GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE TEXT, OR "ALT-TEXT"

It is important to make your title accessible for all kinds of readers to adhere to legal requirements both in the United States and the European Union. To help those who may be visually impaired better understand and appreciate your work, we require that you provide brief descriptions of your images. Usually called "alt-text," or alternative text, these image descriptions do not have to be long or overly complicated for most images.

These descriptions will not be visible to regular readers of the print or ebook but will be visible to screen readers and other assistive technology that can read the alt-text to the reader. Search engines like Google can read alt-text, too, so adding alt-text to your ebook also helps your book become more discoverable online.

Every image should have an alt-text description included in the Design List. For alt-text purposes, "images" include charts, graphs, musical examples, and any other visual content you may include in your manuscript.

To get started, think about the context of an image. What would a reader need to know about the image if they couldn't see it? What meaning does the image illustrate or add to the text?

For example:

Credit line: Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

A book about George Washington: *The Washington Monument, made from white marble, stands taller than the trees around it.*

A book about Washington D.C.'s cherry blossoms: *The light pink cherry blossoms are in full bloom under the Washington Monument and along the tidal basin.*

Here is a video with additional tips: Write great alternative text - YouTube

Dos and Don'ts of Alt-Text

<u>Do:</u>

- Keep descriptions short and concise (no longer than 150 characters)! If you are working with a more complex image that simply must require further description, you can write a "long description," which can be in addition to the alt-text.
- Focus on the information the image is meant to give to the reader.
- Remember the information provided in the caption and manuscript; don't repeat information!

<u>Don't:</u>

- Include phrases like "Image of," "Drawing of," etc., if it is not relevant to the context (i.e., it may be important to know something is a drawing, not a photo). Screen readers and the people who use them will know it is an image.
- Use AI to generate alt-text, since it will lack context.
- Analyze or interpret the image (that's what your main text is for!)—only describe.

For example:

Credit line: Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

<u>Do</u>: *The light pink cherry blossoms are in full bloom under the Washington Monument and along the tidal basin.*

<u>Don't</u>: *An image of the Washington Monument. The photo shows a happy blue sky with fluffy clouds. Some green trees are in the background. Cherry blossom trees full of light pink blooms go across the middle of the photo, cheering up the landscape. The tidal basin takes up the bottom half of the image.*

Additional Reading or Information

Bristol University Press. (2022, February 23). *What is alt text?* Ask UP. What is alt text? – Ask UP (hcommons.org)

Education and Outreach Working Group. (2022, February 8). *Images tutorial*. W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. Images Tutorial | Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) | W3C

SUNY Press. (n.d.). *Writing effective alt-text.* Author Tool Kit. https://sunypress.edu/content/download/922146/7764578/version/3/file/Writing_effective_alt_text.docx

The University of Chicago. (2024). *The Chicago manual of style* (18th ed.). The University of Chicago Press.