

Alternate and Descriptive Text for Images and Figures

Alternative text for images, charts, graphs, and tables is vital to ensuring access to "non-text" elements of a Word document.

The text alternative for a simple image should be limited to no more than 120 characters as a rule of thumb, while the alternative text for graphs, tables, and complex images (such as detailed maps and diagrams) should give a brief summary of the included information and follow with contextual description in the body text around or under the complex graphic. If the body of the document already contains a sufficiently detailed description, the alternative text can simply identify the image so that the reader knows when it is being referred to. There are no hard and fast rules for determining what alternative text should say (it depends on the image, its context, the intent of the author, etc.), one simple trick is to imagine describing the image to someone over the phone. The more important an image's content is, the more descriptive the alternative text should be. If images are purely decorative and contain no informative content, they do not require a description.

Windows –

- Right-click on the image and select Format Picture. A dialog box will appear. (Detailed in video.)
- Select the Alt Text option in the sidebar. Enter appropriate alternative text to the Description field, not the Title field.

Mac 2011 -

- Right-click (or control + click) on the image and select Format Picture. A dialog box will appear.
- Select the Alt Text option in the sidebar. Enter appropriate alternative text to the Description field, not the Title field.

