

# Social media

A guide to writing for social media.

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Our posts on social media should use [plain English](#). This guide has been created to improve writing for social media.

All social media posts must be self-contained and read correctly out of the context of the release or bulletin. This includes text and images shared on all social media accounts.

We publish three main types of content on social media:

- **Headline** – this should include the subject, number and a link.  
<https://twitter.com/ONS/status/686842653485445120>
- **Nuggets** – this is posting a fact or interesting point without asking a question.  
<http://twitter.com/ONS/status/685069899501309952>
- **Hook** – this is sharing information relating to issues of public interest.  
<https://twitter.com/ONS/status/679271352281538561>

We have various followers on social media ([have you seen our user personas?](#)) so we often share content we think a specific group of people would be interested in. Regardless of the targeted audience, all content should be easily understood by everyone. This means we use plain English and write content as simply as possible so that our content is usable and accessible. Anyone should be able to understand our content; this isn't "dumbing down", this is opening up information to all. The [reading age](#) tools in Microsoft Word may help when drafting content for social media.

## Personality

Our personality as an organisation is an expression of how we behave and what we believe, so:

- be friendly and use warm and welcoming language

- be helpful, respectful and give good advice
- always be honest and only share information that is reliable, we are a source that you can trust
- use the active voice (“John did this”), not the passive voice (“this was done”); a passive voice can sound defensive
- address the user and refer to them as “you” where appropriate so they feel we’re talking to them personally
- refer to ourselves as “we” and “us”

## Variations from Style.ONS for social media

- **Ages in years:** When a tweet needs to be shortened, use the abbreviation “yrs” for “years”
- **Age ranges:** Use a hyphen, such as “10-12 yrs”
- **Ages:** Use the plus sign (+) when characters are limited on social media, such as “aged 12 and over” as “ages 12+”
- **Fractions:** Show these as a number over a number (one-quarter can be 1/4)
- **Writing numbers:** Use numerals such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc
- **Abbreviations and acronyms:** Avoid these as social media content should be self-contained and informative to everyone
- **Ampersand:** Use these to replace the word “and” but only when characters are limited

## Top tips for writing a Tweet or social media post

When writing a Tweet or social media post:

- have a point and get to it
- write self-contained short copy
- cut out the puns/acronyms/jargon
- include strong links/hashtags
- frontload with the most important information
- have a call to action

All charts and graphs should have a title and source. See the [chart guidance](#) for more information.

## Colour

Please see the [colour guide](#) when choosing colours.

All colours used should meet the [WCAG 2.0 accessibility guidelines](#) and have a colour contrast ratio of 4.5: 1. This

ensures that the background colour and foreground colour of graphs and text is a high enough contrast to meet the [AA standard](#).

- Ages in years: When a tweet needs to be shortened, the abbreviation “yrs” for “years” may be used
- Age ranges: Use a hyphen such as “10-12 yrs”
- Ages: Use the plus sign (+) when characters are limited on social media, such as “aged 12 and over” as “ages 12+”

Show fractions as a number over a number on social media, so one-quarter can be 1/4.

Use numerals such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc.

Avoid abbreviations and acronyms as social media content should be self-contained and informative to everyone. However, when a tweet needs to be shortened, the abbreviation “yrs” for “years” may be used.

Use these to replace the word “and” but only when characters are limited.