



# ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:**

The nine accessibility-related icons are framed in white on a warm orange background

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# INTRODUCTION.

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## **Accessibility - what is it and why do we need it?**

The core of accessibility is inclusivity which entails giving equal access and opportunities to everyone. That means that all digital content, services, and activities need to be easy to access for as many people as possible. A conscious effort needs to be made to reduce and overcome barriers users may experience.

When people see that their access needs are being considered it makes them feel more included and validated. The more accessible your student group is, the better it will be, as more people will feel welcomed and seen. Disabled and neurodivergent people have sadly become too used to ignorance and inaccessibility. We need to change that. We need to be inclusive. And that means learning how to make your content, events and activities accessible.

As a wheelchair user myself, it is so frustrating when I can't enter a building, join in an activity, or fully understand/engage with videos and digital content. I'm the first Sabb Officer to be elected as a wheelchair user and I am determined to make RHUL as disability friendly as possible. This guide offers you a way to learn how to become more inclusive and understand the complicated world of accessibility and what it actually means in practice.

**Alice Goode**

**VP Wellbeing and Diversity**

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# IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS.

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There are loads of different ways you can describe images on social media and it can all be a bit confusing.

So what's the difference between **alt text, image descriptions (IDs) and captions?**

**Alt text** = A brief explanation of an image. The alt text is included within the coding of the digital image/file. Alt text is not permanently visible, but is built into sites like Instagram which produce their own alt texts for images/allow you to create your own which are then read by screen readers.

**Image description** = It is a good idea to rewrite the automatically generated alt text as it does not always convey the correct meaning of the image and is rather brief. Taking the time to replace it with an image description will ensure that the meaning of the image is properly conveyed and understood.

**Caption** = A brief explanation that provides further information about an image. They don't need to focus on the visual components or descriptions. The caption doesn't have to have anything to do with the image description and isn't required for any accessibility needs - you get free range over what your caption is!

## Why do we need image descriptions?

They put all of the visual aspects of an image in writing so disabled users can access it in other ways via things like screen readers. IDs can help identify all parts of an image or details a disabled person may have missed from just the image/caption itself.



## Step by step guide:

**Step One:** What's the most important part of the photo?

The first things you notice should be written at the beginning of the description. These are the main ideas of the image.

**E.g.** (for the image above) Four people and the Royal Holloway mascot, Colossus the polar bear.

**Step Two:** The next most noticeable details

For example facial expressions, colours, placement of objects etc.

**E.g.** Four people in orange t-shirts are smiling at the camera. Standing in the middle is the Royal Holloway mascot, Colossus the polar bear, who is waving and holding a sign which reads "Welcome to Royal Holloway". They are standing in Founder's Quad in front of a statue.

**Step Three:** Final additions

Add the smaller details.

**E.g.** Four people in orange student ambassador t-shirts are smiling at the camera. Standing in the middle is the Royal Holloway mascot, Colossus the polar bear, who is waving and

holding a sign which reads “Welcome to Royal Holloway”. They are standing in Founder’s Quad in front of a statue on a sunny day with Founder’s Building behind them.

**The above is a great example of how to write an image description. When you next create one, here are some key points to consider:**

- Everyone should be able to access image descriptions.
- Don’t make it too long - just stick to the main points.
- They’re useful for social media posts, posters (digital and physical), PowerPoints etc.

## How do you make an image description for a logo?

Every logo needs an image description.

**Step one:** Say that the image is a logo! Screen readers don’t automatically know the difference between a logo and other images. Using the word “logo” helps users understand the image’s purpose.

**Step two:** Just like with other image descriptions, any text in the image should be in the description as screen readers can’t access that text in any other way.

**Step three:** The format for describing/naming the logo should always be “[student group name] logo”



**Example:** Royal Holloway University of London logo: To the left on an orange background is the Royal Holloway crest in white. To the right on a slate grey background the text reads ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

# CAPTIONS.

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When posting any videos online it is important to include captions for those with hearing impairments, learning disabilities, those who are neurodivergent and those who process information slightly slower.

Instagram has recently added a new feature where captions are auto generated so you don't have to do a thing - all you have to do is press the captions button and they will appear for you.

Some digital sites aren't so handy and you do have to create the captions yourself, either by writing them out or by using free caption generating software which can easily be found online.

## **Check out these great resources:**

- [Wondershare Filmora](#) - 5 Best Free Automatic Subtitle Generators in 2021
- [VEED](#) - super-simple closed captions generator

The same guidelines for social media posts regarding font and colour apply to captions as well when creating them yourself.

Captioning videos sounds complicated and scary, but it really isn't and it massively benefits loads of people who are viewing your content - it's definitely worth doing.

# COLOUR.

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People with limited vision need content to have enough contrast in order to read it. This means that the background colour and the colour of the text need to be clear and contrasting in order for it to be accessible for everyone.

## **Two great tools to use are:**

[Toolness accessible color palette builder](#)

This helps you to build your colour palette in an accessible way. Simply edit the palette to include the colours you want and it will create a grid of the accessible combinations that you can use, and also show you which combinations not to use, as those colours combined aren't contrasting enough to be legible for people with limited vision.

[WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)

This handy tracker tells you whether certain colour combinations pass or fail the contrast requirements needed to make your content accessible.

## **When to use:**

Colour contrast requirements only apply to text and graphics that are essential for understanding the content or functionality. You don't need to meet any colour contrast requirements for logos or incidental graphic elements - e.g. an emoji

Text that is part of a logo does not need to meet contrast requirements either.

## **Tips:**

- Try not to use pure black text on a pure white background. Try to temper the colours slightly. Pure black on white gives a stark contrast which can cause text to be blurred or move about for some people.
- If you want to put text over an image, simply add a solid background behind the text



or a dark overlay to the image to make it more accessible.

- Don't use colour alone to convey meaning - use icons, written content, and other visual elements to reinforce clear communication of content - e.g. someone may be red-green colour-blind so can't reliably make sense of information conveyed with colour alone.

# FONT.

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## Things to consider:

- Use a large enough font size in the body of your text so that people can comfortably read it - size 16 is suggested.
- Your chosen text performs well when it's big or small,
- Individual letterforms are distinct in shape, making sure that they can't be confused with other letters and are clear/easy to read.
- Make sure the line height, width and type size are all consistent and clear - lines that are too close together or massively spaced apart can decrease readability by making it harder for the eye to know where to return to when the line breaks.
- When using headers, try and make sure they are slightly different from the rest of the text by putting them in bold for example.
- Try and make sure that key information is discernable at a glance.

Design posters/social media posts minimally and intentionally so that the reader can get as much info as quickly as possible. Also consider your required reading order to make sure your information flows and is easy to understand.

# ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS.

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It's important to talk to people in advance about their accessibility needs. That person knows what their needs are better than anyone else so it is always best to talk to them directly and as early as possible.

## **Everyone faces different barriers e.g.**

- Physical access needs
- Mental health issues
- Learning disability
- Language or communication barriers
- Financial difficulty
- Religious or cultural practices
- Perceived (or real) prejudice or stigma

Make sure you ask at the beginning of a session/when the posters/social media posts go out if anyone has any access needs and to get in contact with a member of the group if they do, so that you can work together to figure out what needs to happen.

## **Ten ways to improve accessibility within your student group:**

- Nominate a committee member to be the point of contact for accessibility concerns and make sure this person is identified on your SU website page and on your social media pages.
- Make sure any videos that you share are captioned.

- Use image descriptions.
- Think about the colours and fonts you use.
- For longer events think about implementing short breaks into your activity so people can have a rest, use the toilet etc. and make sure you let people know about the breaks at the beginning/before the event.
- When booking a room for an activity, make sure it is fully accessible to your members - are there stairs, is it really noisy, are there toilets close by etc.
- Try to make some activities alcohol-free as some people may not be able/want to drink but still want to be included and have fun!
- Consider whether in-person events could also be joined virtually for those with mobility issues etc.
- Be mindful of your content and include trigger warnings/content warnings (tw/cw) if there is discussion of triggering or sensitive topics.
- Think about having alternative payment methods - e.g. implement second hand kit sales, for more expensive events, consider a payment plan so people can pay for the activity over a longer period of time in more manageable increments.

### **Other tips on digital accessibility:**

On Word there is an amazing feature that lets you check the accessibility of your document! Simply go onto file, click inspect document, then check accessibility and it should tell you all the things that need to be changed to make it as accessible as possible!



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**@SURHUL / SU.RHUL.AC.UK**