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Alt-text Review: Do's and Don'ts

This page is meant as a quick review of some of the top Do's and Don't's of writing image descriptions for Alt-text. It is by no means an exhaustive list, if in doubt of anything ask on the Alt-text Q&A!

> Remember to review the General Guidelines for a deeper dive on and overview how to describe images. Please make sure to review the pages on the wiki that pertain to the image type you are describing.

Let's start with the Don't's:

- Don't leave the filename in the alt-text. May seem obvious, but it is more common than you may realize. No one wants to hear img_66tgse34fa.jpg
- don't start each description by saying "An image/picture of…". The screen reader will have already indicated that this is an image. Note that if it is something unique, like a map or a child's drawing, that is fine to use as an introduction. But, if it's a photo in a book with many photos, you don't need to repeat that information.
- don't censor: All readers deserve access to the same information.
- don't include any paragraph breaks or styling in your alt-text. Alt-text can only be a string of text and punctuation. If you need more, you will need to create a long description.
- don't rely on Word's automatically generated image descriptions. AI is getting better, but it is FAR from reliable. I would recommend uploading some images into a Word doc and seeing what the AI comes up with, sometimes the results are very entertaining!

Now let's cover the do's:

- Do work from general to specific – this is the best way to start.
- Do be clear and concise.
- Do be objective. The reader should have the freedom for their own interpretation given all the necessary details.
- Do state the type of image if it is unusual or out of context. We mentioned this before in the don'ts, but just wanted to reiterate!
- Do pay attention to the context of the image. Is it well-described within the text? Then the alt-text can be simple. I say it often, and I will say it again: Context is key!
- Do review and edit your alt-text. Ask for help, or use Thorium to hear a screen reader read your text.

> Go to Writing Tip: Using Point Form Technique for a breakdown on how you can start the writing process

> If you have any questions, post your question on the Alt-Text Q&A

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Last update: **2024/05/09 05:04**