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Alt text and file names for images: what to write, and what to avoid

On-Page SEO & Yoast

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Alt text and file names for images: what to write, and what to avoid

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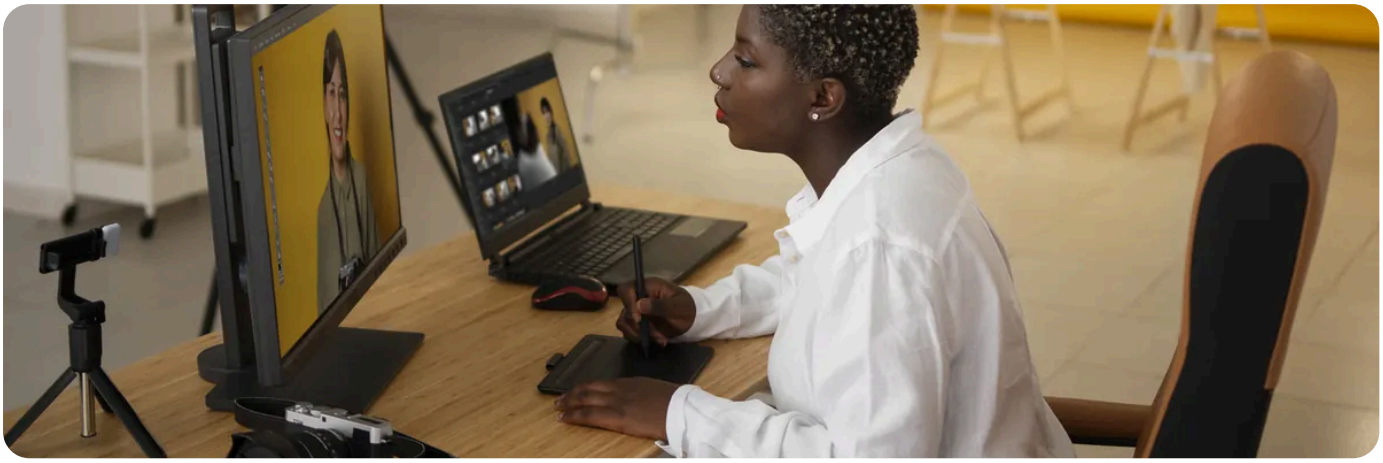

Alt text is a short phrase that describes the image to those who cannot see it: screen readers, slow connections where the image did not load, and search engines. Write **what the image shows, in normal language**, and give the file a name that says the same. It helps people first, and Google second.

How to write the alt text

The image is	The alt should be	Example
A product photo	What is visible, with the useful detail	“Brown leather strap sandal, side view”
A photo of the team or place	Who or where, without exaggerating	“Shop team at the warehouse entrance”
A chart or diagram	The conclusion it shows	“Sales rising every quarter this year”
A button or icon that is a link	Where it goes	“Go to contact”
Pure decoration (a line, a background)	Empty: `alt=""`	The screen reader skips it instead of reading it out
Text written inside an image	The same text	Better: write the text on the page, as text

Naming the file

1. **Before uploading**, rename `IMG_4821.jpg` to `brown-leather-sandal.jpg`: lower case, no accents, with hyphens.

2. **Pick the right size** and compress. A heavy image slows the page; see **image optimisation and WebP**.

3. **On WordPress**, when you upload the image to the media library, fill in the “Alternative Text” field. When editing the post, it is the field on the right of the image block.

4. **Also set the width and height**, so the page does not jump while loading. It is part of **Core Web Vitals in plain words**.

Alt, caption and title: they are not the same thing

The **alt** describes the image and is only seen when the image does not appear or is read aloud. The **caption** is the text visible under the image, for everyone, used to add information (whose photo it is, which year, what you are looking at). The **title** attribute is the tip that pops up when the mouse rests on it; it is optional, cannot be seen on a phone and Google gives it little weight. If you must choose where to spend time, spend it on the alt and the caption.

Do not stuff the alt with keywords.
“Sandal leather cheap best sandal sandal shop” is spam, sounds dreadful in a screen reader and can hurt. Write as if describing the picture over the phone to a friend. Do not begin with “image of…” either: the screen reader already says it is an image.

A useful image can bring visits.
Google’s image search uses the alt text, the file name and the surrounding text. A good photo with a clear alt appears in searches the text alone would not catch. If the image is the one shown when the page is shared, see **the wrong preview when sharing**.

NEED A HAND?

Do the site’s images fail to load, or open only for you? Tell us the address of one and we will see what the server returns.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Image optimisation and WebP** →
- **Core Web Vitals in plain words** →
- **The wrong preview when sharing** →

WordPress hosting

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