

Berghahn Books Alt-Text 101

What is alt-text?

Alt text (or alternative text) is an accessibility tool that uses image descriptions to help those with visual impairments understand the meaning of an image. When a screen reader reaches an image, it will read aloud the description. The user gets a sense of what that image is and its purpose in context.

Why do we need it?

Berghahn is committed to providing high quality, scholarly titles that are accessible to all. As of 2024, we've begun implementing alt text in all of our books in compatibility with the European Accessibility Act. The European Accessibility Act provides legislation aimed to ensure products such as ebooks are fully accessible to people with disabilities. By 2025, all ebooks will need to be accessible in order to be sold in the EU.

How do we write effective alt-text?

To write effective alt-text, begin by considering the context in which the image is being used. Your goal is to convey in words the information another user might gain visually. The length of the description will depend upon the complexity of the image and what you expect the reader to understand as a result of looking at it. For example, a simple illustrative image may only require a few words but a complex graph may require a number of sentences to explain. It may be useful to consider how you would describe the image to someone over the phone.

Below is an example of a figure, the visible caption, and the invisible alt text one may write to describe it:



Figure 4.4. City street slogans: 'Everything to reach the goal [of a] prosperous people [and a] strong country [that is] democratic, just, civilized'; 'Eternal life to the glorious Party!' © Susan Bayly.

Alt text: A sequence of state message banners in bright red and gold, strung high above a busy Hanoi thoroughfare.

What needs alt-text/what doesn't?

We ask that authors provide alt-text for all items that have visual elements. This includes graphs, maps, pictures, illustrations, and figures. Text-only tables do not need alt text.

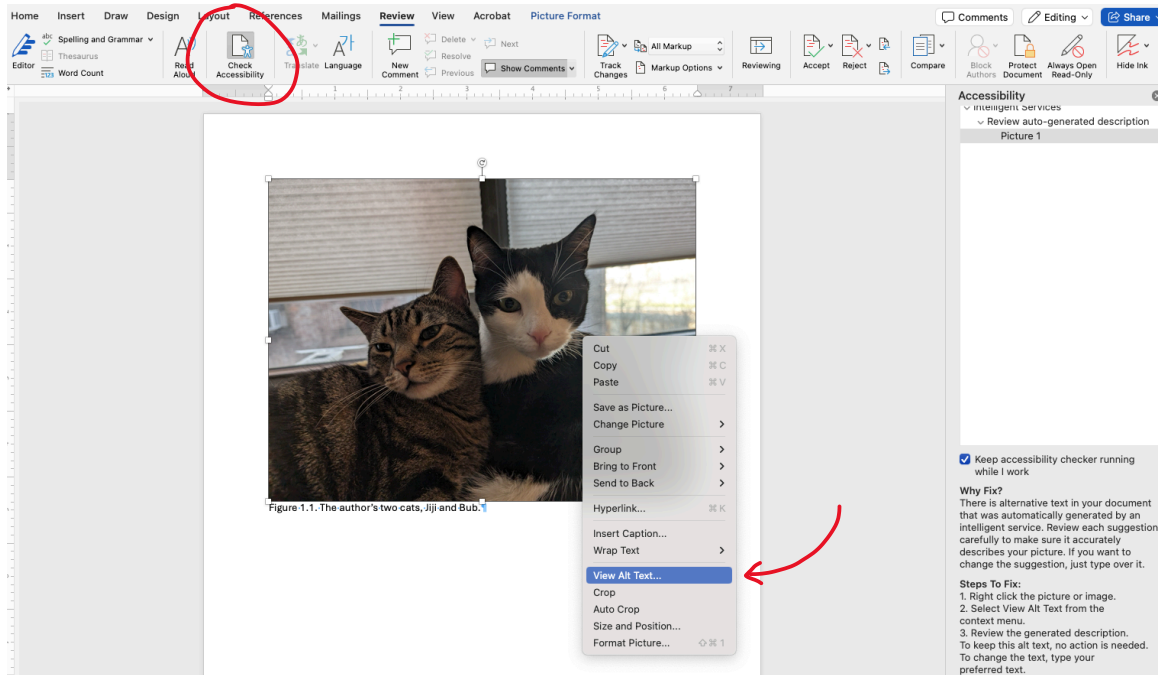
Tools to create alt-text

As mentioned above, alt text can be created manually by writing a brief description for each image. If further assistance is needed, there are some available tools to help create alt text discussed below:

[Microsoft Alt Text Guide](#)

Open the Microsoft 365 Accessibility Checker:

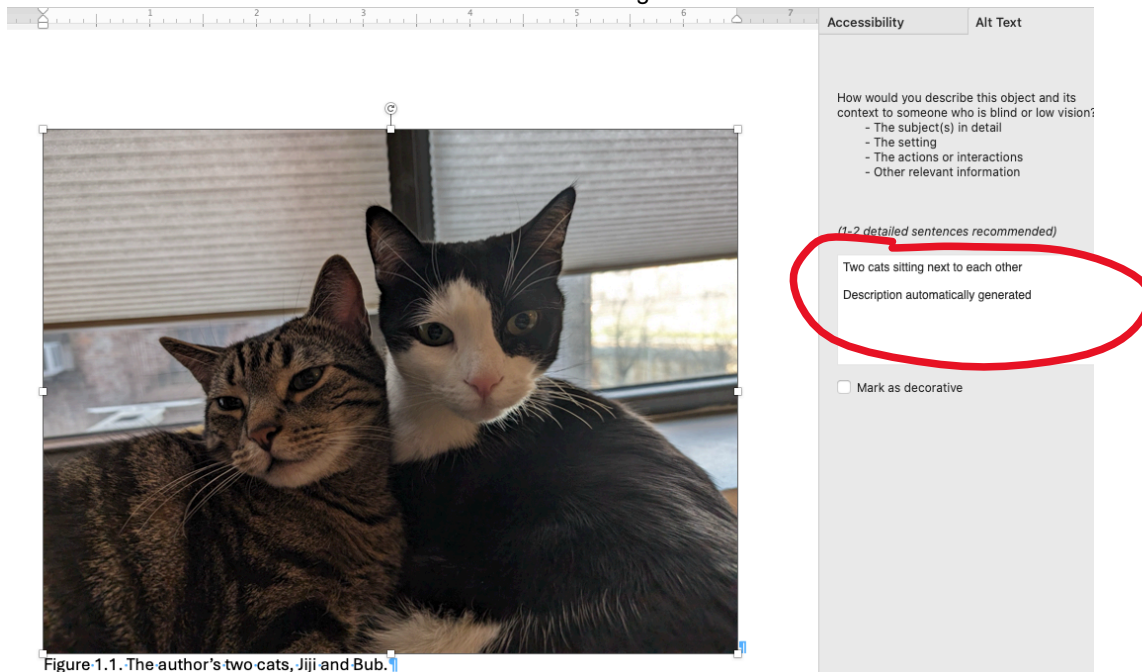
1. On the **Review** tab, select **Check Accessibility**.



2. Right-click an image, chart, or other object, and select **View Alt Text**.

Tip: On the **Review** tab, you can select the **Check Accessibility** drop down and choose **Alt Text**.

3. In the **Alt text** pane on the right, edit or approve the displayed alt text (if automatically generated).
 - a. This is not a perfect tool and often the automatically generated text is lacking some detail. We highly encourage authors to add detail to the generalized alt text. For example, you may add description about the cats' coloring: "A brown cat and a black and white cat sitting next to each other."



As a reminder, when submitting finalized Word files to Berghahn, images should not be inserted into the files themselves, only the alt text should be there with the caption and image placement callout.

Alt-Text AI Generator

There are many new and exciting tools that use AI to generate alt-text. One such tool is AltText.ai, which allows users to directly upload and automatically generate alt-text. While there are paid plans available, the free trial (which does not require any payment details to access) allows users to upload and generate 25 alt text captions.

Authors who use AI tools or other automated technologies to generate or support the creation of their work must clearly acknowledge this use. It is the author's responsibility to ensure that all content adheres to our principles of transparency, accountability, and responsible innovation.

AI tools should be used responsibly and in accordance with our authorship guidelines and publishing ethics. Any use of such tools must not compromise the originality of the work, misrepresent authorship, or obscure the original source. All content created using AI tools **must** be reviewed by the author for accuracy and sense.

The following example shows the type of alt text generated for the image below:



Add a New Image

No file chosen

Image URL

https://example.com/image.jpg

☐ Overwrite existing

OR

Upload File

Choose File

PXL_20240319_124720541.jpg

JPG, PNG, GIF, WebP, or BMP (max 10MB, at least 50x50px)

Asset ID

Optional - assign your own unique ID to this image.

Alt Text Language

English

☐ Human Review

Request a human review to enhance and correct alt text. This will use an additional 15 credits.

☐ Ecommerce Data

Add a specific product and brand name to be used in the alt text.

☐ SEO Keywords

Include SEO keywords in generated alt text.

☐ ChatGPT Modification

Use your own ChatGPT prompt on the alt text.

Add Image

Cancel

☐	Asset ID	URL	Alt Text	Date Updated	Actions
☐	ca4686d7b475...	(direct upload)	Two cats snuggling together in front of a window covered by blinds. one cat has tabby markings and the other is black and white. they appear calm and close.	less than a minute ago	

Alt-text: Two cats snuggling together in front of a window covered by blinds. one cat has tabby markings, and the other is black and white. They appear calm and close.

Further Resources

- Harvard Guide for Alt Text
- W3C Resources on Alternative Text for Images
- European Accessibility Act