

A picture is worth more than a thousand words, as the old adage goes. Images help bring texts to life, they complement complex explanations and often lead to greater understanding and better web experiences. For many people they help make things easier to understand. However, not everyone can see images and therefore a text alternative is needed so that everyone has access to the information conveyed in the image.

## Text Alternatives

The text alternative for an image depends upon its purpose. Is the image purely decorative? Does it help to describe or explain the text? Or does it serve a functional role like an icon pointing to the homepage?

In HTML the text alternative is added to the image element which takes an alt attribute. The alt attribute should be present on every img element. If the image is an svg it must be given the role of image and a title to make it accessible.

The alternative text can be read out by screen readers or converted into braille for refreshable braille displays. Without it, screen reader users may hear the whole image url instead, which can often be a string of incomprehensible letters and numbers.

EXAMPLE CODE - img tag and svg tag

## Decorative Images

Decorative images usually add no extra information to a page and a person's understanding is not hindered if the images are not visible. Background patterns and shapes are often decorative. Icons are also sometimes decorative if they are combined with a link and the link text describes the icon. Decorative images should have an empty alt attribute

EXAMPLE IMAGES

EXAMPLE CODE

## Informative Images

Informative images compliment written information by illustrating concepts and examples visually. An image of a cake alongside a recipe, a diagram visualising an instruction and a telephone icon preceding a phone number are all examples of informative images. These should have a short and succinct text alternative.

EXAMPLES

### Complex Informative Images

Some informative images such as graphs can convey a lot of complex information. In such cases the text alternative needs to convey the same information which can be difficult to do in a short and succinct alt attribute. In this case the text alternative is split into two parts. The alt attribute should summarise the image and also explain where a longer form text explanation can be found. The longer text can be found on the same page or as a link to a separate page.

The longer text should convey the same complex information as the image. In the case of graphs the data should be explained along with any trends or relationships. Avoid using colour as the only way of explaining the information as not everyone perceives colour in the same way.

#### EXAMPLE

More info on graph page (eventually)

## Functional Images

If images are used as part of a link or button they are usually there to perform a function. Examples include using a magnifying glass to signify a search field, a floppy disk icon as a save button or a logo as a link back to the home page. The text alternative should match the action performed by the link or button.

#### EXAMPLES

### Images of text

Wherever possible, images of text should be avoided as the text can't be enlarged in the same way as text in HTML. However, if you must have an image of text then the alt text should match the text in the image.

#### EXAMPLE

### Image maps

An image map is a larger image with clickable hotspots, each of which open a different section. An example could be a floor plan of a local building which opens up an enlarged map of each room when clicked. The hotspots are made with the area element and each area element should have its own alt attribute. The overall image should also have an alt attribute.

#### EXAMPLE

How to write good alternative text - **WRITE ME**

### Images and colour

Colour should not be the only way to represent meaning in an image because not everyone perceives colour in the same way. If it is used in graphs, charts and diagrams then there should also be another way to tell the colours apart, such as different patterns or symbols

\*Add something about how screen readers announce the alt text. No need to include 'Image of...' etc. - This might be good as a video.

May or may not include this section, hmm

Dos:

Always include an alt attribute on img tags, even if the attribute is empty

Don'ts:

Rely solely on colour in your text alternative

WCAG criteria concerning images:

Extra resources:

Alt decision tree <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/decision-tree/>