

Accessible Social Media Guide: By MOPD

What is accessibility?

Accessibility refers to the design of an experience that can be enjoyed by all people. Something that is not accessible disregards a select population of people that are left out of the experience entirely.

People with disabilities use assistive technology to interact with computers, tablets and smartphones. A person from the blind community can use a screen reader to have the contents of the screen read out loud to them. If we do not make our content compatible with screen readers, then that person is less likely to get anything meaningful from our websites or social media accounts.

How can I make social media accessible?

- You can make your post accessible by including a written description for any images or photos.
- You can make your videos accessible by including audio description and captioning.

Language:

Through image description, audio description and captioning it is important that you use the proper language if you are speaking about someone with a disability.

Words that should never be used to refer to people with disabilities:

- Handicapped: Use "accessible" for example "accessible parking" or "accessible bathrooms."
- Midget: Use "little person" or "dwarf."
- Lame: Lame means a person who cannot walk. People use this word as slang for something that is disappointing. Say what you really mean instead.
- Cripple: Say "person with a physical disability" instead. Also, it is offensive to use cripple as a metaphor, for example the name of Donald Trump's book is "Crippled America."

Proper language referring to people with disabilities includes:

People with visual, hearing, physical, cognitive or developmental disabilities.

Making images accessible:

To make an image or photo accessible, you can describe it via text for someone who is unable to see it. This text should accompany the image so someone using a screen reader is able to get the description.



New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

March 15 at 5:07pm · 🌐

A candid moment during the signing of multiple bills that increase access to city services for people with disabilities. To learn more follow the link below.

Image description: [Mayor Bill de Blasio](#) and MOPD Commissioner Victor Calise at the bill signing yesterday in City Hall. Microphone in hand, Commissioner Calise shares an enthusiastic smile with Mayor de Blasio who is standing at the podium. Commissioner Victor Calise is on the right while Mayor de Blasio is on the left and behind them are multiple US and NYC flags.

Describing an image:

Ask the following questions:

- Where is this photo? It could be something specific such as City hall. It could also be general such as a room with a table and some seats.
- Who is in the photo? You can give a count of how many people are in the photo if it's a finite number. If their identity is integral to the purpose of the photo then it should be included.
- What are they doing? Examples, smiling, waving, signing a bill, etc.
- What is the significance of this photo? Ask yourself "what's the point?" or "Why am I posting this?"

Advanced image description:

When we include more information about an image, a person using a screen reader will get more meaning from it. Consider adding the following details in your descriptions.

- Where is each person located? Example: On the left is Mayor De Blasio who is shaking hands with Commissioner Victor Calise who is on the right.
- Include specific details about the setting. Example: There are large NYC and USA flags standing up behind them.

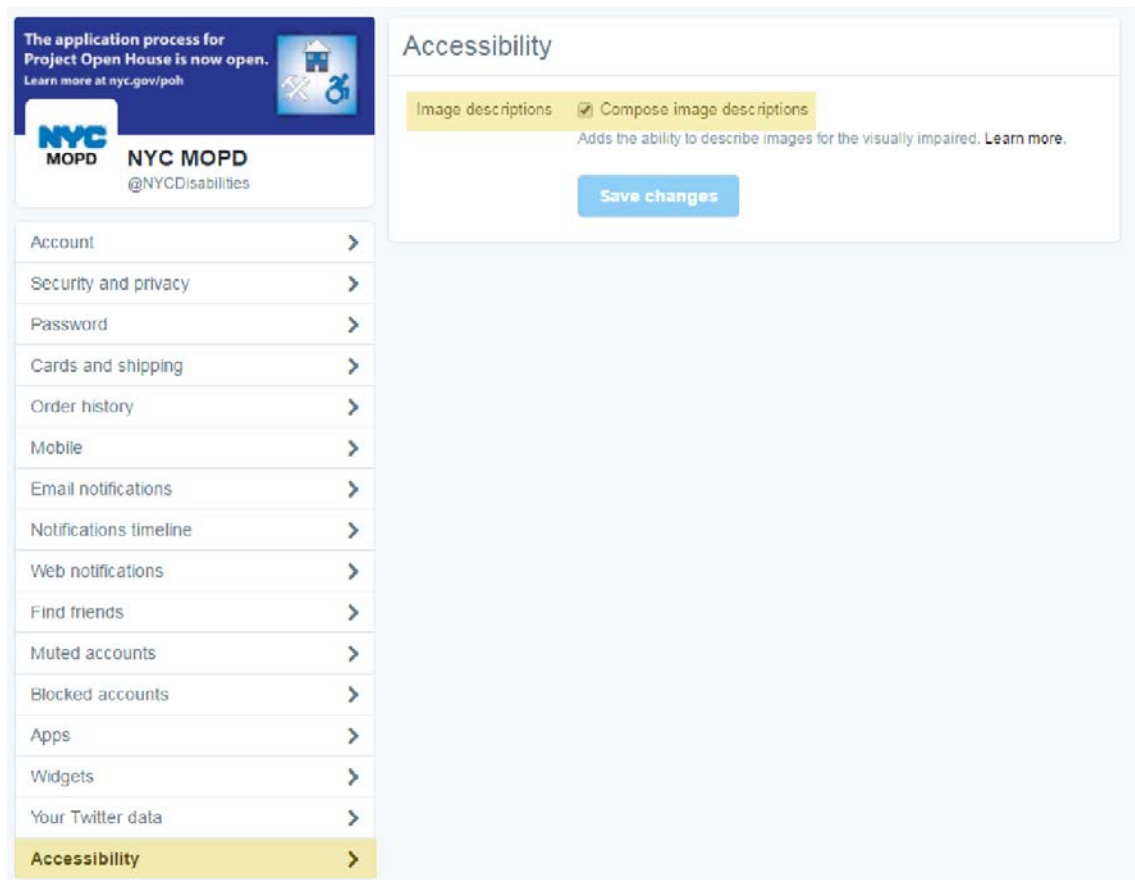
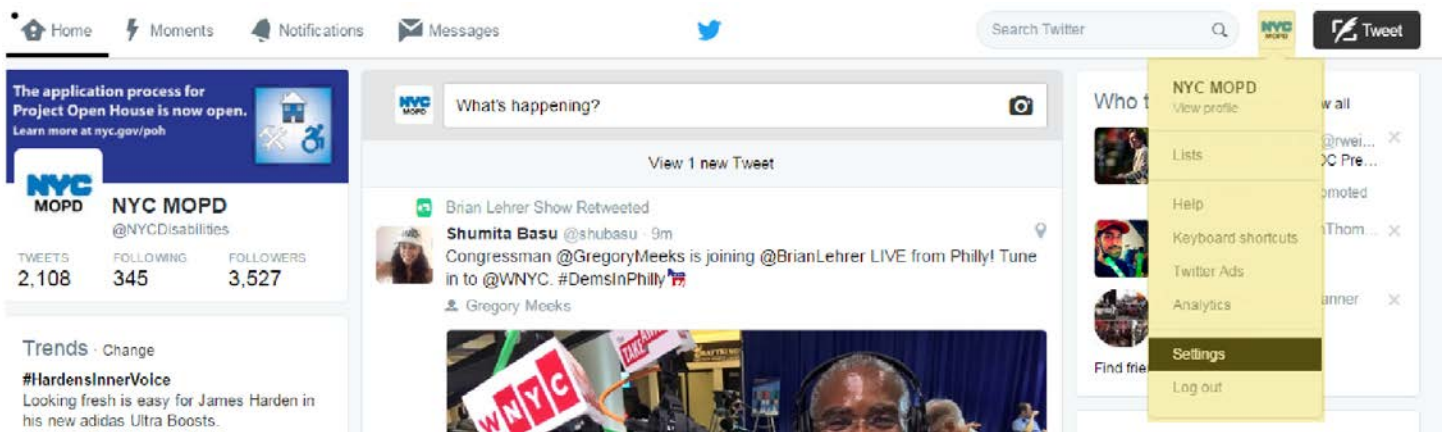
On Facebook or Instagram, you can include this image description in the caption or text that accompanies the image but for Twitter you can use what is known as "Alt-text." Alt-text is a feature which allows users to add a description to a photo specifically for blind twitter users. This means that a screen reader can detect the image description embedded within the image that would otherwise not be visible to the eye. This feature is available on any internet browser, as well as the official Twitter app on iOS and Android phones.

Enabling Twitter Alt-Text:

In order to use the Alt-Text feature on Twitter using a **computer**, you must first enable this feature on your Twitter account. To do this:

- Select your Profile Icon in the top right of your screen
- Go under “Settings”
- On the bottom of the list select “Accessibility”
- Make sure “compose image descriptions” is checked and hit “save changes”

Once you have enabled image descriptions, you will see the option “Add description” appear when you are posting a photo to Twitter.

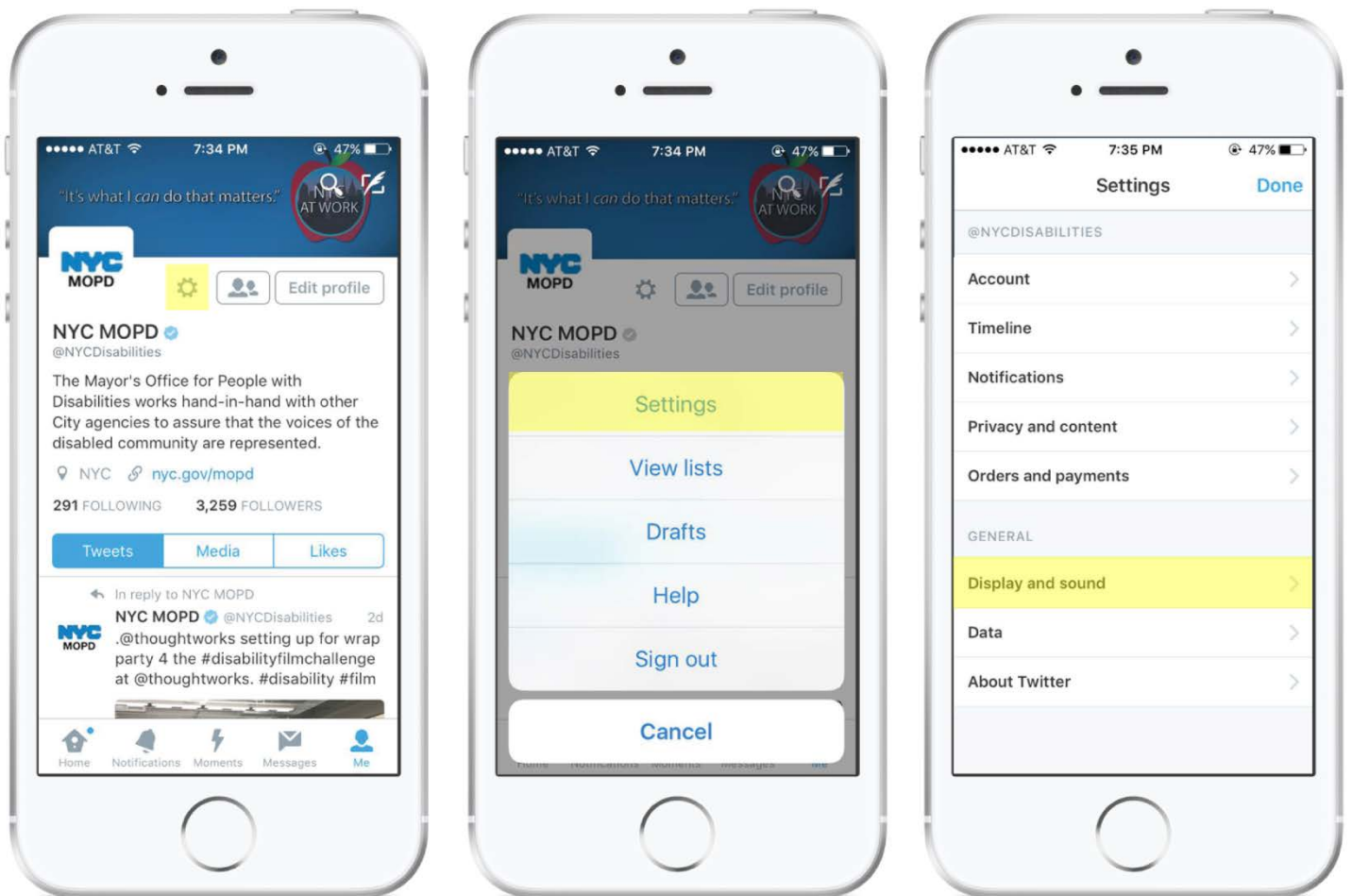


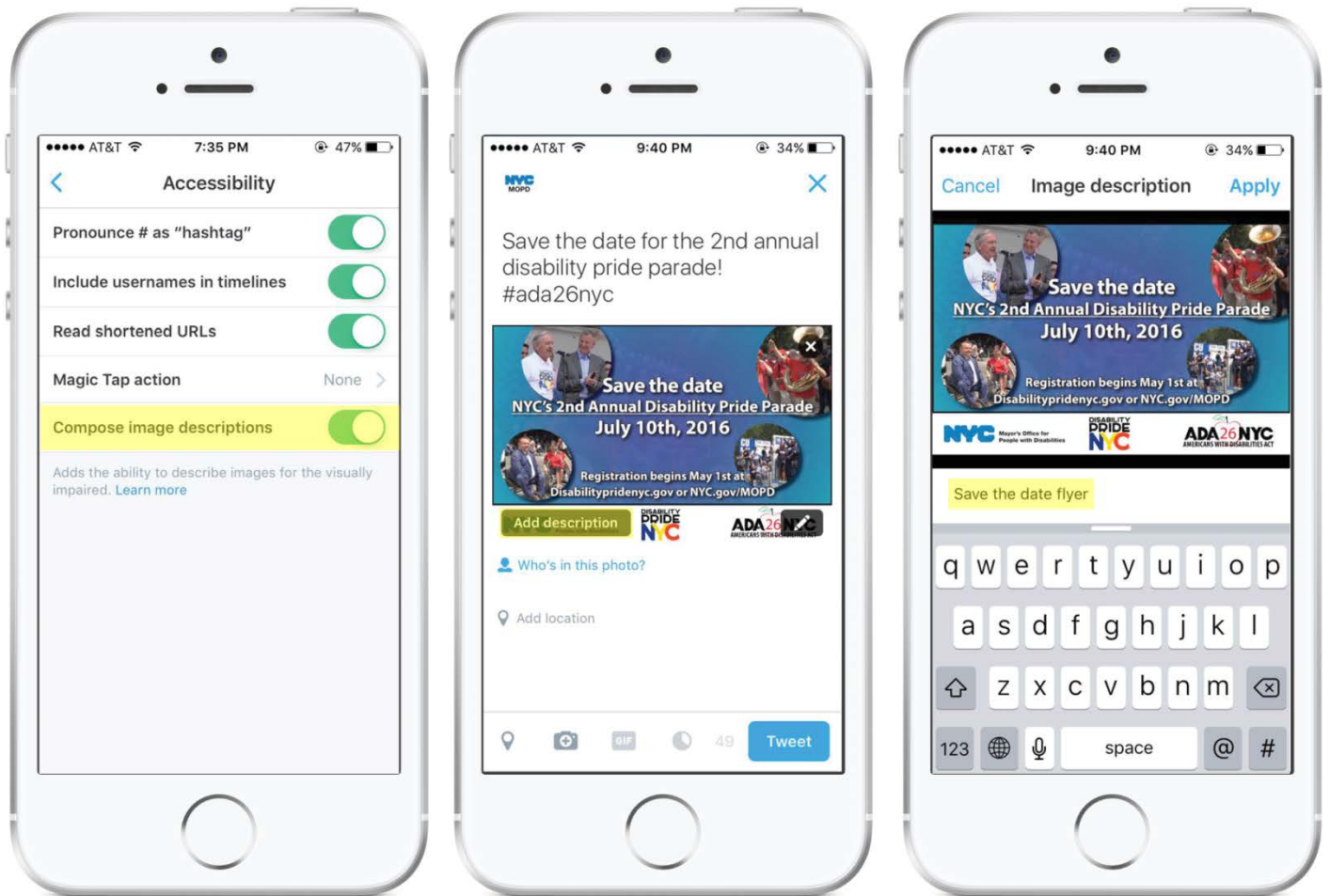
To enable Alt-Text on the **Twitter app for iOS and Android devices**, follow these instructions:

- In the “Me” tab, tap on the gear icon. (Note: for screen reader users this icon is labelled as “settings.”)
- Tap “Settings”
- Tap “Display and sound”
- Tap “Accessibility” and toggle on “Compose image descriptions.”

Once you have enabled image description for Twitter you will see the option “Add description” appear when you are posting a photo on via your mobile device.

Note: there is a 420 character limit on descriptions.





Further reading:

Facebook has a feature that uses artificial intelligence to interpret photos for blind users. While it is an amazing new technology, it is not efficient enough to be considered reliable. We highly encourage users to post their own image descriptions. Below is a demo of the feature.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsUGTdJhBOs>