# Tip of the Week
Alternative Text

For Descriptions of Simple Images

When adding images to Word documents, PowerPoints, Excel or PDF's, you must add alt text to comply with WAG 2.0 guidelines. It should be descriptive of what you are conveying by using the image. It should not include "picture of".

For example, a good alternative text description for the following image would be *"Hurricane winds and storm surge waves blow into palm trees and buildings"*. This is a good description because it is what the instructor is trying to convey to the students while he is lecturing about hurricane force winds.

Another example would be the following graph. The alt text should be descriptive of what you want to convey. If you were teaching zeros of the function, for example, your alt text would look something like the following: *"Quadratic function that crosses the x-axis at 0.586 and 3.414."* However, if you were trying to convey the intercepts or vertex of the graph, it would be a different descriptive text.
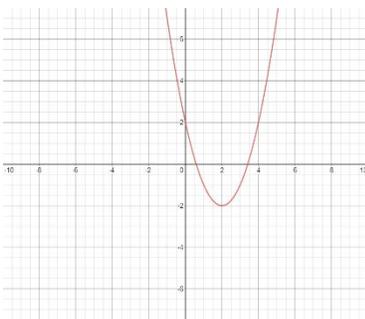
The last example is when you want to have an image but there is no message to convey. Your alt text will simply say *"decorative image"*.

For Complex Images

Sometimes you will have charts or complex images that you will need to provide alternative text. The rule of thumb for alt text is the description of an image should be less than 100 words. In the following example, you will see a chart that a teacher is using in their notes. A good alt text for this chart would be similar to the following.

"Money Invested from 2010-2012. On the vertical axis, the chart shows the amount invested in intervals of 2,000. On the horizontal axis, it shows the years from 2010, 2011, and 2012. In the year 2010, there was 10,000 dollars invested. In 2011 there was 5,500 dollars invested and in 2012 there was 8,250 dollars invested."

The other option is to put a brief description in the alt text box of the chart and then under the chart you can include a more detailed description.

The next example is a bell curve, I will just include a brief description, and under the image, I will include an in-depth description. The alt text I used for this image is *"Normal distribution with areas between values."* Under the image, I included a much more in-depth description. This is one way to make this image accessible. You could also put the in-depth description in the alt text box if it is less than 100 words.

Normal Distribution

95.4%

68.2%

13.6%   34.1%   34.1%   13.6%

-2   -1   0   +1   +2
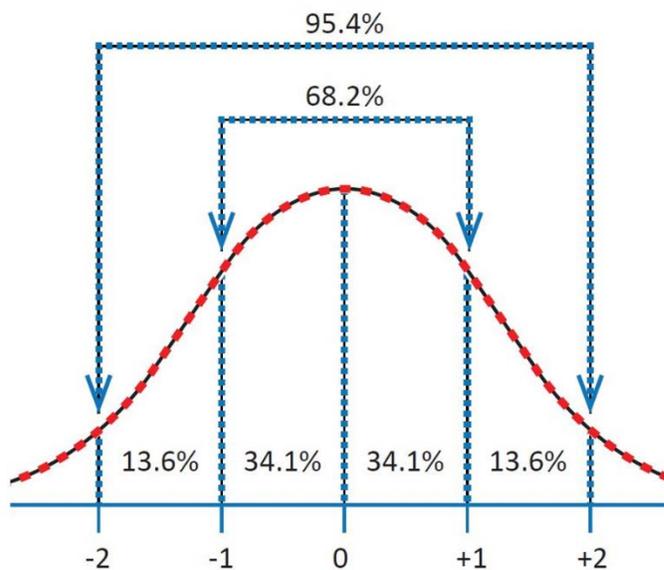
The diagram above shows a symmetric bell curve with x-axis values of negative two, negative one, zero, one, and two. The area under the zero to one curve encompasses 34.1%, which is also mirrored by the zero to negative one curve. The next values between one and two include 13.6%, also mirrored by the negative side. The area between negative one and one is 68.2%. The area encompassed by all four bins includes 95.4%.

Another example for alt text is a flow chart.
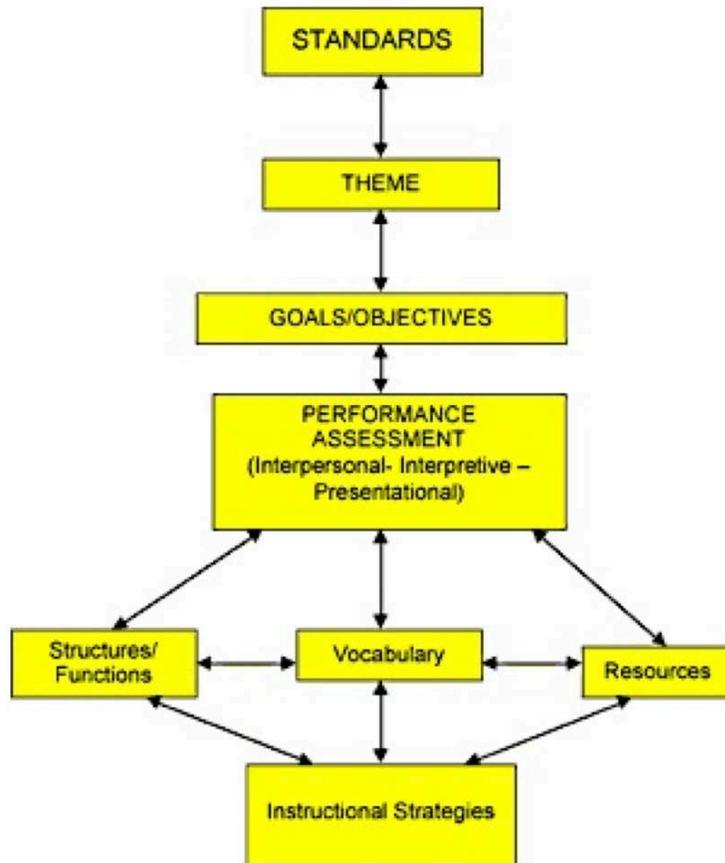
1. Standards
forward to Theme
2. Theme
back to Standards
forward to Goals/Objectives
3. Goals/Objectives
back to Theme
forward to Performance Assessment
4. Performance Assessment (Interpersonal - Interpretive - Presentational)
back to Goals/Objectives
forward to Structures/Functions
forward to Vocabulary
forward to Resources
Structures/Functions
back to Performance Assessment
lateral to Vocabulary
forward to Instructional Strategies
Vocabulary
back to Performance Assessment
lateral to Structures/Functions
lateral to Resources
forward to Instructional Strategies
Resources

This is less than 100 words and is in list format so that the students using screen readers get a good representation of how the flow chart works.

For more examples, and for practice using alt text, visit the Benetech Initiative's [How to Describe Images.](#)