

# ADA Accessibility Rules Guide for Images and Alternative text

FOR LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE **FACULTY & STAFF**

## ADA Digital Accessibility Rules Guide

Accessibility is about ensuring that our technology is usable by people with disabilities. Specifically, it allows for people to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with digital tools.

Accessibility encompasses all disabilities, including:

- **Auditory**
- **Cognitive**
- **Neurological**
- **Physical**
- **Speech**
- **Visual**

Accessibility also benefits people *without* disabilities, such as:

- People using smart phones and other devices with smaller screens or different resolution modes.
- People with temporary disabilities, such as a broken arm.
- People with a slow internet connection.

# ADA Digital Accessibility Rules Guide

## Why is Accessibility important?

On April 24, 2024, the Federal Register published the Department of Justice's (DOJ) final rule updating its regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The final rule has specific requirements about how to ensure that web content and mobile applications (apps) are accessible to people with disabilities.

Fact Sheet: New Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps Provided by State and Local Governments:

<https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule/>

We now not only have a moral obligation but now a *legal obligation* to make digital content accessible.



In this guide, we will cover the following items:

- **Alternative Text**

- ❖ [What is alternative text?](#)
- ❖ [When is alternative text needed?](#)
- ❖ [Tips for adding clear and helpful alt text](#)

- **Decorative Images**

- ❖ [What is a decorative image?](#)
- ❖ [What is a non-decorative image?](#)

### What is alternative text?

Alternative text, or “alt text”, is a textual substitute for non-text content (i.e., images) in a document. Alt text helps users with visual or cognitive disabilities perceive the content and function of the image. Alt text also acts as a substitute in case an image cannot load correctly.

### When is alternative text needed?

Every image should have alt text or be marked as decorative. Images that are “active” or contain information (see bullet list below) require an alt text description. When writing alt text, remember to describe the information as relevant to the document, and not simply describe the picture. Decorative images should be marked as such. (See section: [Decorative Images](#) for more information)

When viewing images in our documents we can think of images as having a *type*. **When applying alternative text, you should first consider what type of image it is.** There are three major types of images you should be aware of:

- **Type 1:** “Active” or functional images. These are images that are being used to perform an action (links, buttons, etc.)
- **Type 2:** Images that contain information within them. (Charts, images of text, supplements, or images conveying an impression/emotion)
- **Type 3:** Decorative images.

## Examples of when to apply alternative text

**Example)** Consider an image of the LBCC logo that is being used as a link to take us to [www.lbcc.edu](http://www.lbcc.edu). What type of image is this?



**Answer:** This image is an *active image* because it contains a link, so it has a *function*. Since there is no accompanying text that describes the link's function it must be conveyed as alt text. It has the alt text "LBCC home" to indicate where the link will take the user.

## Examples of when to apply alternative text

**Example)** Consider the same image of the LBCC logo but now it is being used with accompanying text with an embedded link to the [www.lbcc.edu](http://www.lbcc.edu) homepage.



**LBCC HOME**

**Answer:** This image does not represent different functionality or convey other information than what is already provided in the link text. The image can now be regarded as *decorative* and should be marked as such.

## Examples of when to apply alternative text

**Example)** Consider the image below of our LBCC mascot, Ole Viking with students. What type of image would this be classified under?



Long Beach City College is committed to empowering our students to become active, ethical participants in their learning, as well as in the democratic structures that give them voice and agency in shaping their society and world.

**Answer:** This would be an example of an image that contains information. Specifically, it is an image that *conveys an impression or emotion*. This image is being used to convey that LBCC is a welcoming place for students.

## Examples of when to apply alternative text

**Example)** Consider an instance of an image accompanying a short article.



### Helping LBCC Students in Need

Approximately 120 students stopped by the Students in Need Resource Fair to gather information from community groups such as the Los Angeles Food Bank/Cal Fresh, the Jewish Family Center, Los Angeles County Workforce Development's Aging and Community Services Department, the Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Los Angeles Department of Social Services. The Culinary Arts Department also served a hot lunch in the Bistro to students.

**Answer:** This would be an example of an image that contains information. Specifically, it is an image that acts as a *supplement* to the article.

## How to apply alternative text that is clear and helpful

Now that we have an idea of *when* to apply alt text, let's cover some tips *how* to create alt text that is clear and helpful to users.

- Every image must have an alt text description or, if decorative, marked as decorative.
- Describe the information, not the picture. (*This may overlap but always try to keep the description relevant to the context of the document*).
- Don't begin your alt text with anything to the effect of "*an image of*". A screen reader will already tell the user that this is an image.
- If there is an image containing text that is pertinent to the document, please include that information in the alt text.
- Try your best to keep alt text short, but descriptive.

## How to apply alternative text that is clear and helpful

Consider the image and article below. Which given option would you choose to make the alt text for this image clear and helpful to users? (*See the next slide for our recommended choice*).



### Student Clubs

Long Beach City College has a number of opportunities for you to get connected. Joining a club or organization will provide you the opportunity to make new friends, develop leadership skills, and contribute to LBCC and the community. Utilize the connections you will make within these clubs and organizations to help you plan your future, network and build lifelong friendships.

**A)** Image of students.

**B)** Students exploring campus.

**C)** Students explore club opportunities offered at LBCC.

## How to apply alternative text that is clear and helpful



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A) Image of students.

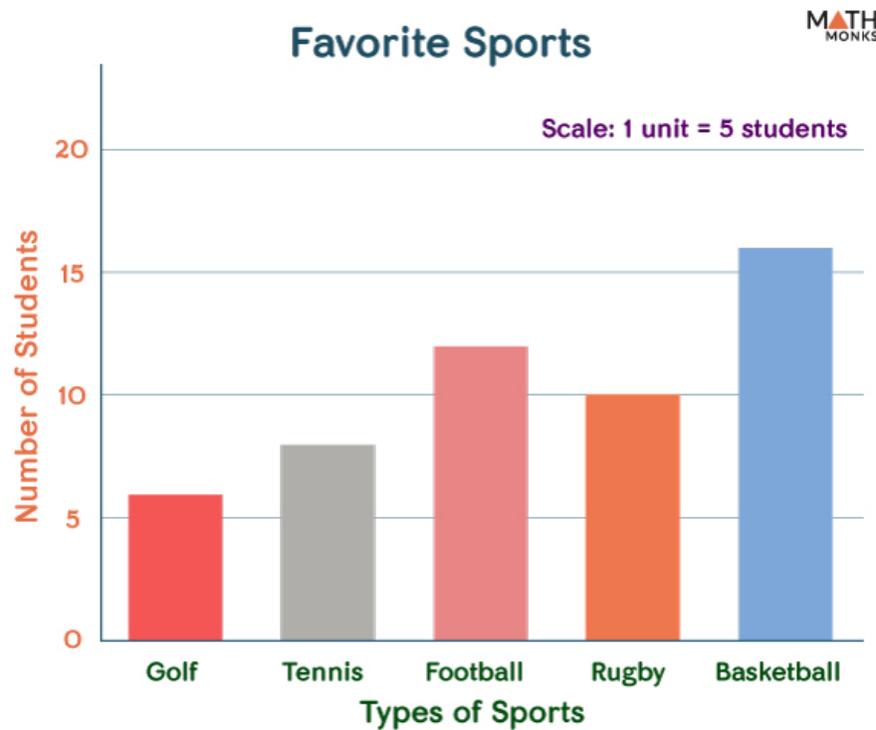
B) Students exploring campus.

C) Students explore club opportunities offered at LBCC.

Considering all our choices. Choice “C” gives us the best alt text description that describes the image in a way that is helpful and in context with the article.

## How to apply alternative text that is clear and helpful

Sometimes, we may encounter informational type images that contain *complex* information that may be more than can be conveyed in a short sentence. These images will often be graphs, diagrams, maps, etc.



For these images, we can use long descriptions to make this accessible to all users.

### Long description:

Bar chart showing the number of students whose favorite sport is Golf, Tennis, Football, Rugby, and Basketball. Scale goes up from 0 to 20 units in the vertical direction. 1 unit is equal to 5 students. The type of sports is given in the horizontal direction. Golf is the least favorited followed by tennis, rugby, football, and finally, basketball is the most favorited.

### What is a decorative image?

Decorative images don't add information to the content of a page. For example, the information provided by the image might already be given using adjacent text, or the image might be included to make the document more visually attractive. Decorative images should be marked as such in your document.

#### Example)



The image above is being used as a page border and has purely decorative purpose.

#### Example)



[Common sunflower](#)

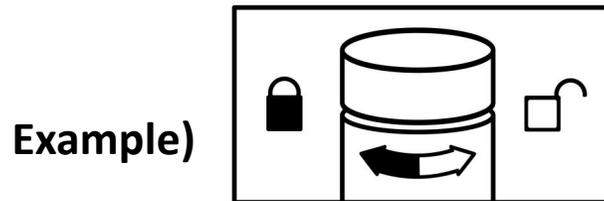
The image of a sunflower is used to make the link easier to identify but does not add to the information already provided in the adjacent link text area.

## What is a non-decorative image?

Non-decorative images, convey concepts or information that may be able to be expressed in a short sentence. These images are essential to understanding the information or context on the document and require alternative text to be added. (Please see the prior slides for more examples and on when and how to apply alt text).

**Example)**  (555) 555-5555       (555) 123-4567

This example shows two image icons – one of a telephone and one of a fax machine. The alternative text “**Telephone:**” and “**Fax:**” are used to identify the device associated with each number.



The image above offers visual instructions on opening a bottle cap. However, low-vision users may not be able to decipher the image and an alternative text description is needed to understand the information provided.

## Questions?

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to:

**ITS Help Desk:**

- [helpdesk@lbcc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@lbcc.edu)
- (562) 938-4357