Author Guide to Writing Alt Text

Contents

What is Alt Text? 1

Benefits of Authors Supplying Alt Text 1

How to Write Alt Text 2

Submitting Alt Text 4

Example Alt Text Submission 5

Alt Text Examples 5

What is Alt Text?

Images and other visuals added to eBooks, Journals and websites not only have permissions considerations, but assistive considerations as well. Alt Text (alternative text) is a short piece of text that can be attached to a digital figure or image to convey to readers the nature or contents of the image. It is typically used by programs such as audio screen readers to make the digital object accessible to people that cannot read or see the item, though it has other purposes too. Alt Text essentially provides a text alternative for any non-text content so that it can be changed into other forms people may need, such as speech, large print, braille, symbols or simpler language.

However, it is important to remember that Alt Text should not contain any additional information that a sighted person (a customer not using a screen-reader) would miss.

Benefits of Authors Supplying Alt Text

A digital “accessible” text is one that provides equal opportunity to all readers, including those with visual or print impairments. The Taylor & Francis Group is committed to the supply of accessible content, ensuring as many readers as possible have access to the books, journals and websites we publish.

We recognize that many of our authors and editors would like to maintain control of the content within the titles and ancillary materials we publish. To accomplish the goal of creating equal access to all materials, Taylor & Francis may seek to outsource the writing of Alt Text descriptions where it is not supplied with a final manuscript. The Alt Text authors outsourced by Taylor & Francis will be Subject Matter Experts (SME) within their fields.

However, Taylor & Francis offers the opportunity for authors to write and submit their own Alt Text, therefore maintaining control of the content and context used within their publications.

The benefits to author submission of Alt Text include:

- Greater control of the text used within the publication to describe visual or graphical items, over the writing of a Subject Matter Expert.
- Immediate production of an accessible title, which visually impaired readers can easily access.
- Increased confidence in textbook adoptions, as more universities and professors require titles to be accessible before confirming them on courses.
- Compliance for all United States government-funded works, as the US requires all funded publications to be immediately accessible.
- Participation in the new accessibility requirements facing all publishers and authors, to support our fellow humans and ensure equal access to all works.
- Gratitude from the publisher for the author's help in enhancing publications to an accessible standard. Taylor & Francis will be happy to write letters of support and thanks for all authors who submit full Alt Text for their titles, to be used for tenure applications, promotions, etc.

How to Write Alt Text

Alternative text is rarely a rote description of the image, instead it should convey the content and functionality of an image.

Alt Text is not the same as a caption, which typically provides information that is not already in the visual element itself. For example, a photo caption might say "A photo of a dog." The caption doesn't tell you what the dog is doing or in what context the photo of the dog exists in relation to the text. Successful Alt Text descriptions describe key elements in a way that is comparable to a non-impaired user's understanding when viewing the visual element itself. Unsuccessful Alt Text describes images in a way that is confusing or, even if clear, does not convey the educational goal of the content.

Alt Text for a visual element can vary depending on how it is used. For example, the same image of New York City may be used within an architecture book and a book on photography. In the first case, the Alt Text may describe the construction elements and design of a skyscraper. In the latter, the Alt Text may discuss the angle of the sun reflecting off windows or the people walking by, or even what makes the photo "good" or "bad" from a photographer's standpoint.

Ask yourself:

- Why is this visual element here?
- What information does it present?
- What is its purpose?
- If the image were removed, how would I describe it to convey the same information and/or purpose?

Alt Text should be as objective as possible, and the following rules should help guide you to writing good Alt Text which will make sense to a reader:

- Solely decorative images, such as chapter opening icons or place holder images in templates, do not require Alt Text. These will be flagged as decorative in eBooks so assistive devices skip over them.
- Be concise. Using a screen reader is time-consuming, and unnecessarily long descriptions can create a burden on the user. Generally, Alt Text should be no more than one or two sentences, though technical or highly detailed images might be slightly longer. A general rule is alternative text should not exceed 100 words.
- Images which require more substantial alternative text should use a Long Description. Long descriptions are in-depth descriptions of an images beyond the Alt Text, the image caption, and any description in the body text. Long descriptions should be rare, but some STEM titles may require them.
- Make descriptions clear and easy to read. Information should be presented in a logical and consistent order.
- When writing text alternatives with data, focus on the data that's included in the visual element.
- Read the surrounding text to ensure that your Alt Text doesn't repeat anything unnecessarily, from the main text or caption.
- Avoid any description of extraneous elements or information that's not pertinent to understanding the concept of the visual.
- Do not use the phrases "image of ..." or "graphic of ..." to describe the visual element as this will already have been made apparent to the reader via their screenreader.

- Whenever possible, provide clearly formatted text, lists, and tables to clearly organize complicated information or data. This is particularly important with STEM topics.
- Start your description with a brief, general summary (e.g.: a cartoon of a frog) followed by an extended description and any pertinent data.
- Use the same level of language that is used within the main body of text.
- Avoid using text in images as the sole method of conveying important information. If you must use an image with text in it, repeat that text in the presentation or in the main body of text. In the alternative text, briefly describe the image and mention the existence of the text and its intent.

Submitting Alt Text

Please submit all Alt Text descriptions within your manuscript, labelled as [Alt Text] next to the image callouts or figure captions. Alt Text must be included with the final submission of the manuscript to your Editorial contact.

It is discouraged, but if the Alt Text will be delivered later, please notify your Editorial contact, who will ensure the Production and eBook Conversion teams are aware. The Alt Text can be implemented at a later date, but it is more cost-effective, efficient and customer-aware to include this during the initial production. There is no guarantee that Alt Text which is delivered late will undergo the same treatment as on time Alt Text, in

terms of copyediting. Simultaneous inclusion of Alt Text at the production stage also ensures the title will publish fully accessible, with no delays to readers.

Images should be named with a short description or image number. For example: *Figure1.eps* or *NewYorkCity.jpg*. The image title/filename will need to match the supplied Alt Text in the template.

Example Alt Text Submission

Cu eum malis erant facilisis, te sumo qualisque has. Vitae gubergren ei duo. Sea in minimum democritum, eos cu erant quidam. Ei vel quot utroque principes, ne congue ponderum consequat pro. Ne mei offendit percipit molestiae.

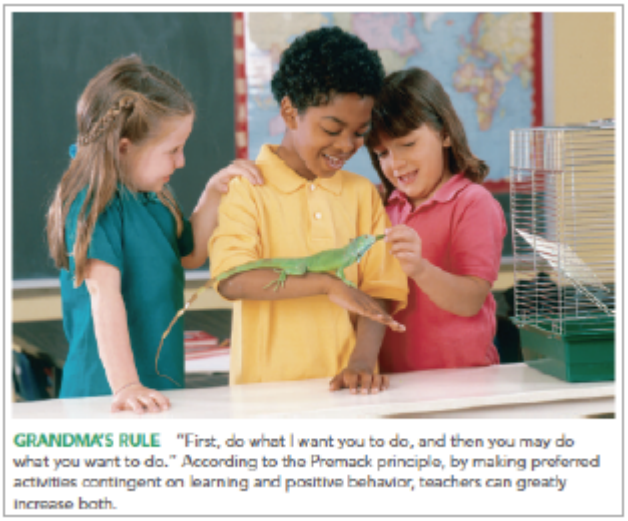
[insert dinosaur1.jpg]

[Alt Text: A large long-necked dinosaur eats leaves from the top of a tall tree.]

Eros iuvaret consequuntur ut vim. Perpetua hendrerit vim ex, aperiri repudiandae his te, consectetuer consequuntur ad mel. Mel ei fugit expetendis, mel erat verterem convenire ex. Qui soluta meliore liberavisse te, novum iriure principes mea ne.

Alt Text Examples

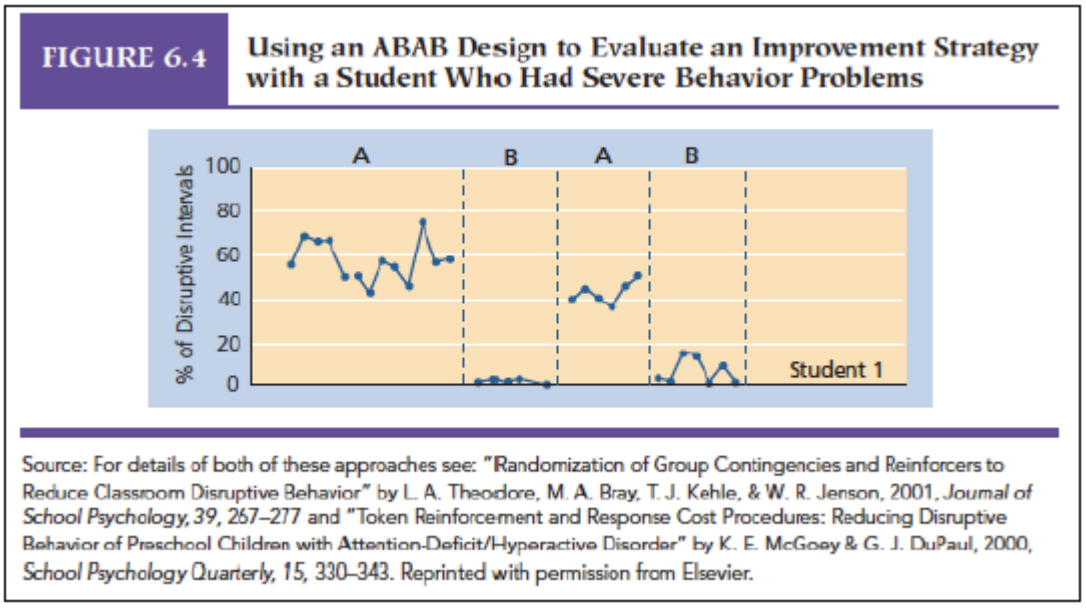
Example 1:



GRANDMA'S RULE "First, do what I want you to do, and then you may do what you want to do." According to the Premack principle, by making preferred activities contingent on learning and positive behavior, teachers can greatly increase both.

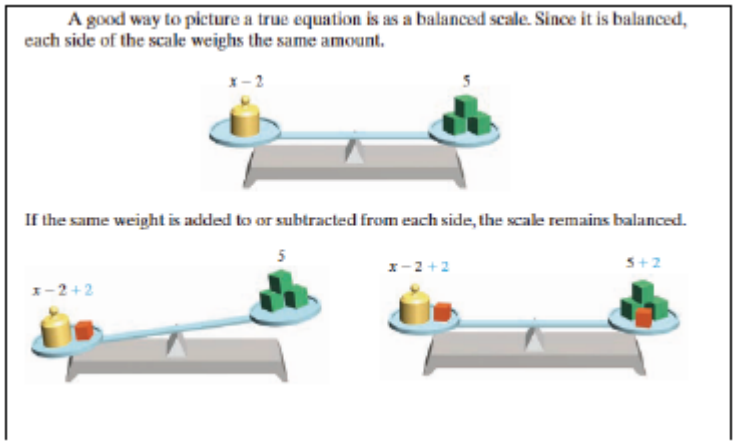
Short ALT Text for photo, p. 208 [22 words]:
Three smiling young children in a classroom, with an iguana perched on one child's forearm as another child feeds it.

Example 2:



Short ALT Text for Figure 6.4, p. 217 [29 words]:
A four section ABAB line graph plotting the percentage of disruptive intervals of a student with behavioural problems. Significantly more instances occur in the A sections.

Example 3:



Short ALT Text for illustration, page 82 [26 words]:
Three balance scales, with different combinations of weights represented by numerical equations, shows the effects of adding or subtracting weights from each side.

Long ALT Text for illustration, page 82 [154 words]:
Three separate balance scales, with different combinations of three types of weights: gold cylinders, green cubes, and red cubes. An equation is shown over each side of each scale.

The first scale shows a gold cylinder labelled x – 2 on the left side, and three green cubes labelled with the number 5 on the right side. The scale is shown equally balanced.

The second scale shows a gold cylinder and a red cube labelled x – 2 + 2 on the left side, and three green cubes labelled with the number 5 on the right side. The scale is shown unbalanced, with the cylinder and red cube side in a lower position.

The third scale shows a gold cylinder and a red cube labelled x – 2 + 2 on the left side, and three green cubes and one red cube labelled 5 + 2 on the right side. The scale is shown equally balanced.

Example 4:



Short ALT Text for Cartoon [71 words]:
A three-panel cartoon strip shows two adolescent boys walking with books in their arms. One boy says, “It’s funny, but girls are a lot more interesting this year than they were last year.” The other boy responds, “They’re more interesting to me too.” After a panel shows the two boys walking a bit more in silence, in the final panel the first boy says, “I wonder what they did to themselves.”