interpretation," creates a welcoming environment and allows participants to feel confident that they can fully engage. It also helps you prepare and address specific needs in advance, avoiding last-minute hurdles.

Even if no one requests accommodations, the offer itself demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity, builds trust with your audience, and aligns with accessibility standards. Including this in your invitations is a simple but impactful way to make your virtual events more accessible and inclusive.

Is there ever too much when it comes to Alt Text? Or things to shy away from? I work with an organization that has clients who are dealing with everything from vision loss to brain injuries, hearing loss, etc.

When it comes to alt text, the goal is to strike a balance between providing enough information to convey the purpose of the image and avoiding overloading the user with unnecessary details. Alt text should focus on what is essential to understanding the context or message of the content.

For example, describing a stock photo of a smiling group as "People smiling at the camera" may suffice, but if the image is part of a campaign highlighting diversity, you might add more specific details like "A diverse group of people smiling together."

Avoid adding decorative or irrelevant details, such as "A beautiful sunset with vibrant hues of orange," unless those details are directly tied to the message.

It's also important to prioritize clarity and avoid jargon, especially when working with audiences who may have cognitive or sight-related disabilities. Ultimately, less can be more; focus on what enhances understanding, and

remember that the alt text should complement, not duplicate, the surrounding content.

Would providing alternative formats for infographics and the like be suitable?

Providing alternative formats for infographics is not only suitable but a highly recommended accessibility practice.

Infographics often pack a lot of visual information into a single design, which can be challenging for screen readers or users with vision or cognitive disabilities to interpret. Offering an alternative format, such as a text-based summary or a detailed description of the infographic's key points, ensures everyone can access the information.

For example, if your infographic includes statistics, trends, or charts, you could provide a written breakdown that explains the data in a logical, easy-to-follow way. Additionally, you might consider breaking the infographic into smaller, labeled sections with alt text specific to each piece for users navigating it digitally.

The goal is to ensure the same level of understanding for all users, regardless of how they access the content. Offering multiple formats not only demonstrates inclusivity but also aligns with accessibility best practices.

And what about PDFs? These are the bane of my existence.

PDFs can certainly be a challenge, especially when it comes to ensuring they meet accessibility standards. The good news is that tools like [PAC \(PDF Accessibility Checker\)](#) can help you identify and address common issues, ensuring your PDFs align with PDF/UA standards, the gold standard for accessible PDFs.

Making a PDF accessible means incorporating tags for proper structure, ensuring text isn't just an image (thanks to Optical Character Recognition), and adding alt text to images, among other steps. I

If this feels overwhelming, there are excellent services like [GrackleDocs](#) and [Accessibil-IT](#) that specialize in PDF remediation to make your documents compliant and user-friendly.

Or, is that PDF really necessary, or can you provide the information HTML-first, or as accessible Word or PowerPoint files?

On the training side, Matisse offers sessions that demystify the PDF accessibility process, equipping you with the skills to create compliant

documents right from the start. With the right tools, knowledge, and support, PDFs can go from being a source of frustration to a standard of accessibility excellence.

For images that are not necessary, just enhance for those without visual limitations, should we still add alt text? E.g. lines our outline boxes dividing sections.

For purely decorative elements like lines, outline boxes, or other visuals that don't convey essential information or context, it's generally better to skip adding alt text.

Assigning them a null attribute (alt="") ensures that screen readers will bypass them, allowing users to focus on the meaningful content.

Adding alt text to purely decorative elements can create unnecessary noise for those using assistive technologies, which can be frustrating and distracting. The goal is to ensure alt text is used thoughtfully for content that adds value or meaning to the communication. Always prioritize clarity and user experience when deciding whether or not to include alt text.

What role do you see AI playing the realm of accessibility?

AI is already making waves in accessibility, offering tools like automated captioning, real-time translations, and screen reader enhancements that can improve access for people with disabilities.

It has the potential to streamline accessibility efforts, like generating alt text for images or suggesting fixes for inaccessible design elements. However, while AI can be a powerful starting point, it often lacks the nuance and context needed for truly inclusive outcomes.

For instance, auto-generated alt text might describe an image generically without capturing its significance or intent. Similarly, AI-driven captioning tools, though improving, still struggle with accuracy, particularly with accents, complex terms, or overlapping dialogue.

The human element remains critical to ensure these technologies are refined and applied thoughtfully. As AI evolves, its best role will likely be as a collaborative tool—helping to identify gaps, speed up processes, and support human decision-making in creating more inclusive and accessible experiences.

Any recommendations on resources that help school communicators interpret the new WCAG 2.1 AA update? I've attended several webinars now, and it seems like there are a lot of gray areas. For example, where schools stand with booster clubs/PTOs that may post/disseminate information or communicate with parents on behalf of campuses and programs. Are they found by the new update? Who carries the burden if WCAG 2.1 AA isn't met and there is a complaint? (Just an example)

Navigating the WCAG 2.1 AA updates can be daunting, especially for school communicators juggling various stakeholders like booster clubs and PTOs. While the guidelines aim to provide clarity on making digital content accessible, some gray areas remain, particularly around third-party organizations affiliated with schools.

Generally, if booster clubs or PTOs disseminate information on behalf of a school or program, it's safest to assume they fall under the same accessibility requirements as the school. As for accountability, the school district or institution is often viewed as ultimately responsible if content posted by these groups fails to meet WCAG standards.

To get a better grasp of these nuances, I recommend checking out resources from organizations like the [World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\), which maintains WCAG guidelines](#), and seeking practical webinars or materials from accessibility-focused groups like WebAIM or IAAP. Accessibility training for staff and partners is also invaluable in addressing potential risks before complaints arise.

Are there research reinforcing the benefits of accessibility best practices to businesses vs. not using these best practices?

In September 2024, ["The Global Economics of Disability: 2024"](#) was released, and highlighted things like:

- The total spending power of people with disabilities (PWD) and their families is estimated to exceed \$18 trillion USD.
- 1.6 billion people, or 22% of the world's population, live with a disability.
- Disability spending power is well-developed in regions like North America and Europe, where PWD control over \$2.6 trillion in disposable income.

- Successful businesses are those that focus on designing for functionality and experience, not merely meeting compliance standards.