

Alternative Text Checklist

Alternative text (or alt text) conveys information about a book’s visual content to readers using assistive devices. An alt text description should be concise—about 250 characters, not including spaces. Additional information, if needed, can be added to the alt text document and labeled “extended description.” If an image is already fully described in the text or caption, it can be labeled “decorative” in the alt text document.

General:

- Is the alt text less than 250 characters (not including spaces)?
- Is all visible English-language text transcribed in the alt text (if within the 250-character limit) or the extended description?
- Do all images with extended descriptions also have alt text? (An image cannot have only an extended description.)
- Are all images fully described in detail in the text or caption marked “decorative” in the alt text document?
- Are all abbreviations spelled out?
- Is the alt text written in complete sentences with appropriate punctuation?
- If the alt text is written in long, overly complex sentences, consider adjusting to simpler constructions for clarity.

Compare with image/caption:

- Does the alt text accurately describe the image (e.g., color, content) as it will be printed (e.g., in black/white, as a detail)?
- Does the alt text avoid duplicating information already in the caption?
- If the medium (e.g., photograph, painting) is already indicated in the caption or main text, has it been removed from the alt text?
- Does the alt text serve the same function as the image on the page, without providing extra details or information not in the image itself? Alt text should not include new information, analysis, or argumentation.
- Does the alt text reflect how the image is being used (e.g., what main point is it demonstrating?) and focus on the image’s key features?