

Best Practices for Describing Images

What Is alternative (alt) text?

Alternative Text or **Alt text** is a text replacement for an image and is used to explain what the image is and what the image is trying to convey to the user. It requires adding the `alt` attribute to an image (`img`) element.

Syntax: ``

Why do I need alt text?

The primary purpose of alt text is to allow screen reader users, such as individuals with cognitive or visual disabilities, to obtain a text interpretation of the image that allows them to understand the importance of an image. Alt text can also be beneficial for all users in that it can serve as an image replacement if the image is not visible on the page.

How do you know if an image needs alt text?

An image requires alt text if it conveys important information. The following do not need alt text:

- Images that serve for **decoration only**.
- Images that have a **caption** do not need alt text.
- Images with the **text description within the content of the page** do not require alt text.

NOTE: For images that do not need alt text it is recommended that the alt text attribute be null (`Alt=""`). This will ensure that accessibility-testing applications do not signal an error if alt text is not included in these images.

How do I add alt text?

Web-One allows you to include alt text through multiple means! Review the [Web-One training](#) website to learn how.

How do I write great alt text?

Writing great alt text takes time and practice. There is no one way to do it. Nonetheless, there are tips to follow to write good alt text:

- **Be precise:** alt text should accurately present the same content and function as is presented in the image.
- **Be brief:** alt text of an image should be short and to the point. Listening to long alt text can be burdensome for assistive technology users.
- **DO NOT repeat information:** alt text should not provide the exact same information as the text within the context of the image. Moreover, the same alt text should not be used in different images.



- **DO NOT use the phrases "image of ..." or "graphic of ..." to describe the image:** Typically, assistive technologies will announce to a user the presence of an image. Therefore, including phrases such as "image of..." or "graph of..." causes unnecessary redundancy for users.

My image has alt text. Do I need to change anything?

Try asking yourself these simple questions so you can decide if the alt text is appropriate.

- Is the alt text describing what is in the image?
- Is the alt text too simple? Is it too generic? Typically, you want your alt text to be between 8 – 80 characters long.
- Is the alt text too long?
- Does the alt text provide repetitious information?
- Is the image meaningful? Should it have alt text or should it be null (`Alt=""`)?

Resources:

- [UDC Web Accessibility Criteria- Images](#)
- [WebAIM: Alternative Text](#)
- [HTML img Alt Attribute- W3Schools](#)
- [Writing effective Alt Text](#)