

Alternative Text Guide

How to add alternative text
to digital communication



Table of Contents

What is Alternative text (alt text)?	1
Benefits of using alt text.....	1
Tips for writing alt text.....	1
Examples of alt text	2
Describing logos	6
1. How to add alt text to images in Word 2019?.....	8
2. Adding alt text in Facebook (Desktop).....	11
3. Adding alt text in Facebook (Mobile device).....	17
4. Adding alt text on Instagram.....	23
5. Image description	28
6. Accessible videos.....	29

Alternative text

The City of Mandurah is committed to ensuring that the community is accessible for, and inclusive of, people with disability including access to digital information. This guide will support content creators to include alternative text to digital communication and has been developed with support from the organisation VisAbility. An accessible and inclusive community is a more vibrant place for everyone to enjoy.

What is Alternative text (alt text)?

Alternative text, also known as “alt text”, is a written invisible description of non-textual content in websites, documents and social media platforms such as images, photographs, logos and illustrations. Adding alt text to images in digital communications increases accessibility for people who have low or no vision.

Benefits of using alt text

- Screen reading software reads the alt text description of the image out aloud for people with low or no vision.
- Displays the text descriptions when web browsers are not loading the images.
- Supports the Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) for websites, documents and social media platforms.

“Alt text is very important to people with vision impairment to improve accessibility by describing the content of a graphic image to people who don’t have the ability to see it.”
Emmanuel Lee, a person with a vision impairment.

Tips for writing alt text

- Keep it simple, concise and short – one to two sentences maximum. If more detail is required to convey the meaning or purpose of the image, you can include a longer image description in the caption or document.
- Only describe what you see – do not provide additional information in the alt text that is not available to non-screen reader users.
- Always end your sentence with a full stop so that the screen reader pauses before reading the rest of the content.

Examples of alt text

Example 1



Good example:

Two men relax on a couch. One is holding a bottle of soft drink and smiling.

Bad example:

Two people sitting.

- This is not sufficiently descriptive and does not convey the purpose of the image.

Example 2



Good example:

A group of young people, all wearing the same uniform, smiling and waving from a bus. The bus is covered in red, gold and silver tinsel.

Bad example:

Photo of a stylised bus full of people.

- This does not provide enough context for people who cannot see the image.
- Phrases such as “Photo of” or “Image of” are not required as the screen reader will identify that an image is present.

Example 3



Good example:

A group of people performing the same yoga pose at an indoor fitness centre.

Bad example:

A yoga class doing a Trikonasana variation pose. We can see three women with ponytails and one man with short hair, as well as the legs of some other people who have been cut off by the edge of the photo. They are all wearing activewear and standing on yoga mats with their upper bodies facing towards the camera. They each have their right leg bent at the front of their mats while their left leg is straight with the left foot parallel with the shorter edge of the back of their mat.

- The description is much too long for alt text. By naming the pose, it also provides details not available to people who are not using a screen reader.
- If describing the pose is important – for example, the image is being used to assist with instruction, rather than simply being illustrative – there should be a longer description accompanying the image that both screen reader users and non-screen reader users can see.

Example 4



Good example:

Coastal landscape showing the ocean, beach, cloudy sky, plants and a bicycle trail on a fine day. Two cyclists ride single file along the trail.

Bad example:

John and Peter riding bikes.

- This does not provide enough description or context. It is also misleading, as the people riding bicycles takes up only a small part of the image.
- Specific people can be named where appropriate, but if “John” and “Peter” have not been identified in the surrounding text, only screen reader users will know their names.

Describing logos

- The alternative text for company logos should be the name of the company.
- Do not go into detail to describe what a logo looks like.

Please see the examples below:

Example 1



Good example:

City of Mandurah logo.

Bad example:

logo

- This provides no context. Screen reader users will not know what the logo is supposed to represent.

Example 2

VisAbility

Every support at **any** stage.

Good example:

VisAbility logo. The tagline reads “Every support at any stage.”

Bad example:

“VisAbility” is in big bold writing at the top. Underneath there is smaller text that reads “Every support at any stage.” The words “Every” and “any” are in bold while the words “support at” and “stage” are in standard typeface.

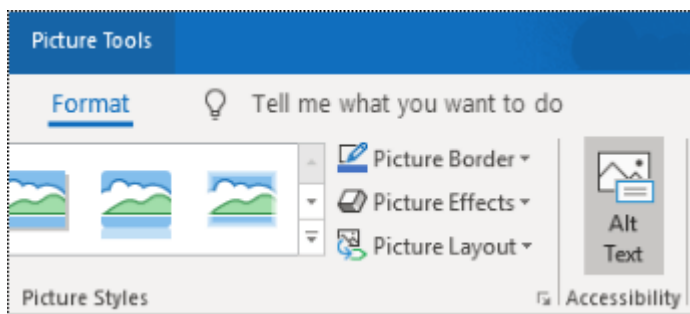
- The image is not identified as the VisAbility logo. Alt text should provide users who cannot see the images with an understanding of the purpose of the image.
- The description contains too many unimportant details that will be confusing and overwhelming to screen reader users. The specifics of what the logo looks like is irrelevant – what matters is the context of the image.

1. How to add alt text to images in Word 2019?

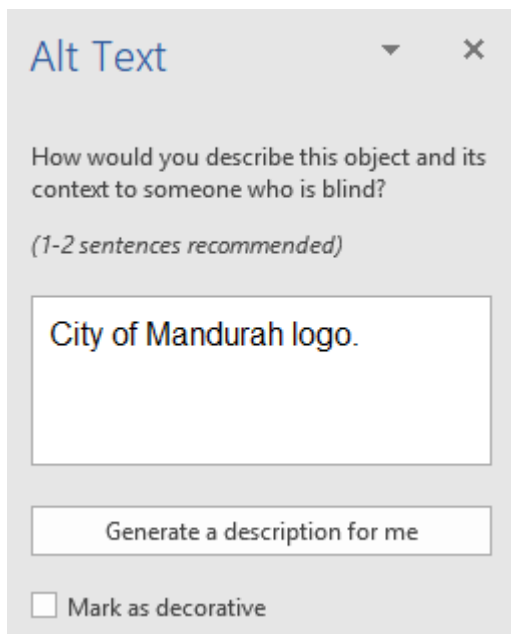
1. Right click on the image and select **Edit Alt Text**.



2. Or double click on the image. Select **Format > Alt Text** at the top of the ribbon.



3. Add the description for your image.



Please note:

- You can use the **Generate a description for me** option for MS Word to automatically generate an alt text. However, always check the auto generated alt text as it may not be accurate.
- You can also check the **Mark as decorative** option for decorative visuals. However, screen reader users reading documents in an older version of MS Word will experience accessibility issues. MS Word is not a publishing tool. It is recommended to use decorative visuals sparingly and state them as “decorative elements” in the alt text box.

1.1 How to make an image in line with text?

Images in MS Word must be set as 'in line' with text so that the screen reader can determine which content to read first.

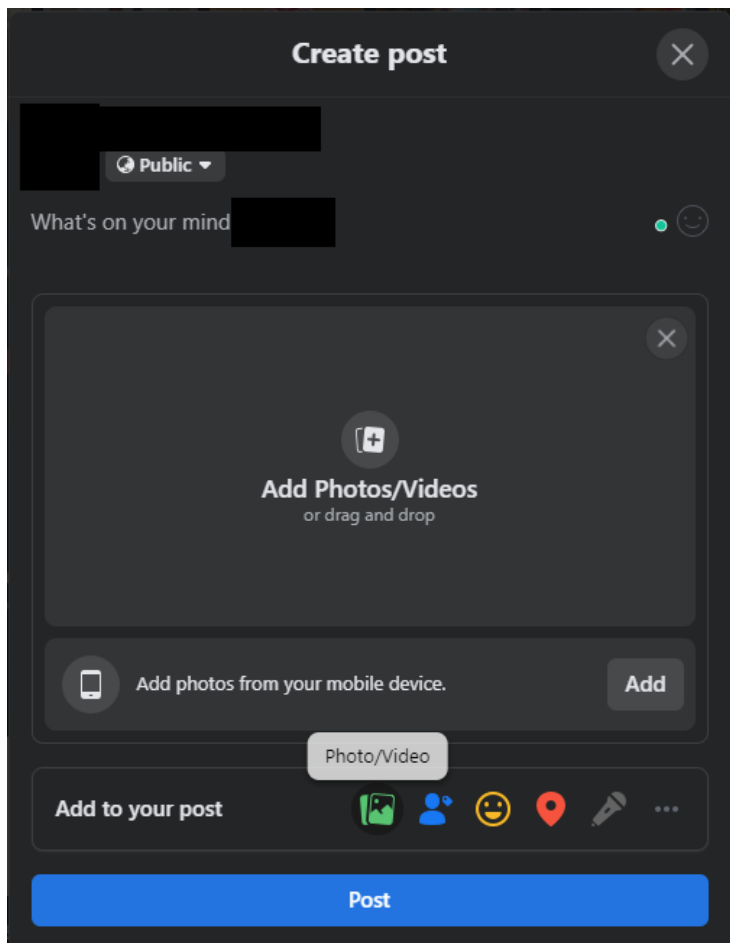
1. Click on the **Layout Options** icon and select **In Line with Text**.



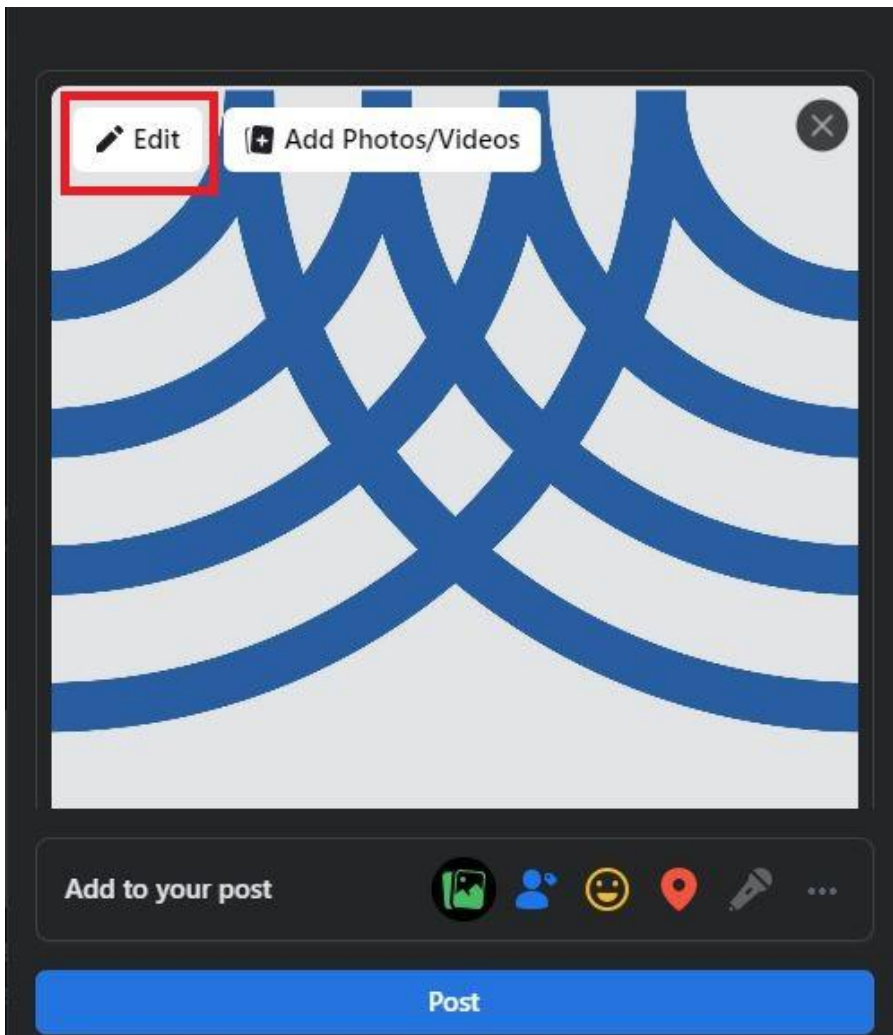
2. Adding alt text in Facebook (Desktop)

2.1 How to add alt text for a photo in Facebook (Desktop environment)

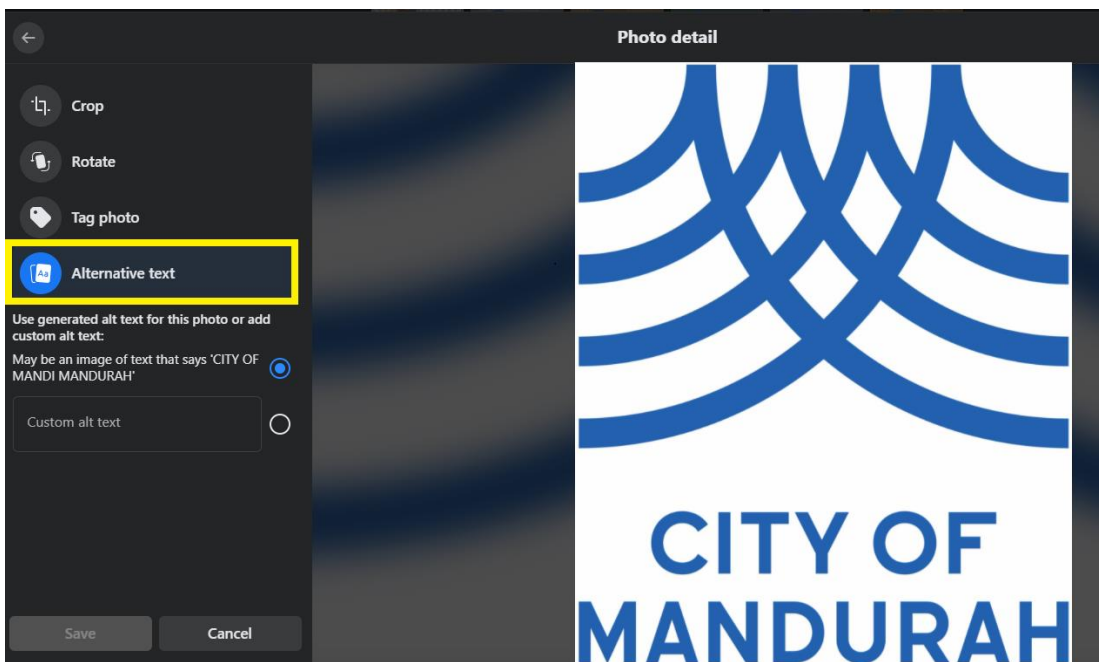
1. Select **Photo/Video** at the bottom of the **Create post** dialogue box -> **Upload your photo**.



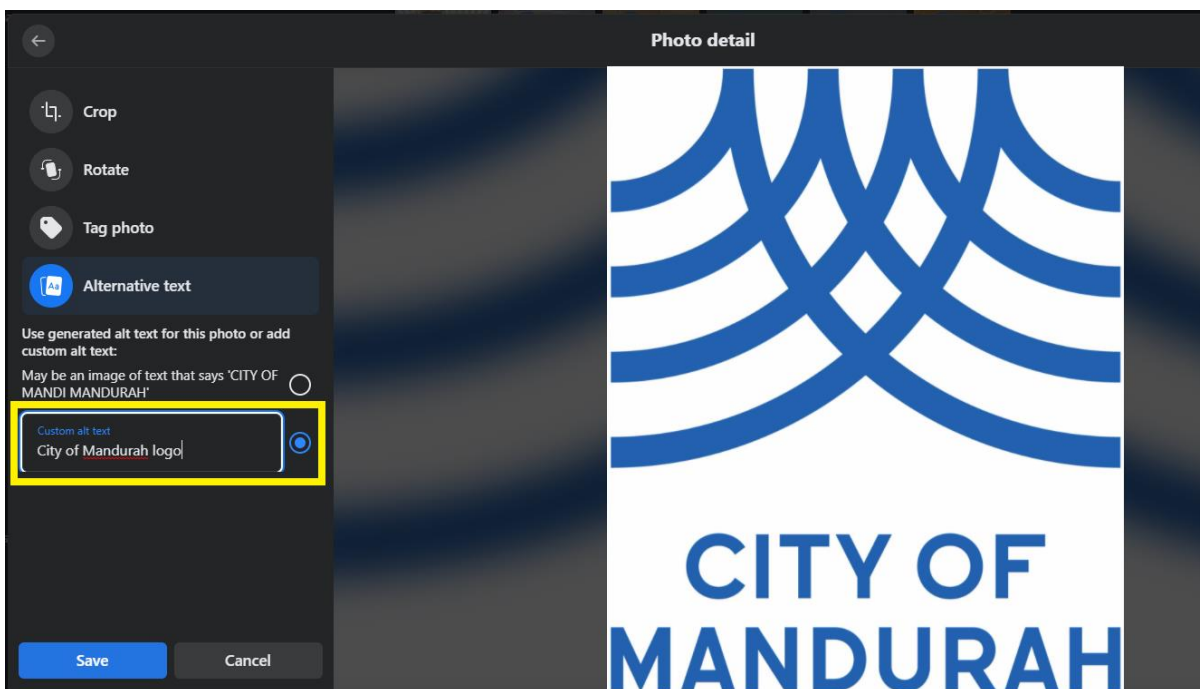
2. Click on **Edit** button (pencil icon)



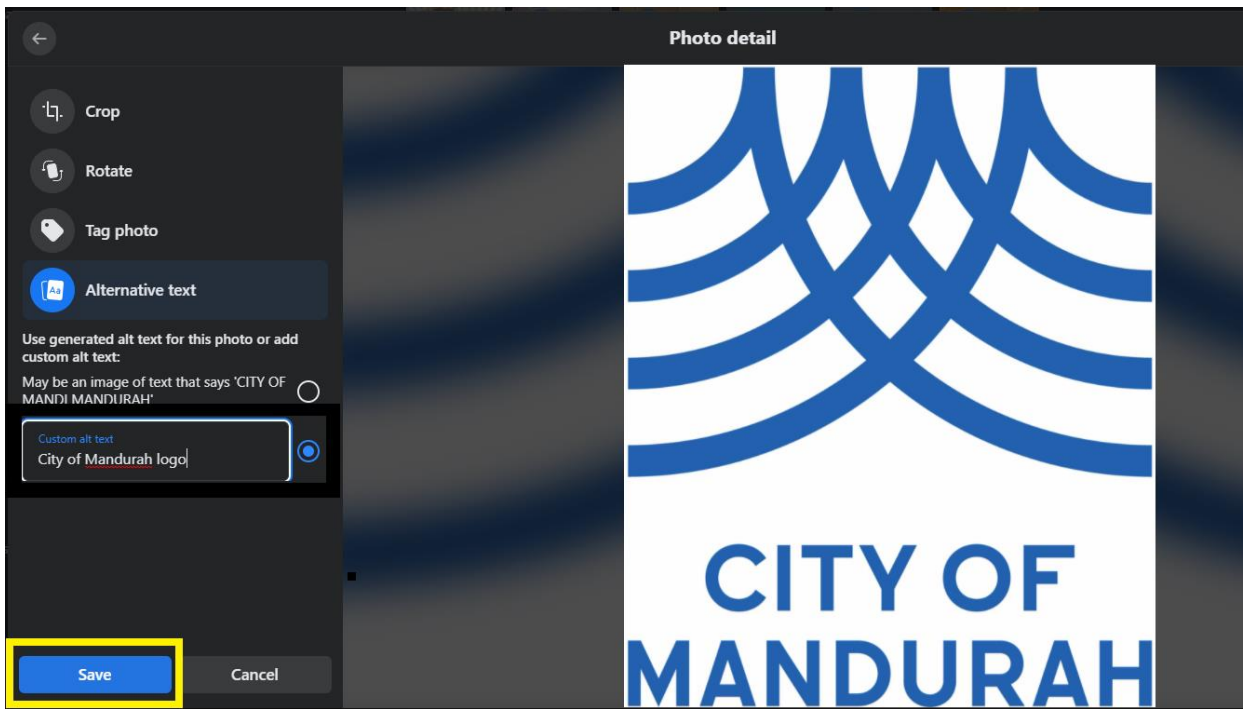
3. Select **Alternative text** on the left side of the screen.



4. Under **Use generated Alt Text for this photo or add custom alt text** -> Select the second option which is highlighted in yellow called "**Custom alt text**" and write your alt text.



5. Click the **Save** button in the bottom right of the screen.

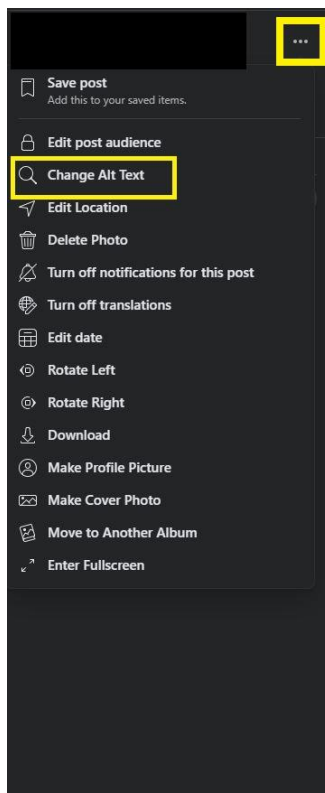


2.2 How to add or change alt text for a photo after you have posted it on Facebook (Desktop)?

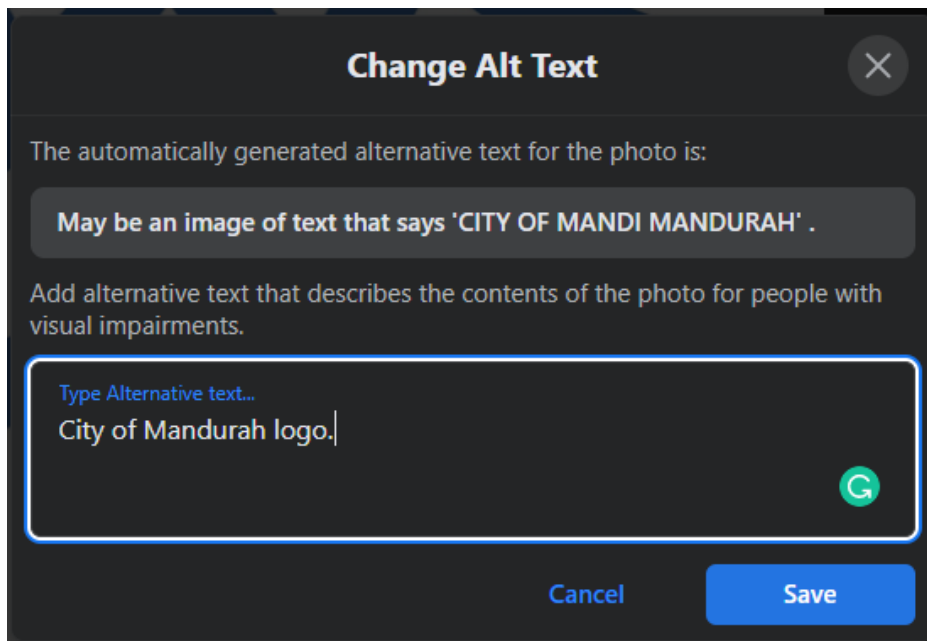
1. Click on the photo to open the post.



2. Select the horizontal ellipsis (three dots) on the top right -> select **Change Alt Text**



3. Write your Alt Text in the “Type Alternative text...” box and click the **Save** button



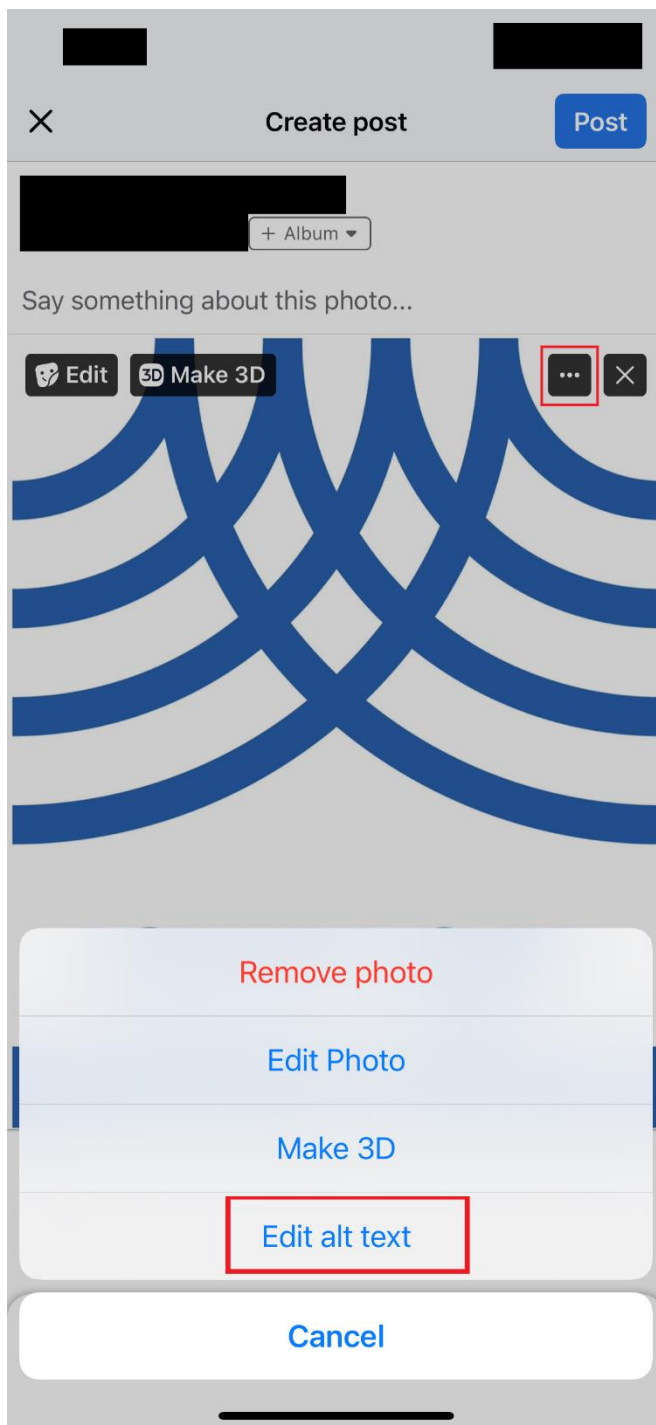
3. Adding alt text in Facebook (Mobile device)

3.1 How to add alt text for a photo using the Facebook app from a mobile device?

1. Upload a photo from your phone.
2. Select the horizontal ellipsis (three dots) in the top right




3. Select Edit alt text



4. Write your alt text in the text edit box and press **Done** button

✕ **Change alt text**



**CITY OF
MANDURAH**

Add alternative text that describes the contents of the photo for people with visual impairments.

City of Mandurah logo.

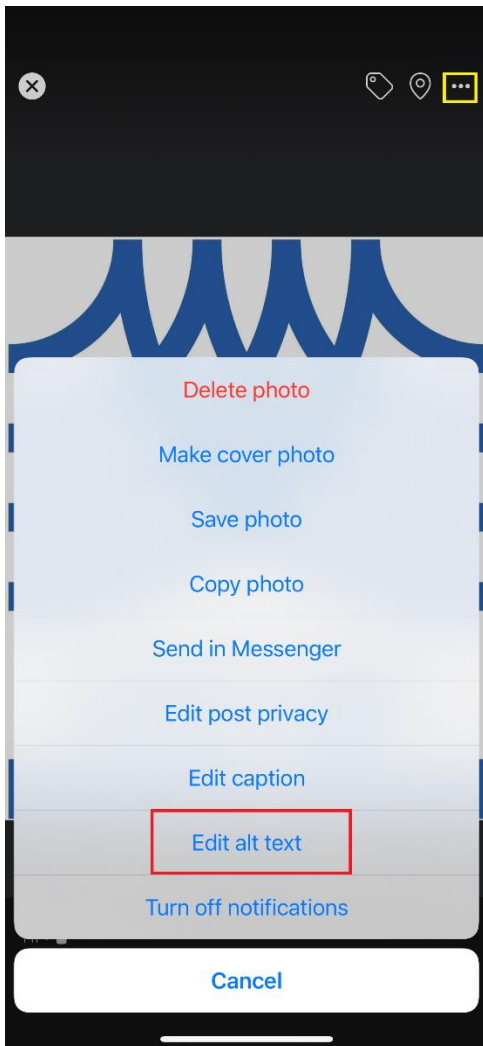
Done

3.2 How to add or change alt text for a photo after you have posted it on Facebook (Mobile)?

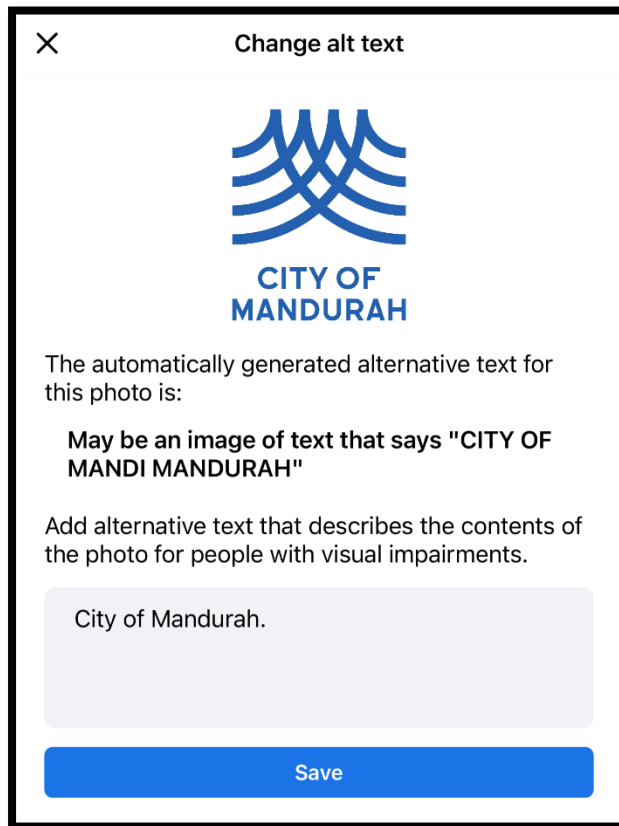
1. Tap on the photo to open the post.



2. Tap the **horizontal ellipsis (three dots)** on the top right -> **Edit alt text**



3. Write your alt text in the box underneath the text “Add alternative text that described the contents of the photo for the people with visual impairments”

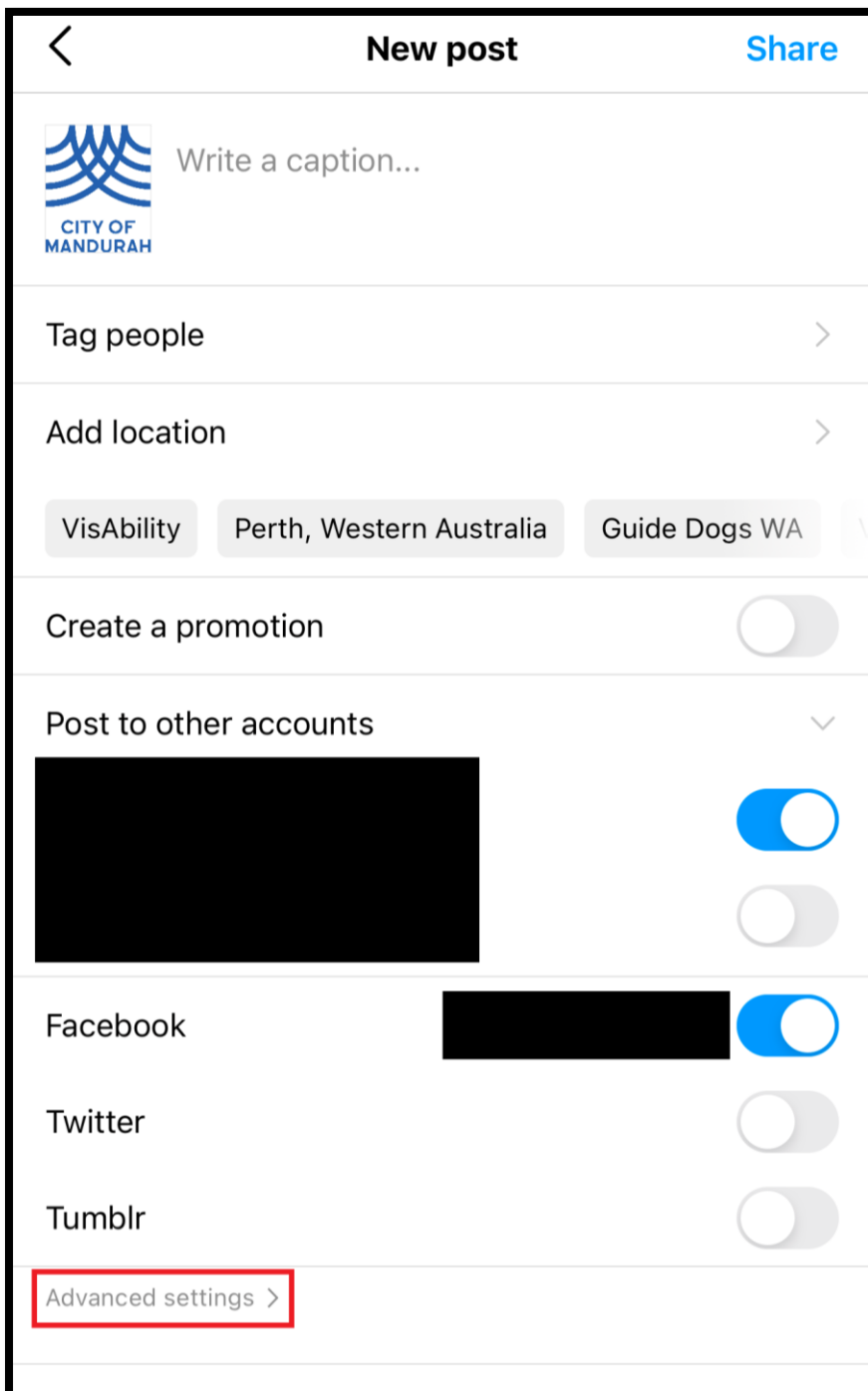


Please Note: Do not rely on the automatic alternative text that is generated by Facebook as it is not always accurate. Always check and add your own alt text.

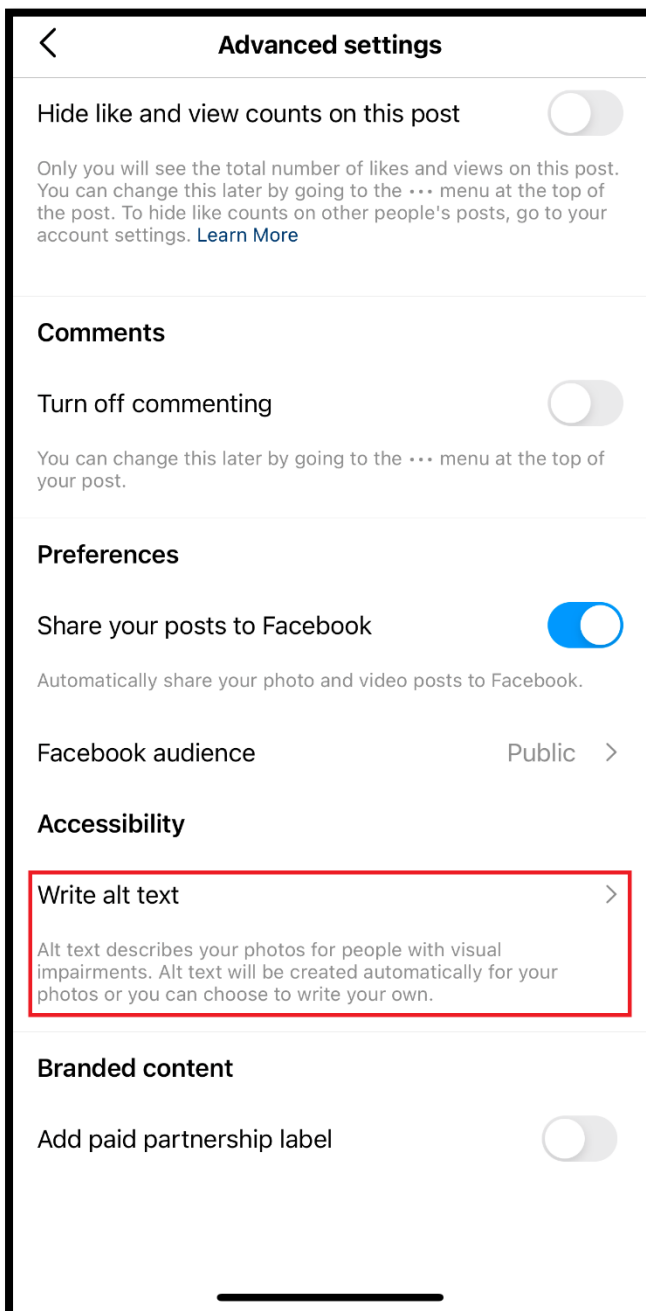
4. Adding alt text on Instagram

4.1 How to add alt text for a photo using the Instagram app from a mobile device?

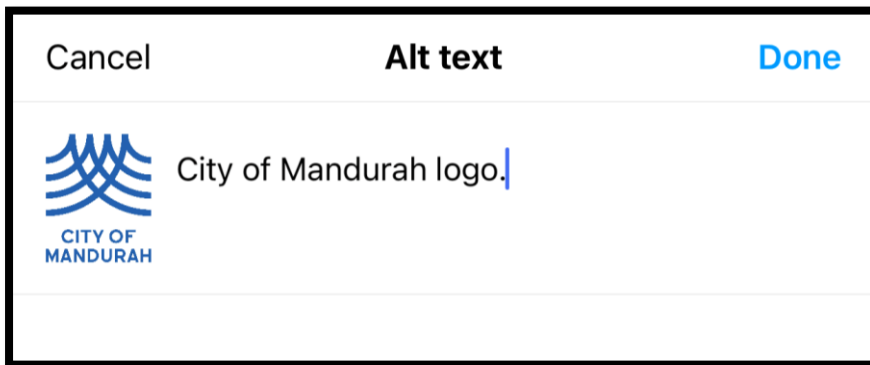
1. Upload a photo from your mobile phone.
2. Select **Advanced Settings** at the bottom of the screen.



3. Select **Write alt text** in the Advanced settings page.



5. Write your alt text in the text box.

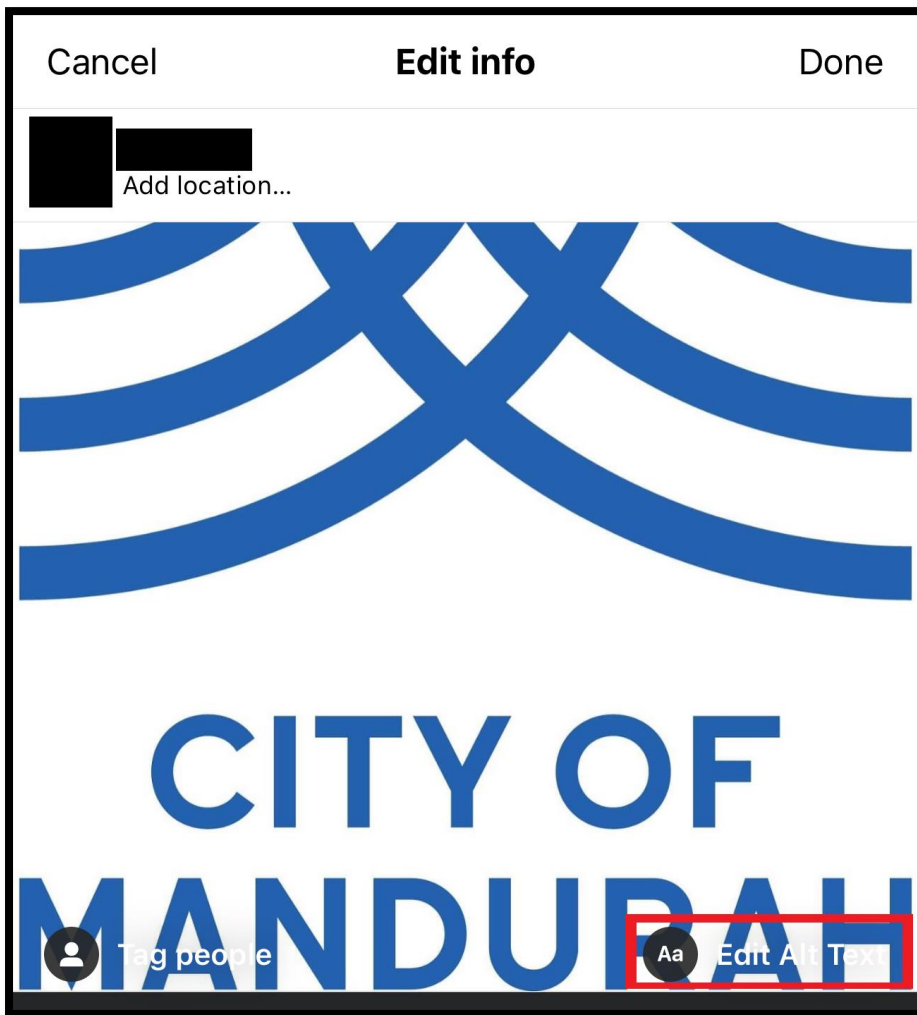


4.2 How to add or change alt text for a photo after you have posted it on Instagram (Mobile)?

1. Tap on the photo to open the post -> select the **horizontal ellipsis (three dots)** on



2. Select **Edit Alt Text** on the bottom right of the photo.



3. Write your alt text in the text box.

Cancel	Alt text	Done
<p>Alt text describes your photos for people with visual impairments.</p>		
<p>City of Mandurah logo.</p>		

5. Image description

You can also repeat the alt text descriptions as an image description at the bottom of a social media post. This is optional. However, to meet accessibility standards, you are required to always add alt text for your photos. Please see the example below:

[Image description: Coastal landscape showing the ocean, beach, cloudy sky, plants and a bicycle trail on a fine day. Two cyclists ride single file along the trail.]



6. Accessible videos

Creating accessible videos falls under a different set of accessibility guidelines. Accessible video requirements are to create captions, Audio description (AD) for visual elements and a transcript file that captures the dialogue, sound effects and AD.

For more information refer to the following link for guidance: [Making Audio and Video Media Accessible: W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#)



City of Mandurah
PO Box 210, Mandurah WA 6210
council@mandurah.wa.gov.au
mandurah.wa.gov.au
9550 3777

If you need help to speak or listen on the phone you can
use the National Relay Service on 1300 555 727.
For more information visit: relayservice.gov.au

This information is available in alternative formats on request