

# An alt Decision Tree

This decision tree describes how to use the `alt` attribute of the `<img>` element in various situations. For some types of images, there are alternative approaches, such as using CSS background images for decorative images or web fonts instead of images of text.

## Does the image contain text?

**No:**  
Continue.

**Yes:**

- ... and the text is also present as *real* text nearby.  
→ Use an empty `alt` attribute. See [Decorative Images](#).
- ... and the text is only shown for visual effects.  
→ Use an empty `alt` attribute. See [Decorative Images](#).
- ... and the text has a specific function, for example is an icon.  
→ Use the `alt` attribute to communicate the function of the image. See [Functional Images](#).
- ... and the text in the image is not present otherwise.  
→ Use the `alt` attribute to include the text of the image. See [Images of Text](#).

## Is the image used in a link or a button, and would it be hard or impossible to understand what the link or the button does, if the image wasn't there?

**No:**  
Continue.

**Yes:**

- Use the `alt` attribute to communicate the destination of the link or action taken. See [Functional Images](#).

## Does the image contribute meaning to the current page or context?

**No:**  
Continue.

**Yes:**

- ... and it's a simple graphic or photograph.  
→ Use a brief description of the image in a way that conveys that meaning in the `alt` attribute. See [Informative Images](#).
- ... and it's a graph or complex piece of information.  
→ Include the information contained in the image elsewhere on the page. See [Complex Images](#).
- ... and it shows content that is redundant to *real* text nearby.  
→ Use an empty `alt` attribute. See (redundant) [Functional Images](#).

## Is the image purely decorative or not intended for the user?

**No:**  
Continue.

**Yes:**

- Use an empty `alt` attribute. See [Decorative Images](#).

## Is the image's use not listed above or it's unclear what `alt` text to provide?

This decision tree **does not** cover all cases. For detailed information on the provision of text alternatives refer to the [Image Concepts Page](#).