

Alternative Text





What is alternative (alt) text?

- a textual alternative to non-text content in web pages and documents
 - Makes images and graphics “visible”
- read by screen readers in place of images allowing the content and function of the image to be accessible to those with visual or certain cognitive disabilities
- provides a semantic meaning and description to images which can be read by search engines



Guiding questions

- Does the alternative text for informative images provide the same information as the image?

- Does the alternative text for actionable images, such as an image link, button, or image map area, clearly identify the link destination or button purpose?



More guiding questions

- Are complex images or infographics explained fully in the page content and with a short alternative text description?
- Are decorative images identified as not requiring alternative text?
- Is plain text used instead of text embedded in images? (exceptions like text in logos and decorative text images exist)

Pro tip

No need to write “image of...” when describing an image. A screenreader will already announce “image of...” It is fine to say “Screenshot of,” when appropriate!



Images

WHAT WE SEE



WHAT SEARCH ENGINES SEE

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ALT TEXT ENSURES THAT SEARCH ENGINES CAN “SEE” IMAGES.

- Informative images MUST have brief, meaningful alt text describing the purpose of the image
- Actionable images MUST have brief, meaningful alt text describing the destination or result of the action
- Recommended: ~160 characters or less



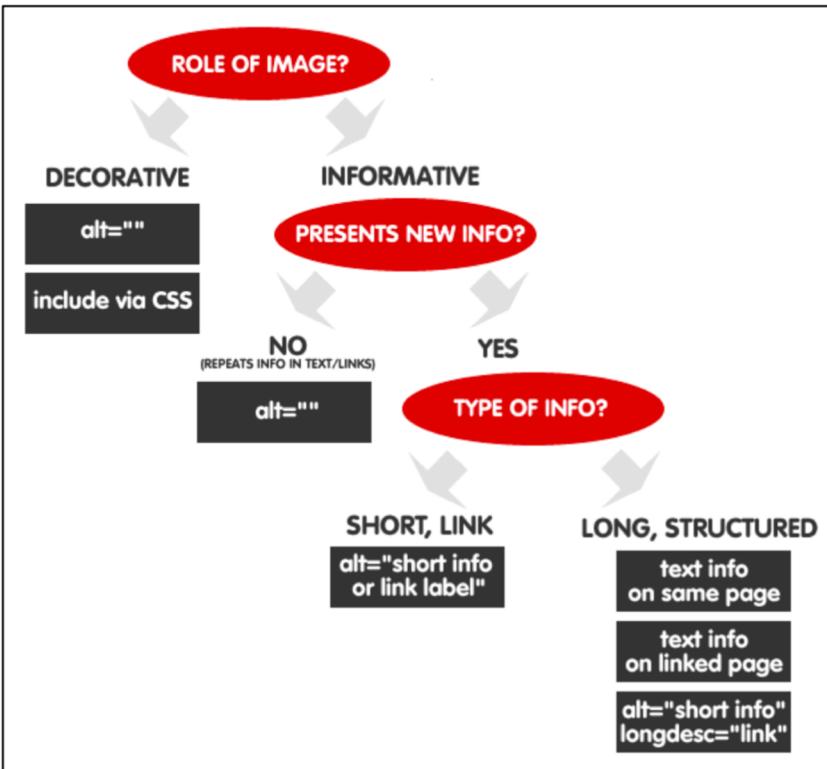
Complex Images



- Complex images **must** be given extended text descriptions
- Images **must not** be used to convey text, (except in logos and other essential situations)
- Non-informative, decorative or redundant images **must** be marked as decorative



Accessible image decision tree



Helps write better text alternatives for images.
Ask yourself three key questions:

1. What is the role of the image? Is it decorative or informative?
 - o If decorative, no alt text needed
2. If informative, does the image present new information?
 - o If no, no alt text needed
3. If yes, what type of information is presented in the image?
 - o If short, provide short information in the alt text field
 - o If long, provide short alt text and a long description in the text of the page

Good alt text



[Img Desc: MJ and Carmen smile for a picture with the sun shining on their faces. Both are wearing sunglasses. MJ is on the left, wearing a royal blue shirt, with blonde hair. Carmen is on the right with a mauve colored shirt with brown buttons and brown hair pulled back in a ponytail. Both are smiling and soaking in the beginning of spring sunshine.]

No alt text - denoted by red bar



Note: An [alt text Google Chrome extension](#) was used to view possible alt text on social media posts, such as this tweet.

Questions?

Email us: accessibility@wayne.edu

Visit us: accessibility.wayne.edu

