

Good Practices When Writing Alt-Text: A Checklist for Academic Book Manuscripts

- ☐ The image is not decorative but an essential element of the manuscript.
- ☐ The alt-text is written specifically for the manuscript in which the figure is used.
- ☐ The alt-text contains no vague language. For example, rather than writing “image,” you have specified the kind of image (e.g., photo, map, painting) you are referring to.
- ☐ The alt-text does not simply repeat the information contained in the figure caption.
- ☐ The alt-text does not repeat text surrounding the image.
- ☐ The alt-text is descriptive and objective.
- ☐ The alt-text does not include interpretations or assumptions.
- ☐ The alt-text consists of 1–2 sentences and 25–30 words in total.
- ☐ The alt-text contains more than 10 words.
- ☐ The alt-text does not exceed 100 words. (Note: Some publishers allow for more words.)
- ☐ Contractions are spelled out (e.g., “she’d” → “she would” or “she had”).
- ☐ Numbers used are spelled out (e.g., “231” is written as “two-hundred thirty-one”).
- ☐ Symbols, such as mathematical symbols, are written out (e.g., “+” is written out as “plus” or “add,” depending on the context; δ = “delta”).
- ☐ The alt-text spells out any text that appears in the image.
- ☐ Non-Latin letters are spelled out (한글 = “Hangeul”, देवनागरी = “Devanagari”).
- ☐ Plain text is used: The alt-text contains no bold or italicised text, superscript, bullet points, or other formatting.
- ☐ Acronyms that may be read as single words by assistive technology have a space inserted between each character, e.g., “U N” rather than “UN.”
- ☐ If there are several images in the manuscript, the alt-text is written in the same style and language for all images and also matches the style and language of the manuscript itself.
- ☐ The alt-text does not contain additional information that the sighted reader does not have.
- ☐ The alt-text sentence or sentences end with a full stop.