



## **What about Social Networks and Accessibility?**

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Have you heard of [AccessibleTwitter](#) or [Easy YouTube](#) ?

These sites offer an alternative, more accessible way of using these social networks.

### **Introduction**

You may just have come to terms with making your printed information accessible. Now you need to think about other media. What about social network sites? Technology is a rapidly changing world with each change likely to bring new accessibility issues. Work is ongoing to make sure these issues are addressed but the challenges of social networks and accessibility remain.

### **What is social networking?**

Social networking or social media has introduced an even wider range of ways to communicate, including:

- internet forums
- message boards
- blogs
- podcasts
- video.

Social media aims to deliver its message in a more innovative and engaging way than a leaflet or brochure. It can achieve this aim because of the wide range of technology available. The increase in its popularity means that social networking has many advantages:

- Anyone can create content.
- For many it's easy to use.
- It makes information sharing easier.
- It provides rapid delivery of information with audience interaction.

However, social networks are not always accessible for people using assistive technology such as screen readers. Because of its constant development as new techniques and processes are introduced, assistive technology can't keep up with it, with the result that people can feel left behind. On the positive side, the networks are becoming aware of the issue and accessibility options are being included.

## **Twitter**

Twitter lets you follow what others are doing, eg your MP, your football team or your favourite celebrity. You can also flag up what you or your organisation are doing. You can use Twitter via the web, SMS mobile phone messages or instant messaging programmes such as AOL Instant Messenger or Google Talk. You 'tweet' with messages of no more than 140 characters.

Although Twitter is relatively easy to use, some accessibility issues for screen reader users have been found. These issues have been partially resolved by [accessibletwitter.com](http://accessibletwitter.com) which has made some improvements. Keyboard accessibility has been improved. You can now access the Favourite and Reply buttons using a keyboard or screen reader and there are audio cues to announce

when the 140 character limit is being reached.

However, as social network sites are constantly changing, [accessibletwitter.com](http://accessibletwitter.com) is not the finished article and more improvements are in the pipeline.

## **YouTube**

Many people watch and create video using YouTube. However, the small controls on the video player can be difficult to operate so [Easy YouTube](#) has been developed to improve accessibility.

[Easy YouTube](#) is less cluttered and the player controls are much easier to recognise. There is also improved support for keyboard only operations. However, there are still ongoing accessibility issues.

## **Facebook**

Facebook is a popular meeting place for many people. You set up a profile which can link you to other people. Families and friends often use Facebook to share news and photographs.

Much of Facebook is accessible but certain functions like drag and drop and adjusting slider settings may not work with screen readers. Find out more about [Facebook's Accessibility Information](#).

## **Conclusion**

Now you have an idea of some of the issues and the work being done to improve accessibility by the major social media services, there are also steps that you can take to make your social media content accessible, such as providing captions for your videos.

There are lots of articles on the web. You can start off at:

[Accessibility and Social Media](#)

“You provide the message; you should also make sure everybody can receive it.” (From Accessibility and Social Media article listed above).

## **Contact us**

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