

# Image description and digital accessibility

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# **I study how citizens in Denmark rely on their communities to use mandatory public digital self-services**



# Image description

1. Audio description
2. Alternative Text (Alt-text)
3. Text descriptions



Article: Narrating Digital Access, Trauma, and Disability  
Through Comics and Image Description in Denmark  
(Carreras and Ross Winthereik 2023)

# Audio description

## *Synstolkning*

**The process of translating visual information into words for people who are blind or have low vision. It was originally developed as an access accommodation in live theater, cinema, television broadcasts and museum collections (Kleege and Wallin 2015).**

# Audio description

## *Mod de blindes verden (2022)*



Vælg tilgængelighed ×

[o] OPLÆSTE UNDERTEKSTER

[..] SYNSTOLKNING

28:16

# Image description

## *Billedbeskrivelse*

The process of translating and writing visual information for people who are blind , have low vision or cognitive disabilities.

Digital technologies enable different ways to display image descriptions.

# Image description

*Alice Wong,*  
*Disability*  
*Visibility*



Photo of Alice Wong, an Asian American disabled woman in a power chair. She is wearing a black blouse with a floral print, a bold red lip color and a trach at her neck. She is giving a cheeky expression with her eyebrow partially raised.

In the background is a gray cement wall. Photo credit: Eddie Hernandez Photography.

# Image description

*We move together book:*  
*Access tools*



*We Move Together*

Kelly Fritsch Anne McGuire Eduardo Trejos



# Alt-Text

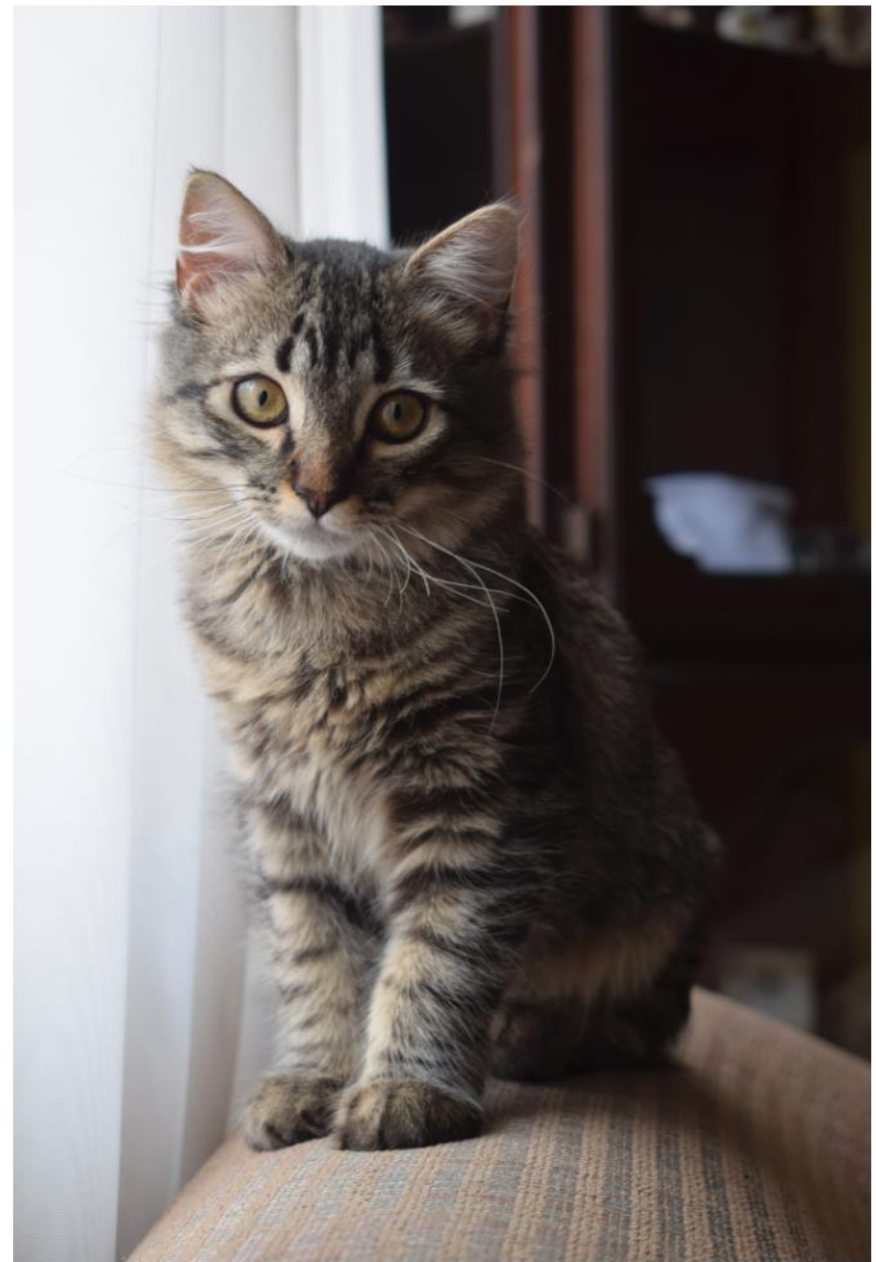
## *Alt-tekst*

**Alt text is a written description of an image posted online. Alt text can also be added to images embedded in digital documents (PDFs, Word documents, Google docs, presentations, etc).**

**[Get inspired by visiting the website Alt text as Poetry](#)**

# Alt- Text

[A New York Times article on image description](#)



```
<article role="presentation">  
    
</article>
```

# Alt- Text

I'm a Black woman with long, dark hair and dancing hazel eyes. I'm sitting on a rock petting Mylo, my German Shepherd Seeing Eye dog. With his pointed ears and open mouth he exudes joy. The rocks behind us have the white foam of crashing waves, and in the distance an island rises out of the ocean.  
#ServiceDogsOfInstagram #Hawaii #Maui



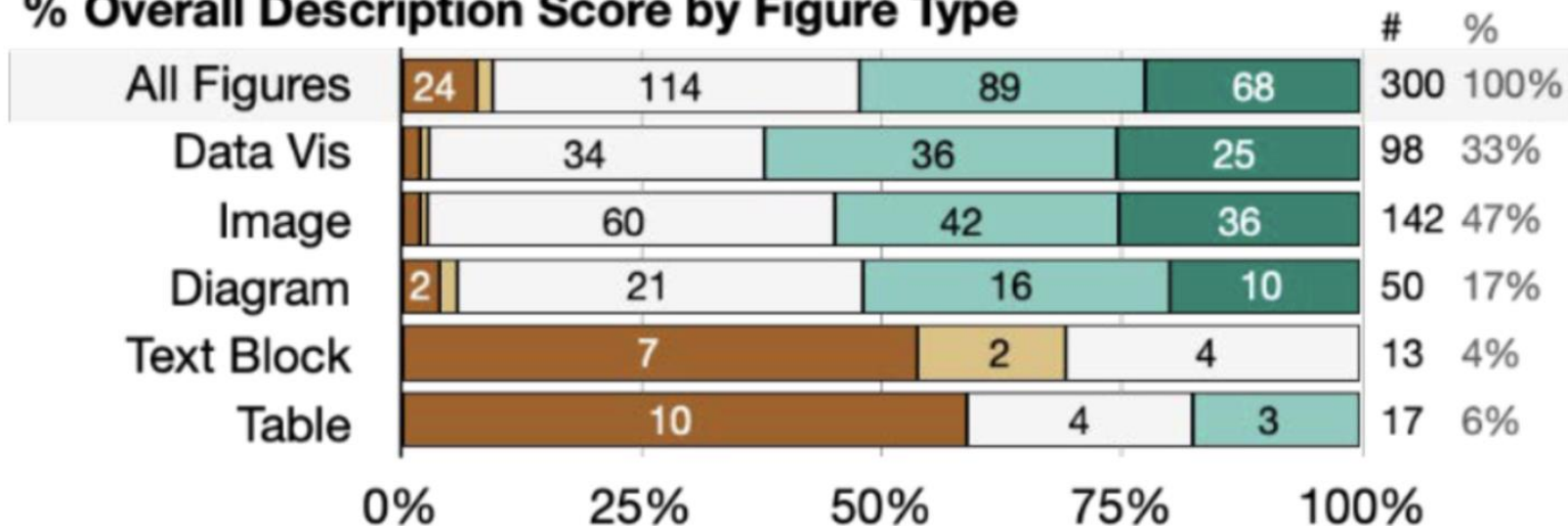
A person with a dog on a rocky beach.

May be an image of 1 person, dog and outdoors.

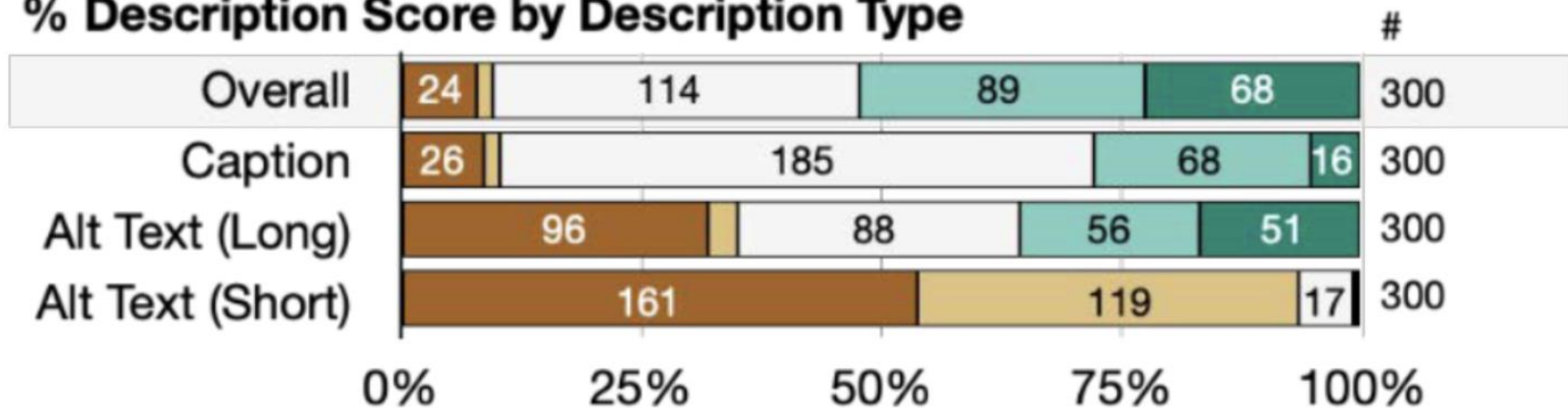
The first description was written by Haben Girma for a photo of herself that was posted on her Instagram account. The others are alt text examples from Microsoft Word and Facebook.

# Alt- Text

**% Overall Description Score by Figure Type**



**% Description Score by Description Type**



# Alt- Text HQ

High quality alt text: “Two stacked horizontal bar graphs showing the percentage of overall description scores by figure and description type.

Graph 1 – Percentage of Overall Description by Figure Type:

Y-axis represents the different figure types.

X-axis represents the percentage, ranging from 0% to 100%.

All Figures: 0: Blank = 24%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 114%; 3: Descriptive = 89%; 4: Very Descriptive = 68%; Number of figures = 300; Percentage of figures = 100%.

Data Vis: 0: Blank = just over 0%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 34%; 3: Descriptive = 36%; 4: Very Descriptive = 25%; Number of figures = 98; Percentage of figures = 33%.

Image: 0: Blank = just over 0%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 60%; 3: Descriptive = 42%; 4: Very Descriptive = 36%; Number of figures = 142; Percentage of figures = 47%.

Diagram: 0: Blank = 2%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 21%; 3: Descriptive = 16%; 4: Very Descriptive = 10%; Number of figures = 50; Percentage of figures = 17%.

Text Block: 0: Blank = 7%; 1: Not Descriptive = 2%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 4%; 3: Descriptive = N/A; 4: Very Descriptive = N/A; Number of figures = 13; Percentage of figures = 4%.

Table: 0: Blank = 10%; 1: Not Descriptive = N/A; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 4%; 3: Descriptive = 3%; 4: Very Descriptive = N/A; Number of figures = 17; Percentage of figures = 6%.

Graph 2 – Percentage of Description Score by Description Type:

Y-axis represents the different description types.

X-axis represents the percentage, ranging from 0% to 100%.

Overall: 0: Blank = 24%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 114%; 3: Descriptive = 89%; 4: Very Descriptive = 68%; Number of figures = 300.

Caption: 0: Blank = 26%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 185%; 3: Descriptive = 68%; 4: Very Descriptive = 16%; Number of figures = 300.

Alt Text (Long): 0: Blank = 96%; 1: Not Descriptive = just over 0%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 88%; 3: Descriptive = 56%; 4: Very Descriptive = 51%; Number of figures = 300.

Alt Text (Short): 0: Blank = 161%; 1: Not Descriptive = 119%; 2: Somewhat Descriptive = 17%; 3: Descriptive = just over 0%; 4: Very Descriptive = just over 0%; Number of figures = 300.”

# Alt- Text LQ

**Low quality alt text:** “Two bar plots showing overall scores of description quality by figure type and description type.”

**Difference:** the high quality alt text provides numerical details of the different elements in each bar plot whereas the low quality alt text is missing critical information.

For more examples check the guidelines created for [Designing interactive systems’ Creating accessible figures and tables](#) created by Rahaf Alharbi, Cynthia Bennett, Robin Brewer, Franchesca Spektor, Frank Elavsky, and Garreth Tigwell

# Accessibility in Practice

Practice your image description skills at work and on social media. Help promote a culture of image description so that everyone can access meetings, presentations, digital content, and reports equally.

## Image description

Two hands, in different shades of brown, rest on top of a gray stone with the engraved words, "Garden of Fragrance." Vibrant green foliage surrounds the sign.

Dismiss



# Accessibility in Practice

**Consider your audience and the context of the images you use at work. Follow disabled experts online who share tips and best practices of image description.**

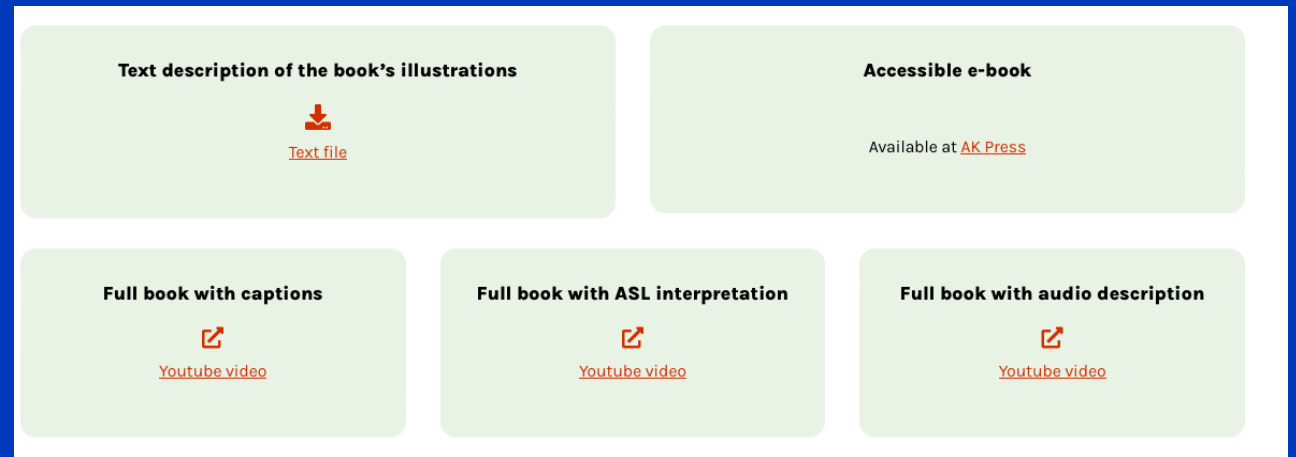
**ACCESS IS L♥VE**



# Accessibility in Practice

Consider the flexibility of digital interfaces as an opportunity to offer multimodal content.

We move together access tools



# Resources to practice

- [New York Times article on image description](#)
- [WAI Web accessibility Initiative guidelines for images](#)
- [An article on Audio description written by creative writer and blind scholar Georgina Kleege and media studies scholar Scott Wallin](#)
- [Guidelines for accessible tables and figures made by computer scientists](#)
- [Guidelines by Digitaliseringsstyrelsen for alt-text](#)
- [Follow the project alt-text as poetry](#)
- [Check out Art Beyond Sight's image description archive of artworks.](#)
- [Check out the article Comics Beyond Sight](#)