5 TOP TIPS:

WRITING ALT-TEXT

*Adding alt-text to images is one of the best ways of making your website more accessible. Here are **Comma Chameleon**'s top tips for doing it right...*

COMMA CHAMELEON

1. Keep it simple, but be specific

The recommended length for any alt-text description is 125 characters. This means you don't have enough space to waffle on about all the irrelevant aspects of your image. If the background colour doesn't add value to the viewer, don't mention it. If it's important that the subject of your image is a child rather than an adult, say so. Think about why you're including that particular image on your page in the context of your written content and write only information that helps to convey that function.

2. Describe information, not aesthetics

Most people using screen readers to view websites agree that the aesthetics of a page don't matter. What they want to know is what any images mean in the context of the written content. For this reason, you needn't write alt-text for purely decorative images or ones used to break up large chunks of text. For all other images, think about what information you would sacrifice by not including them and use that to guide what you write in your alt-text description.

3. Punctuate as normal

Commas and full stops can make your alt-text descriptions easier to understand for assistive technology like screen readers. How this technology reads out the information about your images will have an impact on the person using it, so be sure to punctuate your descriptions properly to ensure your viewer's experience of your website is a good one. If punctuating is your nemesis, it might help you to read your alt-text aloud so you can see where you need to insert a pause or a break.

4. Don't waste your characters

You don't need to start your alt-text with 'This is a photo of...' – most screen-reader users will know when they have reached an image because of the semantics their reader uses. Another thing you can leave out is any copyright or credit information – this is the least important information in terms of experiencing an image as somebody with a disability or visual impairment. Reserve the alt-text for information that adds value to the viewer – everything else can go in the caption.

5. Refer users to text elsewhere

There are times when 125 characters just isn't going to cut it in terms of getting across everything you need to about an image. In these circumstances, don't just give half the information you need to, because this does a disservice not just to your user, but to you and your content as well. If your image is a chart, diagram or infographic that adds value to the rest of your content, use your alt-text to direct screen-reader users to a more thorough text description located elsewhere on your page.

We blend in to make you stand out!

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