Web Accessibility Guidelines
Alternative (alt) Text

Why alternative text?

- Read by screen readers
- Alternative to an image when images are disabled or not supported
- Provides *semantic meaning* and descriptions to images.
- Used by search engines

What is equivalent alt text?

- Conveys CONTENT and FUNCTION
- VERY RARELY a description of the image itself

Alt text can be presented in two ways

In the alt attribute of the img element:

<img alt="I am alt text">

In the *context or surroundings* of the image itself – consider what's in the content on the page

Alt text should:

- Be accurate and equivalent
- Be succinct – keep it short
- NOT be redundant – don't repeat something already on the content of the page
- NOT use phrases such as:
    o "image of "
    o "graphic of "
    o "Photo of"
    o "Logo of" or "xxxx logo"
    o

Examples of proper alt text:

alt="Westside Regional Medical Center"

alt="American College of Radiology – Radiation Oncology Accredited Facility" – if this text is in the content, then alt="" (null) is sufficient.

Images that are the only thing within a link must ALWAYS have alternative text ... and image map hot-spots and image buttons too.

Examples

There are actually *3 links* here, all going to the *same place*: the image, the "Take Heart With Your Heart" H3 under the photo, and the Learn More button. Triple redundancy, and none of them, in this state, accurately reflect where the link takes the user.

The image link - existing code for this image is:

```
<a href="/hl/?/11814/"><img alt="Take Heart With Your Heart" src="/util/images/Take-Heart-With-Your-Heart.jpg"></a>
```

The link actually goes to a health library topic titled "Heart Attack", so the alt text here is technically inaccurate and relatively meaningless when read by a screen reader. Because the image is a link, it should have alt text, but it should be something like "learn more about heart attacks" since that is the subject of the health article it's linked to.

However, given that there are 2 other links going to the exact same place, the alt here can be **null** – **alt=""**.

The code on the "Learn More" button is:

```
<a class="btn btn-block btn-primary" title="Find out more about Take Heart With Your Heart" href="/hl/?/11814/">Learn More</a>
```

1. The "title" attribute is not read by most screen readers, but in some, it can cause confusion, so the title attribute should *not* be used on links or images.
2. The "Learn More" button, which, taken out of context, is not relevant and meaningless, and isn't really accurate for where the user will wind up when they follow the link, which is the HL topic of "Heart Attack". For clarity and relevance, the button should be more like "*Learn More about Heart Attacks*".

Revising the "Learn More" button to relevant text means the alt on the image can remain as null.

NOTE: Currently, the 3 links illustrated above is part of how the Home Featured Item is built. It will need to be addressed through development as part of our accessibility efforts.

The best practice at this time, would be to change the "Learn More" button to something that's relevant and accurate.

Images in content

The code for this image is:

```
<img alt="Da Vinci Surgical Robot" src="/util/images/surgical-robotics.jpg" class="pull-left image-margin-left">
```

The image is embedded in a page that is all about the DaVinici robot. The image itself does not convey any additional content or meaning that's not already on the page. Since it would take a lot of text to describe what's actually depicted in the image, and it would be redundant given the surrounding content, the alt text on this image should be **null – alt=""**

This page has a heading that says "Diabetes Classes" and the content describes those classes. The image here has the following code:

```
<img alt="Diabetes Classes" src="/util/images/diabetes-web.jpg" class="pull-right image-margin-right">
```

- Does the image really depict Diabetes Classes? No. It's a middle-aged man on an exercise bike.
- Would alt text of "middle-aged man on an exercise bike" convey any additional content or meaning relevant to the content on the page? Not really.
- The alt text on this image should be **null – alt=""**

Images of people

We often will have content, news articles or events that have photos of actual people (not stock images).

Home » About Us » CEO Message

Thank you for considering Oak Hill Hospital for your care.

When seeking a healthcare facility for treatment, it's important to compare and evaluate quality.

About Us:

- Oak Hill Hospital opened on June 6, 1984 with 96 beds and has grown to be the largest hospital in the county with 262 acute care beds.
- One of the area's largest private employers with more than 1,100 associates.
- Celebrated 30 years of service in 2014 and is known for its quality of care, focus on patient safety and commitment to the most advanced technology.

Mickey Smith, CEO

The code on this image is:

<img width="150" height="200" **alt="Mickey Smith, CEO**" src="/util/images/mickey-smith-2007.jpg" class="pull-right">

With a caption of:

<p class="text-center">Mickey Smith, CEO</p>

In this particular case, the alt on the image could be null, as his name and title are repeated in the content of the caption.

If there was no caption, then the alt on the image should *only* contain the person's name and title.

Groups of people

If the people are named in the content on the page, then the alt text on the image should be null as the image itself conveys no additional information.

the November Service Excellence Employee of the Month Award: Heather Thomas, Medical Dosimetrist for LewisGale Regional Cancer Center Pulaski; Anne Reau, Executive Assistant to CEO; and Chastity Robinson, Clinical Pharmacist.
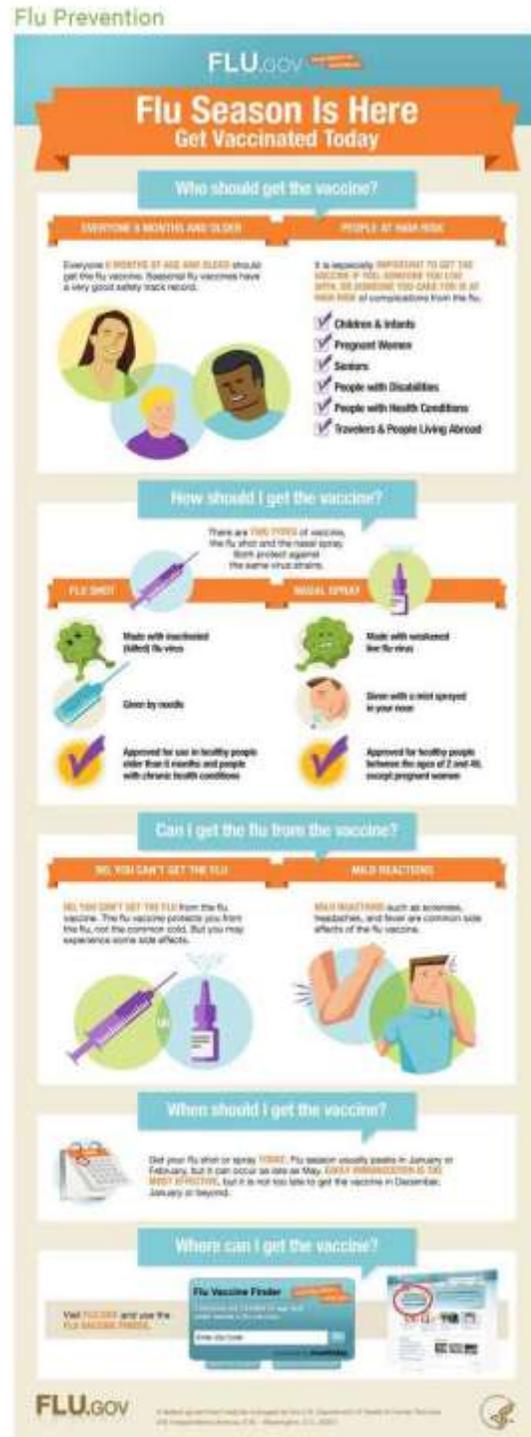
Complex Images

Provide the alternative text *in context* (meaning on the page)

OR

Provide a link to a page that contains the longer description (you can additionally use the longdesc attribute, though support is poor). The main image should still have some alt text!

Examples of complex images:

This page exists on one of our sites and is a very good example of what ***not*** to do.

The code on the page for this graphic (it's actually all in 1 image on the site) is:

```
<img src="/util/images/flu-risk-chart-.png">
```

That's it, that's all that is there, no alt text at all. There is no part of the information in the graphic on the page as text (in context), nor is there a link to anywhere that would provide the information in the graphic in text format. So, the information in the infographic is 100% inaccessible to anyone using assistive technology. In addition, if someone with low vision used a screen magnifier on that page, the text in the image would become so pixelated as to be completely unreadable.

Another image on that same page is an animated gif:

The code for it:

```
<a title="Did you know it is estimated that an average of 200K people are hospitalized due to flu-related complications?" href="http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm?s_cid=seasonalflu-bb-052">

<img src="http://www.cdc.gov/flu/images/freeresources/200KHospitalized690x388.gif">

</a>
```

Again, no alt text in the image. Instead, there is a title attribute in the <a>, which **is not read by screen readers**! This one can mostly be corrected and made accessible by changing the title attribute to alt and putting it on the image where it belongs – except that the destination of the link is not just statistics, so adding something more to the alt text to let the user know where they're being taken to would be best.

(Note – the graduated graphic of green to orange to red – is not very helpful to someone with red/green color blindness, all that person will see is varying degrees of greens. Shame of flu.gov!)