

## Alternate Text in Adobe

You must have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro to use this guide. If the program you are using says Adobe Acrobat Reader at the top of the screen you will not be able to follow these steps. Adobe Acrobat Reader is a free program that only allows you to read PDFs. If you are a CSUSM student, staff or faculty member, you can download the full Adobe Creative Suite from [Instructional & Information Technology Services \(IITS\)](#).

### What is Alternate Text?

Alternate text is a short description of images or graphics included in a file which will be read aloud by a screen reader. The purpose is to provide equitable access of information to all users regardless of ability. Therefore, as a creator of content, it is important to think about what you intend to convey when adding an image to your file and provide similar information in the Alt text.

### How to Create Meaningful Alternative Text

Alt text should be no more than two sentences long. Start with the broadest category of description and get more specific as you write the alternative text. Such as:

- Model of
- Pie chart of
- clip art depicting

After the initial descriptor, add the specific details relevant to the particular image

- educational theory showing “Learning” at the center “Teachers” as the second ring and “Books” as the outermost ring.
- responses to above question where 25% responded “Yellow” 25% “Green” and 50% “purple”
- a stick figure with a light bulb over its head

See the below image and description provided via the [Perkins School for the Blind](#). You may also [visit their website](#) for more information on the elements of good alternative text.



Image description- An infographic titled “How To Write Alt Text” featuring a photo of a capybara. Parts of alt text are divided by color, including identify who, expression, description, colour, and interesting features. The finished description reads “A capybara looking relaxed in a hot spa. Yellow yuzu fruits are floating in the water, and one is balanced on the top of the capybara’s head.”

Infographic created by digital agency Puzzle in the UK for their #AccessAlt campaign. [Puzzle on Instagram: “Okay, so you’ve signed up to our #AccessAlt campaign, and now you’re looking to start including alt text when you post on social. But what...”](#)

### **Alternate Text Error Types in Adobe**

Adobe Acrobat identifies several types of accessibility errors regarding alternate text in PDF files.

- Figures alternate text
- Nested alternate text
- Associated with Content
- Hides annotation
- Other elements alternate text

This document addresses Figures alternate text, Nested alternate text, and Other elements alternate text.

## Figures alternate text

All images and figures within a file need to have alternate text describing that image or graphic. Errors in this category are elements that Adobe has recognized as an image. To correct these errors, you will need to open the Accessibility Checker tool.

1. Select the “Prepare for Accessibility” option under “All tools” on the left-hand side of the screen.

### All tools

 Create a PDF

 Combine files

 Edit a PDF

 Prepare for accessibility

2. The various options and formatting functions will appear on the left-hand side of the screen. Select “Check for accessibility.”

< Prepare for accessibility ×

 Automatically tag PDF

 Automatically tag form fields

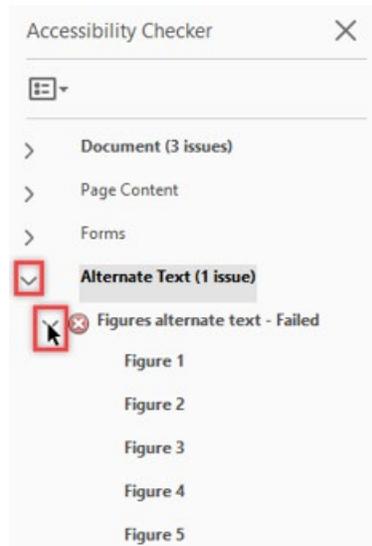
 Change reading options

 Check for accessibility

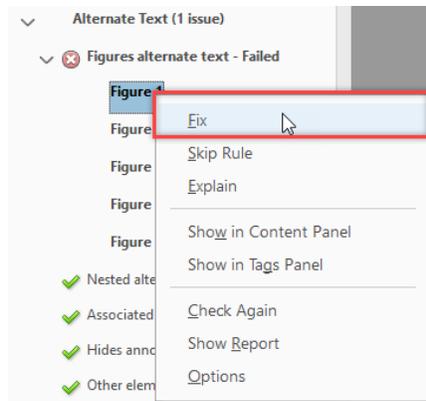
 Open accessibility report

 Identify form fields

3. The “Accessibility Checker Options” menu will pop up. Do not change any of the settings and click “Start Checking” to run the Accessibility Checker on the file which will open on the right-hand side of the screen.
4. Expand the area for “Alternate Text”, and then expand the area for “Figures alternate text – Failed” by clicking on the “>” symbol.

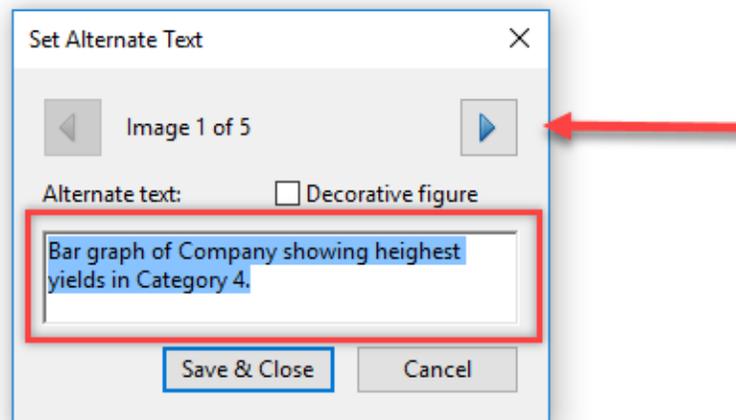
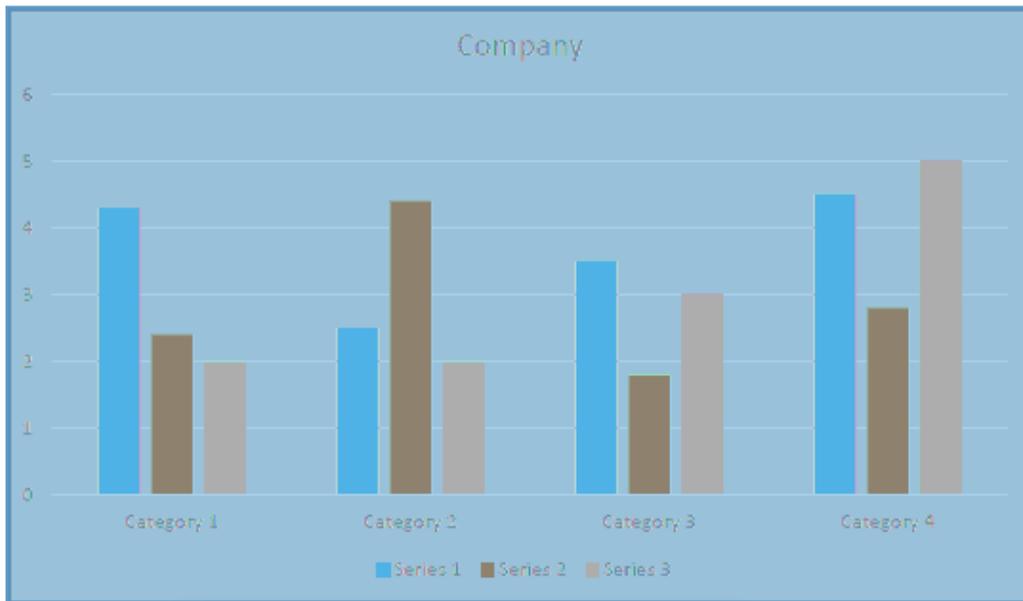


5. Right click on “Figure 1” and select “Fix” from the drop down menu.



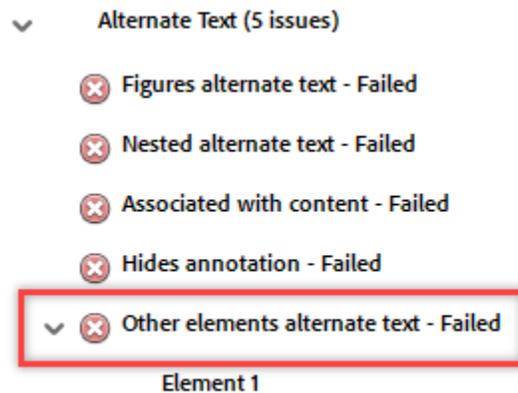
6. Clicking “Fix” will open the “Set alternate text” window. Type the alternate text for the image into the provide space.

## Test Document



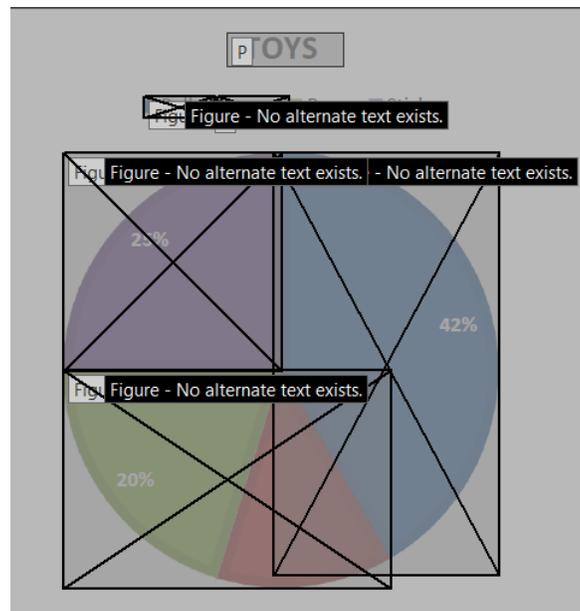
7. After you have added Alternate Text click the right arrow button as shown above. The right arrow button will take the user to the next image which requires Alternate Text. After applying all “Alternate Text” click the “Save & Close” button.
8. If the image is added purely for aesthetics and decoration, you can type an open and close quotation symbol “” to indicate a null value. You can also click the check box for “decorative figure” as shown in the image above, but this does not always work appropriately.
9. You can also set the alt text manually on an image as shown below in the “Other elements alternate text” section.

## Other elements alternate text



These elements are often images or need alternate text, but they fall outside of Adobe’s recognition of “image”. Elements like this can include regular images, lines visually separating text, logos, or sometimes graphs that get deconstructed i.e. each line or point shows up as a different figure.

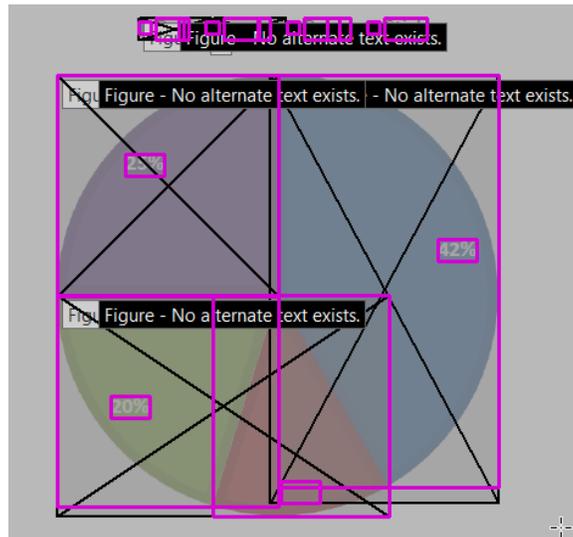
The below image is an example of a graph with each section identified as a separate image. Opening the Reading Order menu will show how Adobe is defining each section of the page, including the image.



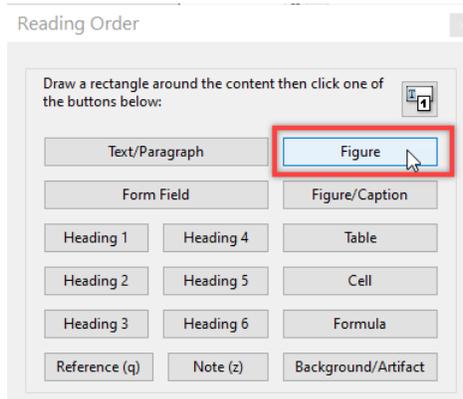
- 1) To correct this “deconstructed image”, open the Reading Order tool to view the structure of the document. On the left-hand side of the screen are the tool options. Select the “Fix reading order” from the bottom of the list.

- Automatically tag PDF
- Automatically tag form fields
- Change reading options
- Check for accessibility
- Open accessibility report
- Identify form fields
- Add alternate text
- Use setup assistant
- Fix reading order

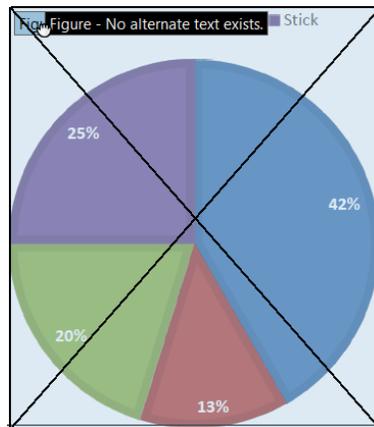
2) Left click and drag a box around the entire image with your cursor. When you release the left mouse button, the entire image should be highlighted as demonstrated below.



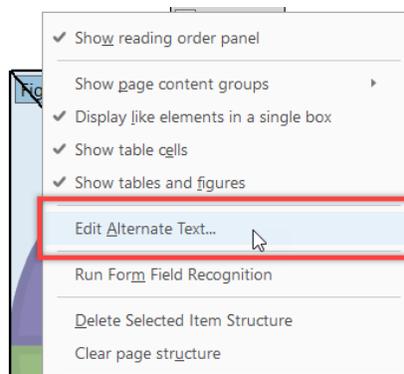
3) With the image selected, chose “Figure” form the Reading Order menu. This will turn the deconstructed image into one whole figure.



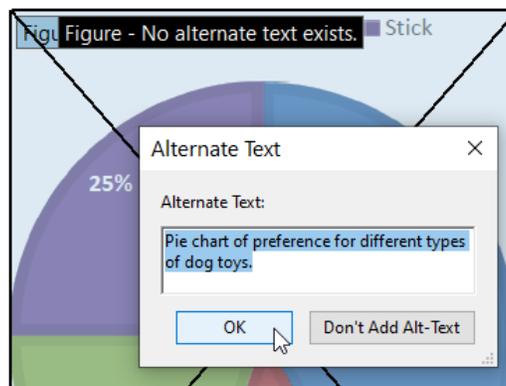
- 4) Click on the small box in the upper left hand corner that says “Figure”, you must click this box to select the image. The whole figure will turn light blue once you have selected it.



- 5) With the image selected, Right Click and chose “Edit Alternate Text” from the drop down menu.



- 6) The Alternate Text window will open, and you can enter the required alternate text. Alternate text should be no more than two sentences long and describe the most important aspect of the image.



### **Nested alternate text**

This error can occur with complex charts where images and text overlay each other, or if there is an embedded link within the image. SmartArt graphs also create this error.

Adobe cannot determine which part of the image is text versus an image, and it cannot differentiate between alternate text and the embedded link. These errors will often have to be simplified by removing the link or going back to the original document and replacing the image with either a completely text version (such as converting a SmartArt graphic to a static table) or by taking a screen shot to flatten the image and remove any embedded elements like text or links.