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Information technology — User interface component accessibility —

Part 11: Guidance on text alternatives for images

Technologies de l'information — Accessibilité du composant interface utilisateur —

Partie 11: Lignes directrices pour les textes alternatifs pour images

Reference number
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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents) or the IEC list of patent declarations received (see http://patents.iec.ch).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 35, *User interfaces*.

This first edition of ISO/IEC 20071-11 as an International Standard cancels and replaces the Technical Specification (ISO/IEC TS 20071-11:2012), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared to the Technical Specification are as follows:

— a major restructuring and simplification of the requirements;

— the addition of image type specific information in annexes.

A list of all parts in the ISO/IEC 20071 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

The saying that "A picture is worth a thousand words" recognizes that images can present a wealth of information. It is important that alternative textual descriptions or representations present a comprehensive account of the purpose and content of images to people unable to see or interpret them.

Text alternatives help people who cannot see the images to understand what the image is of or the purpose it serves by providing the same information in textual form. Text alternatives can be useful to those with visual impairments, those who turned images off in order to improve webpage loading speeds, and those who cannot understand the image being displayed. They can also aid search engines in finding images. This document provides guidance for user interface, web and document developers to help them create informative descriptions for various types of illustrations.

While some sources of guidance advocate that text alternatives be kept short, it is important that they provide an equitable alternative to the image. ISO/IEC Guide 71 states "A system provides equitable use if it allows diverse users to accomplish tasks in an identical manner whenever possible or in an equivalent manner when an identical manner is not possible". This document provides guidance intended to help developers create equitable text alternatives.

The guidance contained in this document is intended to be used by the person who creates content and/or text alternatives to be placed in an electronic document. There is no expectation that this person will have any additional expertise beyond understanding the contents of the document and why an image was chosen to be placed within the document.

While the main intent of the guidance within this document is the creation of text alternatives, the information identified in this guidance could be placed in the main document text, reducing the length of the resulting text alternatives. However, placing information in the main document text does not fully replace the function of having some text alternatives for each image.

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Information technology — User interface component accessibility —

Part 11: Guidance on text alternatives for images

1 Scope

This document gives guidance on how to create text alternatives and what information to put in text alternatives.

This document applies to all static images that are used in any type of electronic document. It also applies to individual images within a slide show.

This document does not apply to moving images (e.g. movies).

NOTE 1 While text alternatives can be implemented via various mechanisms in various types of electronic documents, the contents of this document are not dependent on the choice of implementation mechanism or of electronic document type.

NOTE 2 Guidance on making moving images accessible is contained in ISO/IEC TS 20071-21, ISO/IEC 20071-23 and ISO/IEC 20071-25.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

3.1 Text alternatives and related definitions

3.1.1
text alternative
alternative text
textual description or representation of an image

Note 1 to entry: By storing this description or representation in text format, it is able to be rendered in any available modality.

Note 2 to entry: The main audience of text alternatives are the users of screen reading features.

Note 3 to entry: Text alternatives are often provided to screen reader users in the form of primary and secondary alternative texts of an image.

Note 4 to entry: Generally, "text alternative" is used to refer to any text alternative, while "alternative text" is used to refer to text alternatives for images that are contained in attributes of an image.

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