

Tip Jar for PHSA web & POD editors

In this issue

Adding alt text ensures that everyone can understand your images. Check to see that all of your images have alt text.

What is alt text?

Images and graphics on your webpages can be useful. However, not everyone can see your images.

Alternative text (or alt text) is the text that accompanies non-text content (such as images) on webpages. As a PHSA web or POD editor, you need to add alt text to all of your images to ensure that everyone can understand your images.

Who benefits from alt text?

Accessibility is essential for some of your users and beneficial to everyone. In particular, the following groups benefit from alt text:

- **People with visual impairments who use screen readers:** Screen readers read alt text whenever there is an image. If there is no alt text, users are likely to become confused, especially if the image carries important information.
- **People using speech input software:** Some users with motor or visual impairments use speech input software, which will read the alt text of images.
- **Mobile users:** Images can be turned off or be slow to load. Alt text can display instead.
- **People using Alexa, Siri or Google Assistant:** Virtual assistants will read alt text for images.
- **Anyone using a search engine:** Alt text for images helps search engines understand your page and improves your search result ranking.

How to write good alt text for images

We have step-by-step instructions on [adding alt text to images](#). In short, you can find the field for entering alt text by:

- Opening a page for editing.
- Selecting an image.
- Going to the image tab of the editing ribbon.

How alt text helps people and search engines

Rules for all images

- Don't include "picture of" or "image of." Screen readers automatically announce that it's an image.
- Keep it short. No more than 100 characters.
- Make it descriptive. Convey tone, mood, context, purpose. There is a difference between:
 - Parent and baby
 - Concerned mother holding crying baby at vaccine clinic
- Capitalize the first letter. End sentences with a period.

Rules for different types of images

- **Posters:** Do not use an image file of a poster to display its information. Instead, [add a link](#) to a PDF version of the poster for printing purposes and ensure key information is added to the webpage.
- **Decorative images** have no real meaning. An example is a line that visually breaks up a page. You should add "" in the alt text field so that assistive technology is prompted to skip the image.
- **Functional images** initiate action. An example is an image used as a link. The alt text should describe the action that will take place when a user interacts with the image.
 - Bad alt text for functional image: Facebook logo
 - Good alt text for functional image: Go to our Facebook page
- **Graphs, diagrams and infographics** should have a summary in their alt text. Provide a full-text equivalent of the data also.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email webhelp@phsa.ca.

Your action this month

Check that all your images have short, descriptive alt text.

Created by the Web Strategy Team (PHSA Communications)

No longer a POD or web editor? Questions or comments? Please email webhelp@phsa.ca

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