

An **alternative text** is textual information about what you see in a graphic element that is relevant to the text or topic that the element illustrates. Alternative texts are read by a screen reader and allow people with blindness or vision impairment to see what is, for example, in a given graphic, photo or chart. Graphic elements without an alternative description will be read by the assistive software for visually impaired people as the word ‘graphic’, so they will not get any other information that this ‘graphic’ is supposed to convey.

What should an alternative text look like?

- Above all, the description should be concise and succinct – try to describe the graphic as accurately as possible, doing so in the shortest possible way (the optimum length of an alternative text should not exceed 250 characters)
- It should describe the meaning and content of the graphic element in question
- It should contain key information for the viewer (e.g. a repetition of the content written on the graphic, or in the case of photos, a description of the most important elements building the message: “Rector presenting the habilitation diploma to Dr Anna Kowalska”)
- When creating alternative texts for charts and infographics, remember to include, in addition to the title, a summary and description of the trends resulting from the graphic. Often, due to the length and level of complexity of the data being described, it is worth including the chart description in the proper body of the text, below the graphic itself
- You do not need to use alternative descriptions for graphics that are purely decorative (in which case mark them as decorative by selecting the “Mark as decorative” option). Function of adding alternative description in Microsoft Word