

## **Alt-Text Advice**

### **What to consider when writing it**

**This document contains the personal opinions of blind people regarding the writing of alt-text descriptions for digital images. It must be remembered that every person is different and so this document is not, nor does it pretend to be, the best and only way to think about alt-text - it is just some advice.**

Things to consider when adding alt-text are:

- Try and keep your descriptions to no longer than a paragraph in length.
- Think about which information is most relevant, i.e. describing the outfits of people may only be relevant if they are prominent in the photo.
- If an image contains text then this should definitely be included in the alt text
- Be wary of moving from describing a photo to giving an interpretation or adding in your opinion
- It is maybe more relevant to give details of clothing or pattern features when they are unusual
- When you're writing your paragraph, think about whether you would be able to tell what the image contains by reading it back.

When adding in alt-text for a series of images from the same event, instead of repeating the descriptions of aspects that are repeated in multiple images, consider establishing the context for these details **before** the image gallery. For example, above a set of images from a production, you could have a text box that describes the set and the costume of each character. This allows you to use the alt-text description to give more detail into the nuances of each image.



## Alt-text case study



People's views on alt text will vary a lot based on individual preferences. Personally, I like quite a lot of detail in an alt text if it is necessary, for example if a scene was being described. I find the more detail I have I am able to have a better understanding of what the image is of and what it is trying to communicate. If the image is quite a simple one and does not give a lot of needed information to help with trying to communicate something along with the written component of something like a tweet, then a long description is not needed.

I like when I am given an understanding of the whole image meaning that what someone can see in an image is communicated to me through the alt text. Explaining what can be seen in the background, what someone is wearing and generally what else can be seen in the picture is also helpful. Facial expressions are important if for instance the whole aim of the picture is to indicate someone's feelings about something so then it would make sense to explain the facial expression.

I think alt text is a very personal thing and people will have different views on it. Remember to think about what the picture is communicating to a sighted audience and then try conveying the same through your alt text for screen reader users. You may need to say things like this is to show this so explain what the image is trying to convey to the audience. For instance, the image is trying to show how small something is in comparison to the big object. In terms of having multiple images showing the same thing just at different angles for instance give one detailed alt text for the first image then say something like see first alt text for description this image is taken from above so what we see looks very small for example.

In terms of the length of an alt text this will vary depending on how detailed each image is. I do not normally check to see how long an alt text is so the length does not stop me from reading it.