

# Beyond 99 Red Balloons

A pragmatic guide to alternative  
text

Link to deck:

[bit.ly/99balloons-fldc24](https://bit.ly/99balloons-fldc24)





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# Spot (he/him/they)

**Spotty McSpots A Lot**

**Neighborhood love bug**

- **Chasing his own tail**
- **Getting pets**
- **Drools**



# What we'll discuss today

- ▶ What is accessibility?
- ▶ Terms and definitions
- ▶ Image types
- ▶ Alt text examples
- ▶ Bonus: Overview of slideshows (if time permits)
- ▶ Resources and tools



# International Web Accessibility Laws and Guidelines

- ▶ [Web and Mobile Accessibility Directive](#)
- ▶ [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- ▶ [Bill 81c](#)
- ▶ [European Accessibility Act \(proposed\)](#)
- ▶ [Section 508](#)
- ▶ [Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act](#)
- ▶ [Equality Act 2010](#)
- ▶ [Act on Welfare of Persons with Disabilities](#)

<https://commonlook.com/international-web-accessibility-standards/>

# WCAG Guidelines

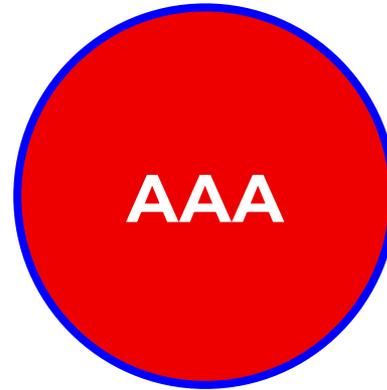
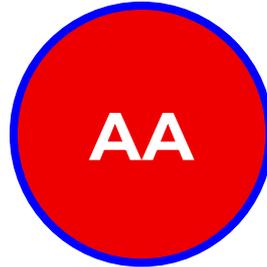
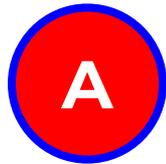
**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)** goal is to provide a single shared standard for web content accessibility.

**They are success criteria, not an end all.**



# Guidelines

**WCAG is broken down into three levels; A, AA, and AAA.** Each increasing A in the level indicates additional criteria to follow.



# WCAG

## Success criteria around images

1.1.1 Non-text Content (Level A)

1.4.5 Images of Text (Level AA)

1.4.9 Images of Text (No Exception) (Level AAA)

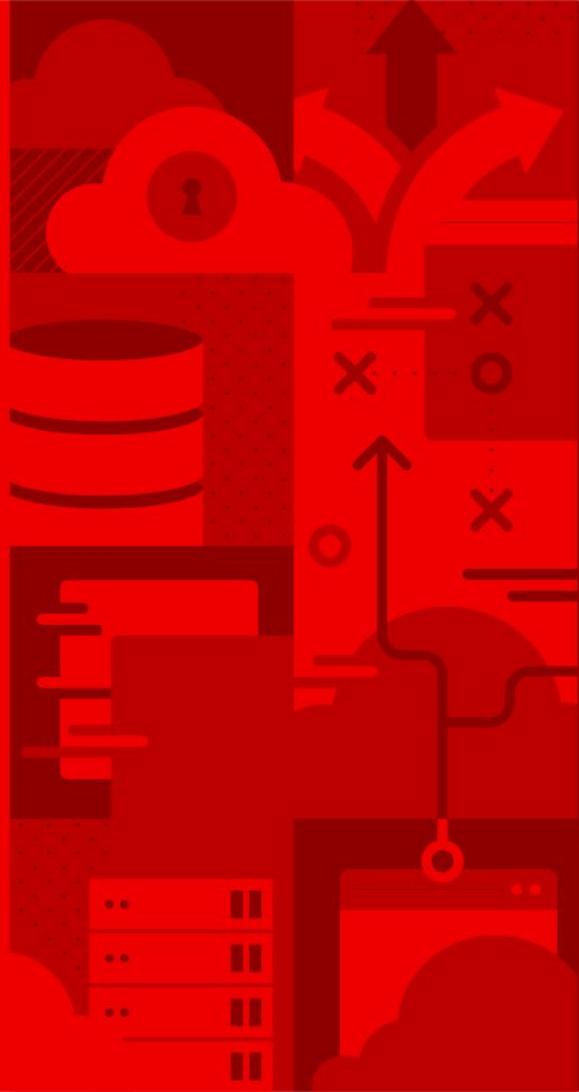
### **This success criterion benefits those:**

- ▶ Who are blind or low vision
- ▶ Using AT (screen readers, mobile phones)
- ▶ Who have difficulty perceiving visual content
- ▶ Who have images turned off
- ▶ SEO (Search engine optimization)

# POUR

An acronym for four high-level principles around accessibility

- ▶ **Perceivable**
  - The user can identify content and interface elements by means of the senses.
- ▶ **Operable**
  - A user can successfully use interactive elements.
- ▶ **Understandable**
  - Users are be able to comprehend the content, and learn how to use the interface.
- ▶ **Robust**
  - Users should be able to choose the technology they use to interact with digital assets.



Let's Break it  
Down



# Visual Needs

Make it easy to see, accommodate visual needs.



# Motor Needs

Make it easy to interact,  
accommodate motor needs.



# Auditory Needs

Make it easy to hear,  
accommodate auditory needs.

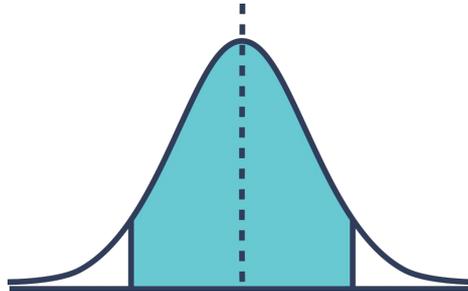


# Cognitive Needs

Make it easy to understand,  
accommodate cognitive needs.

// When you call something an edge case,  
you're really just defining the limits of  
what you care about. //

— Eric Meyer



# Assistive Technology (AT)



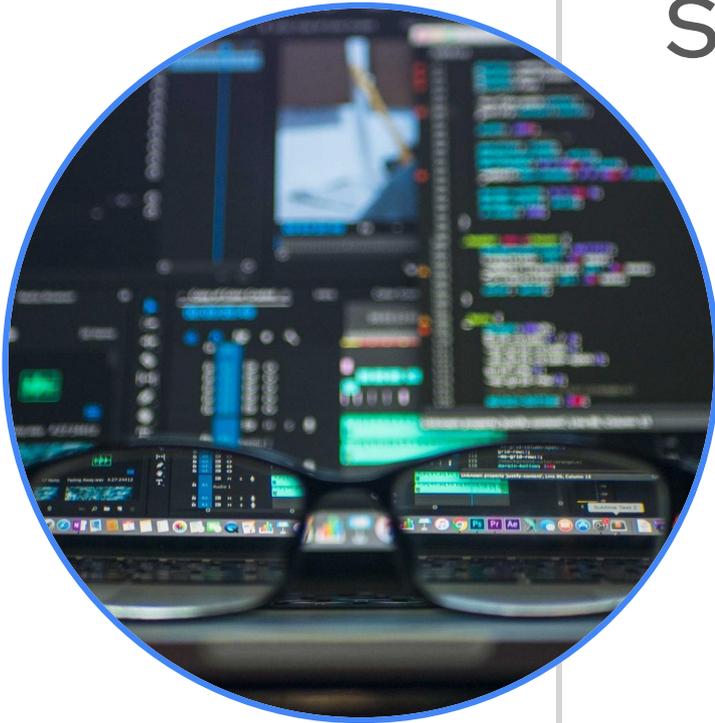
# Screen Readers

Screen readers – used to listen to the content of a webpage.



# Screen Magnification Software

Enlarges screen content to make it easier to read for users with a partial sight impairment.



# Alternative Input Devices



- ▶ Head pointers
- ▶ Motion tracking or eye tracking
- ▶ Single switch entry devices
- ▶ Large-print and tactile keyboards
- ▶ Speech input software

# Virtual Reality



VR comes with new chances to include people with disabilities and make games more accessible.

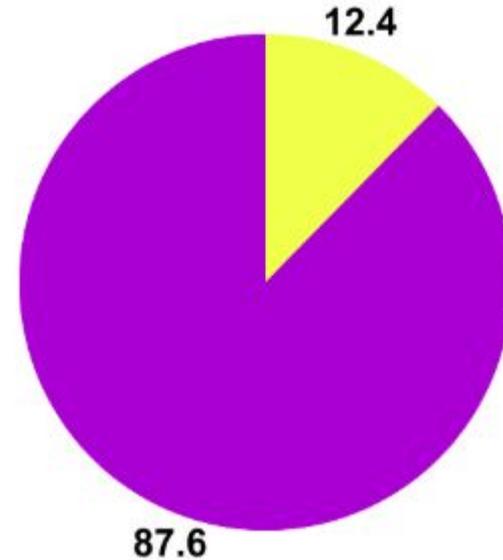
# More Assistive Technologies and Adaptive Strategies

- ▶ Eye tracking
- ▶ Accelerators
- ▶ Keyboard customization
- ▶ Pop-up and animations blockers
- ▶ Refreshable braille display
- ▶ Reading assistants
- ▶ Page maps

# Screen Readers

## Who uses them?

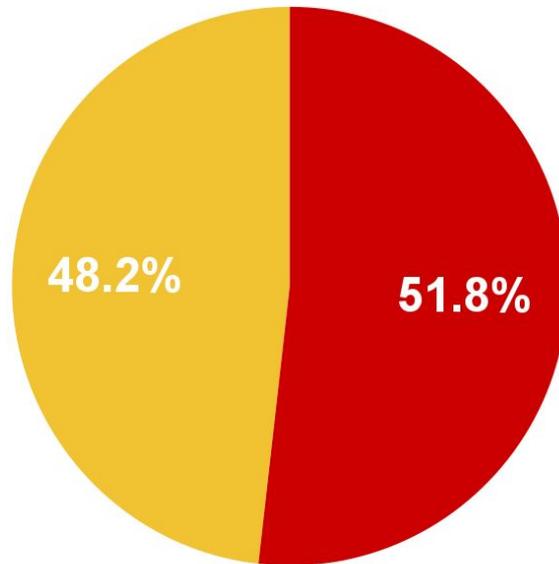
People who live with disabilities



<https://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey8/>

# Screen Readers

## Mobile App vs Web Site Usage



- Mobile
- Web Site

<https://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey8/>



# Why do we love images?



**Images can be major barriers when they are not accessible.**

Accessible images benefit:

- ▶ Screen readers
- ▶ Speech input devices
- ▶ Speech enabled websites
- ▶ When images are turned off in their browsers
- ▶ SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

# Image Types

- ▶ Simple
- ▶ Decorative
- ▶ CAPTCHAs
- ▶ Images of Text
- ▶ Groups of Images
- ▶ Image Maps
- ▶ Complex
- ▶ Functional

# Common uses for images

- ▶ Links
- ▶ Logo
- ▶ Decoration
- ▶ Orientation
- ▶ Buttons



# Simple Image



The image conveys simple information (e.g., a photograph, icon, or logo)

# Head Shot (Simple Image)

- ▶ Person's name
- ▶ It's a headshot
- ▶ Is something happening?
- ▶ Don't over-describe





# Decorative Images

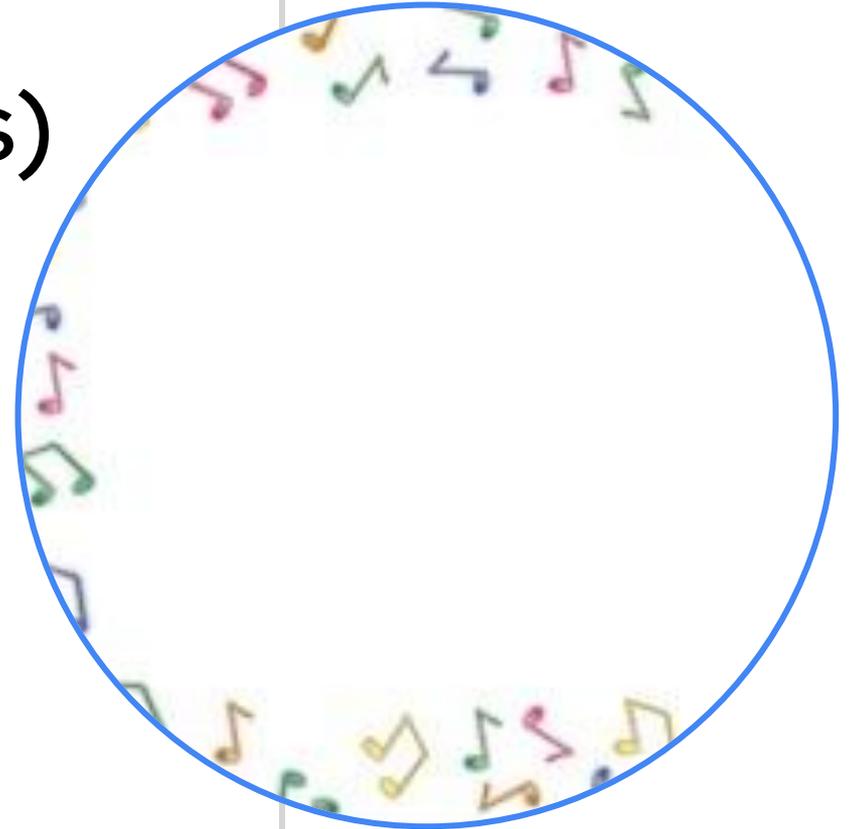
# Decorative Image

The image is purely decorative, not informative



# Borders (Decorative Images)

The image is purely decorative,  
not informative





# Images of Text

Images of text display text that is intended to be read



**THE BEST '80S MUSIC:**

**VH1'S 100 GREATEST SONGS OF**

**THE '80S**

# Logos (Images of Text)

- ▶ Every logo needs alt text
- ▶ "[Organization name] logo."
- ▶ Include text





# Groups of Images

# Groups of Images

The text alternative for one image should convey the information for the entire group

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5





# CAPTCHAS

# CAPTCHAs:

Confirm whether we are human

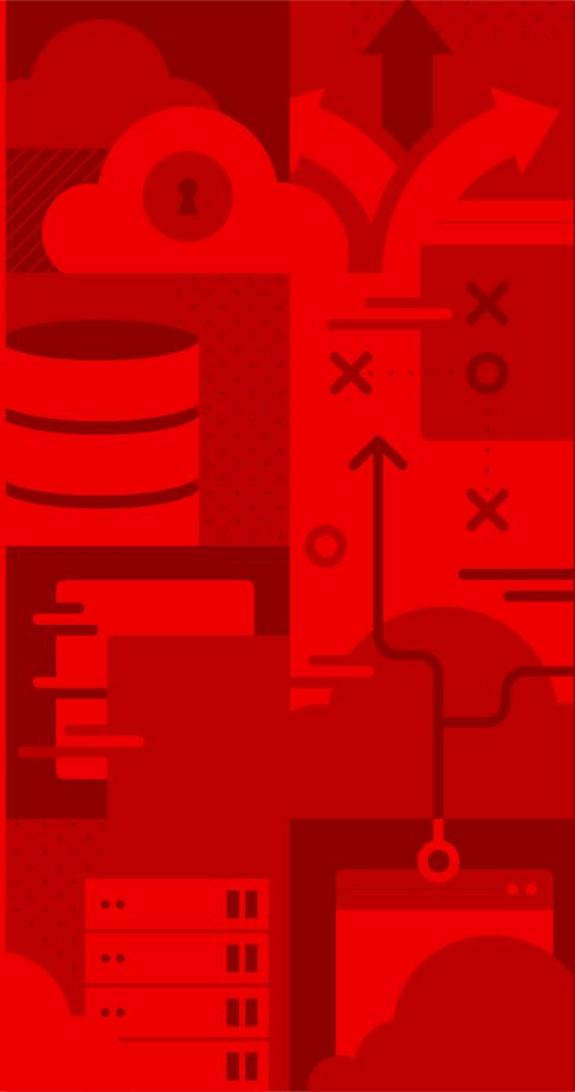


# CAPTCHAs:

## How to avoid user input

- No single way
- Honeytrap
- Simple questions
- Are you human?





# Complex Images

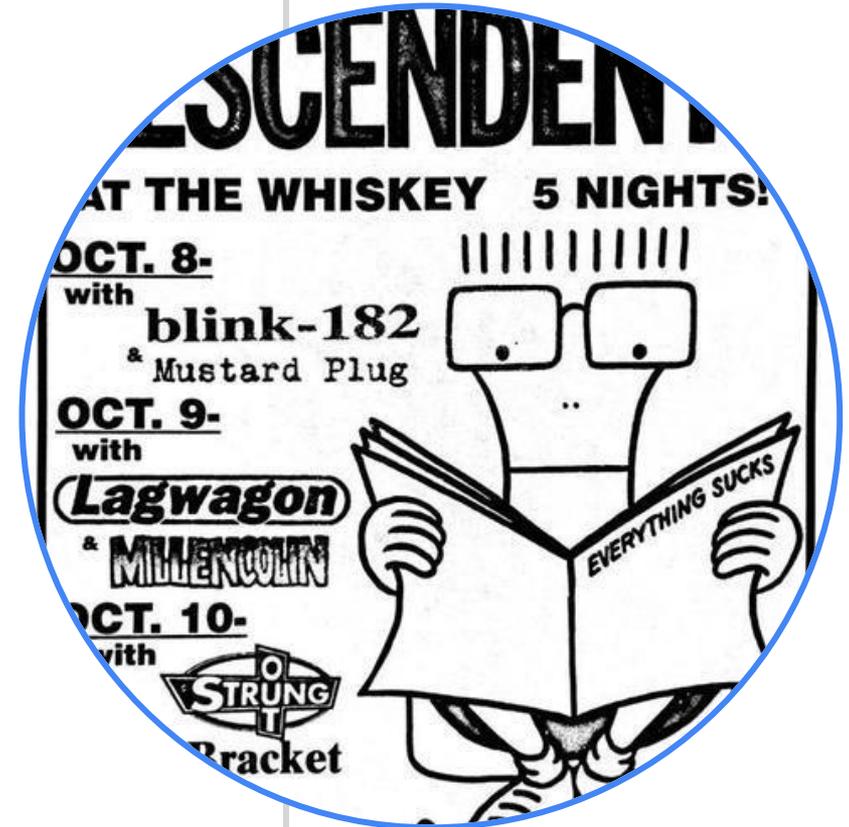
# Complex Image

The image conveys complex information (e.g., a chart or graph)

BILLBOARD HOT 100 SINGLES		OCT. 23, 1991	
TITLE	ARTIST	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART
<b>1</b> <b>★</b> WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN * P. J. RAVENHILL (P. J. RAVENHILL) (COLUMBIA)	<b>★ No. 1 ★</b> MICHAEL BOLTON (COLUMBIA)	50	4
<b>2</b> PRINCE AND THE N. P. G. * PRINCE & THE NEW POWER GENERATION (P. J. RAVENHILL) (P. J. RAVENHILL) (COLUMBIA)	51	30	22
<b>3</b> SET ADRIFF ON MEMORY BLISS * P. M. DAWN * P. M. DAWN (COLUMBIA)	53	52	6
<b>4</b> IT'S SO HARD TO SAY GOODBYE TO YESTERDAY * DOVE II MEN * DOVE II MEN (COLUMBIA)	54	68	5
<b>5</b> CANT STOP THIS THING WE STARTED * BRYAN ADAMS * BRYAN ADAMS (COLUMBIA)	55	30	11
<b>6</b> SET THE NIGHT TO MUSIC * ROBERTA FLACK WITH MAXI PRIEST * ROBERTA FLACK WITH MAXI PRIEST (COLUMBIA)	56	44	16
<b>7</b> THAT'S WHAT LOVE IS FOR * AMY GRANT * AMY GRANT (COLUMBIA)	57	65	5
<b>8</b> BLOWING KISSES IN THE WIND * PAULA ABUVAL * PAULA ABUVAL (COLUMBIA)	58	63	4
<b>9</b> I WONDER WHY * CURTIS STUBBS * CURTIS STUBBS (COLUMBIA)	59	66	3
<b>10</b> DONT CRY * GUNS N' ROSES * GUNS N' ROSES (GUNSHIP)	60	74	3
<b>11</b> O.P.P.A. * NAUGHTY BY NATURE * NAUGHTY BY NATURE (GUNSHIP)	61	88	3
<b>12</b> STREET OF DREAMS * H.A. FREELAS * H.A. FREELAS (GUNSHIP)	62	57	9
<b>13</b> LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX * SALT-N-PEPA * SALT-N-PEPA (GUNSHIP)	63	71	8
<b>14</b> GET A LEG UP * JOHN MELLENCAMP * JOHN MELLENCAMP (GUNSHIP)	64	50	3
<b>15</b> ROMANTIC * KARYN WHITE * KARYN WHITE (GUNSHIP)	65	67	5
<b>16</b> KEEP COMING BACK * RICHARD MARK * RICHARD MARK (GUNSHIP)	66	54	17
<b>17</b> THE ONE AND ONLY * CHESNEY HAWKES * CHESNEY HAWKES (GUNSHIP)	67	45	19
<b>18</b> LIES * EMP * EMP (GUNSHIP)	68	34	19
<b>19</b> WITH YOU * TONY TERRY * TONY TERRY (GUNSHIP)	69	96	2
<b>20</b> BRING MY BELL * D. J. JAZZY JEFF & THE FRESH PRINCE * D. J. JAZZY JEFF & THE FRESH PRINCE (GUNSHIP)	70	79	2
<b>21</b> ALL 4 LOVE * COLOR ME BADD * COLOR ME BADD (GUNSHIP)	71	78	4
<b>22</b> NO SON OF MINE * GENESIS * GENESIS (GUNSHIP)	72	88	2
<b>23</b> SOMETHING GOT ME STARTED * SIMPLY RED * SIMPLY RED (GUNSHIP)	73	89	2
<b>24</b> DO ANYTHING * NATURAL SELECTION * NATURAL SELECTION (GUNSHIP)	74	82	9
<b>25</b> FINALLY * CE CE PENEVTON * CE CE PENEVTON (GUNSHIP)	75	64	22
<b>26</b> WILDSIDE * MARYKAT & THE FUNNY BUNCH * MARYKAT & THE FUNNY BUNCH (GUNSHIP)	76	76	8
<b>27</b> TOP OF THE WORLD * VAN HALEN * VAN HALEN (GUNSHIP)	77	NEW	1
<b>28</b> IVE FORGOTTEN YOU * GLORIA ESTEFAN * GLORIA ESTEFAN (GUNSHIP)	78	NEW	1
<b>29</b> MY LADY * JODECI * JODECI (GUNSHIP)	79	62	50
<b>30</b> ***POWER PICK/AIRPLAY*** * MARIAN CAREY * MARIAN CAREY (GUNSHIP)	80	80	80

# Infographic (Complex Image)

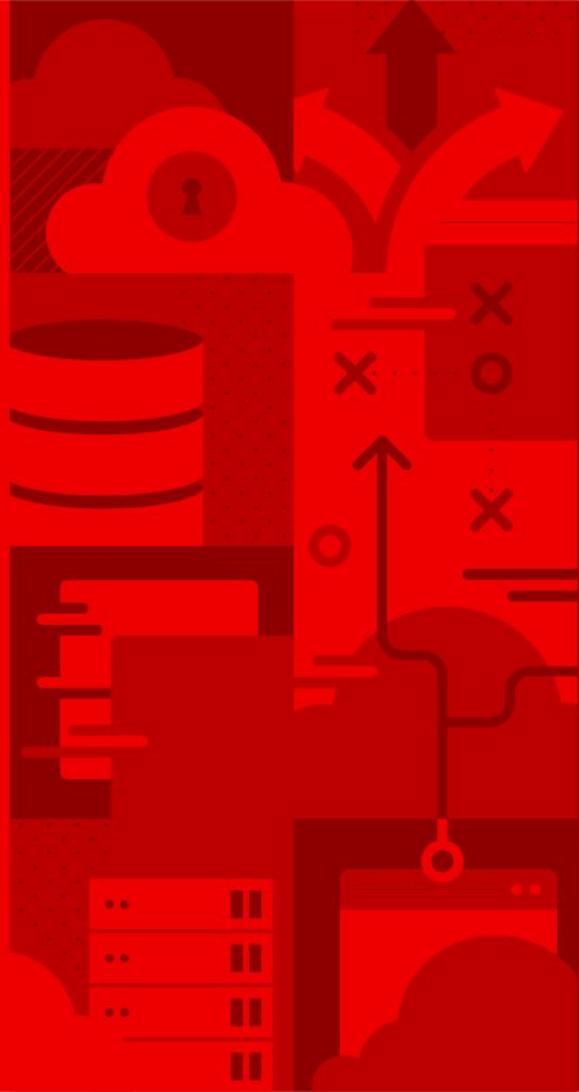
- ▶ Include any text
- ▶ Provide vital layout information
- ▶ Order the information



# Code (Complex Image)

The image is a screenshot of code, try to use code blocks





# Functional Images

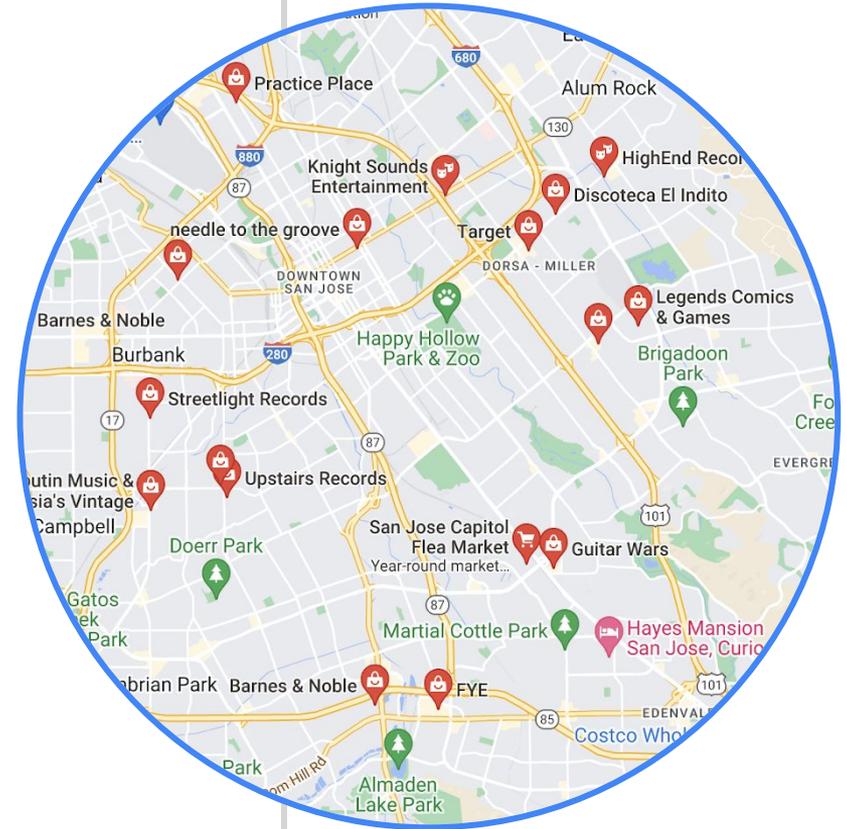
# WCAG

Success criteria around the use of functional images

- ▶ **2.4.4 Link Purpose (In Context):** The purpose of each link can be determined from the link text alone or from the link text together with its programmatically determined link context. (Level A)
- ▶ **2.4.9 Link Purpose (Link Only):** A mechanism is available to allow the purpose of each link to be identified from link text alone, except where the purpose of the link would be ambiguous to users in general. (Level AAA)

# Functional Images (Images maps)

- ▶ Must include alt text
- ▶ Provide all text in the image





## Images conveying file format (Functional)

Conveying information within link text

# Image used in a button (Functional)

The image is used to give the  
button a distinct style





Stand-alone icon image that has a function (Functional)

The image conveys a print icon



# Screenshots

Generally add visual explanations to the text (How-Tos)

- ▶ “screenshot of [INSTRUCTIONS] as explained on page.”





## Illustrations (simple or complex images)

Be sure to describe what adds value



# Alt text Don'ts

Images can be major barriers when they are not accessible:

- ▶ Don't begin with "image of", "picture of", etc.
- ▶ Don't use the file name (screenshot.jpeg)
- ▶ Don't be too wordy
- ▶ Don't rely on Artificial Intelligence
- ▶ Don't use a space (" "), Use null ("")
- ▶ Don't use emoji icons or ASCII art in alt text

# Alt text Do's

For descriptions, users generally want:

- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Location
- ▶ Colors
- ▶ Feelings or emotions
- ▶ Who is present (people)
- ▶ What is present (objects)
- ▶ What is happening?



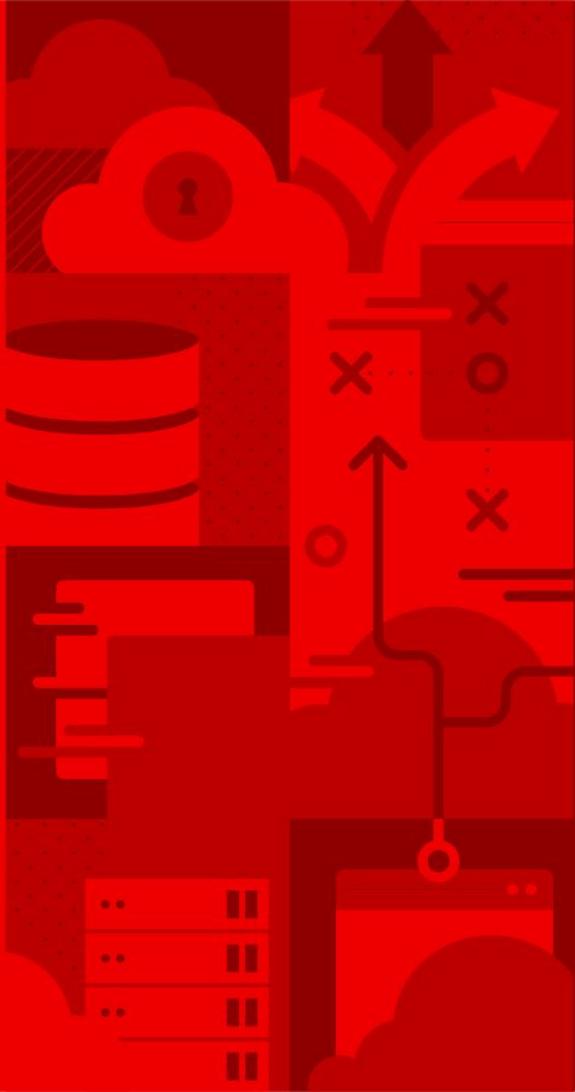
**Not all  
descriptions  
are created  
equal**



## What is the image's purpose?

Clarify the purpose of the image





**Alt text:  
Men with  
makeup**



Men with makeup



Men with makeup



Men with makeup



The faces of the music group  
Kiss in their stage makeup



The faces of the music group  
Kiss in their stage makeup



David Bowie with a red and  
blue lightning bolt on his face



# Alt text: Rio



Rio



Rio



Rio



The iconic statue of “Christ the Redeemer” looking over the city of Rio de Janeiro.



The iconic statue of “Christ the Redeemer” looking over the city of Rio de Janeiro



Duran Duran's album cover Rio by artist Patrick Nagel



**Alt text:  
Dead bug**



Dead bug



Dead bug



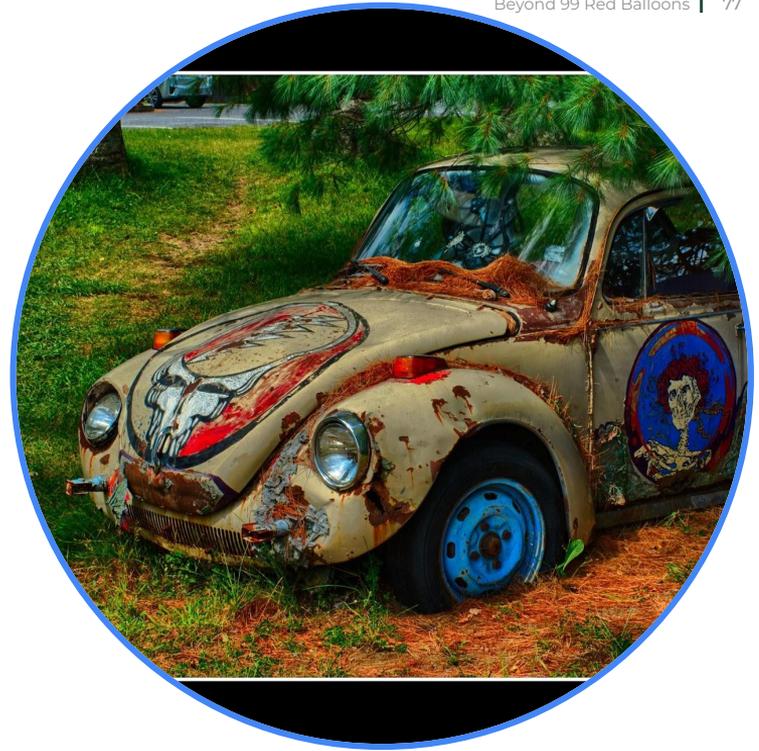
Dead Bug



A bug on a leaf carrying a  
stack of dead bugs on its  
back



A bug on a leaf carrying a stack of dead bugs on its back.



A volkswagen beetle with a Grateful Dead logo on its hood



**Alt text:**  
**Paul Revere**



Paul Revere



Paul Revere



Paul Revere



Statue of Paul Revere in a park on his horse



Statue of Paul Revere in a park on his horse



DefJam record of Beastie Boys songs Paul Revere and It's the new style





Flock of Seagulls



Flock of Seagulls



Flock of Seagulls



A flock of seagulls flying  
against a bright blue sky



A flock of seagulls flying against a bright blue sky



The band Flock of seagulls posing with 80's style clothes and hairstyles





AC/DC



AC/DC



AC/DC



AC: a tilde over a line. DC: a line over a dashed line



AC: a tilde over a line. DC: a line over a dashed line



The band AC/DC with Malcolm Young in the front



# Alt text: The Cure



## The Cure



The Cure



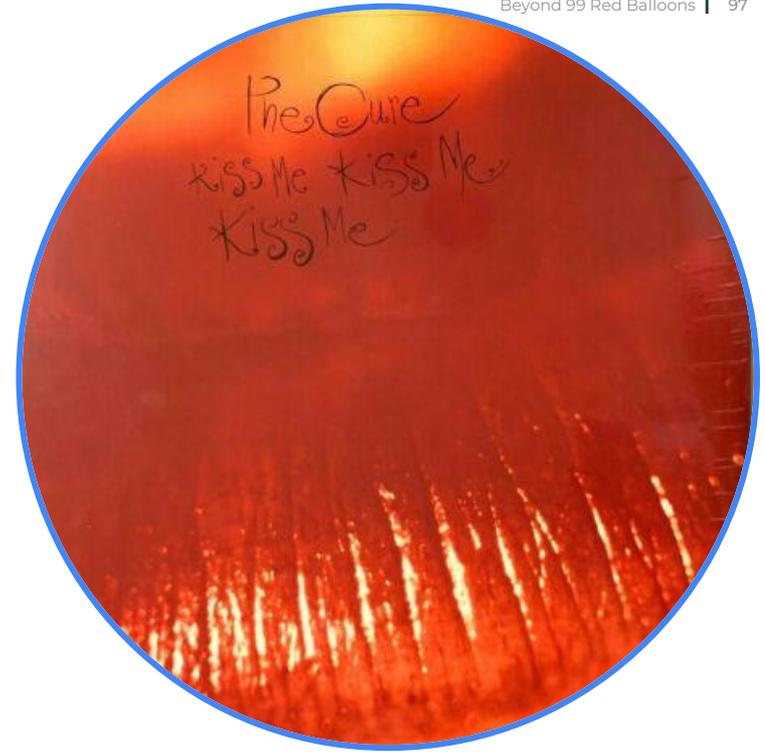
The Cure



Someone holding a tray of  
pills



Someone holding a tray of pills



The Cure's "Kiss Me Kiss Me Kiss Me" album with shiny red lips on the cover





# Why write accessible content for social media?

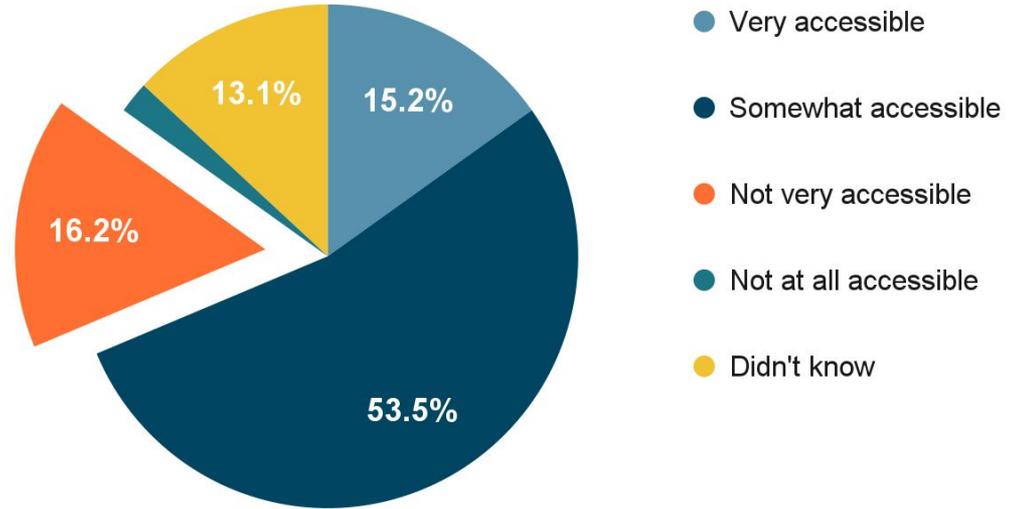


88%

Of 1792 screenreader users, 88% use it  
on a mobile device  
54.3% found social media **SOMEWHAT**  
accessible

# Screen Readers

## Social Media Accessibility

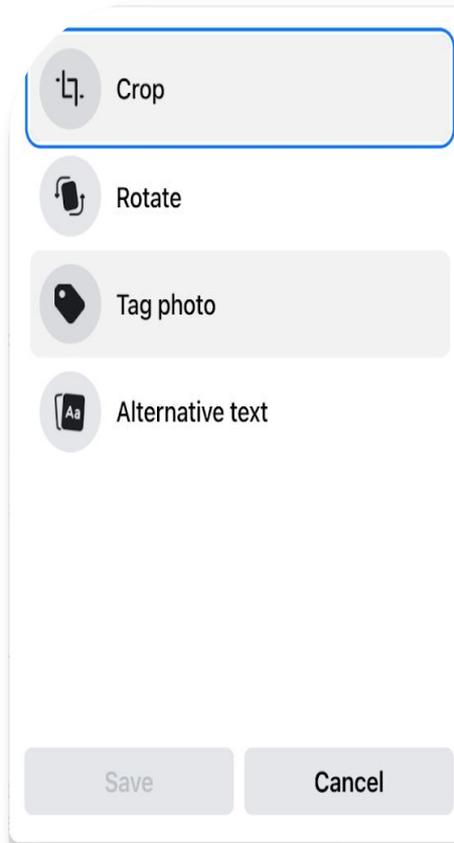
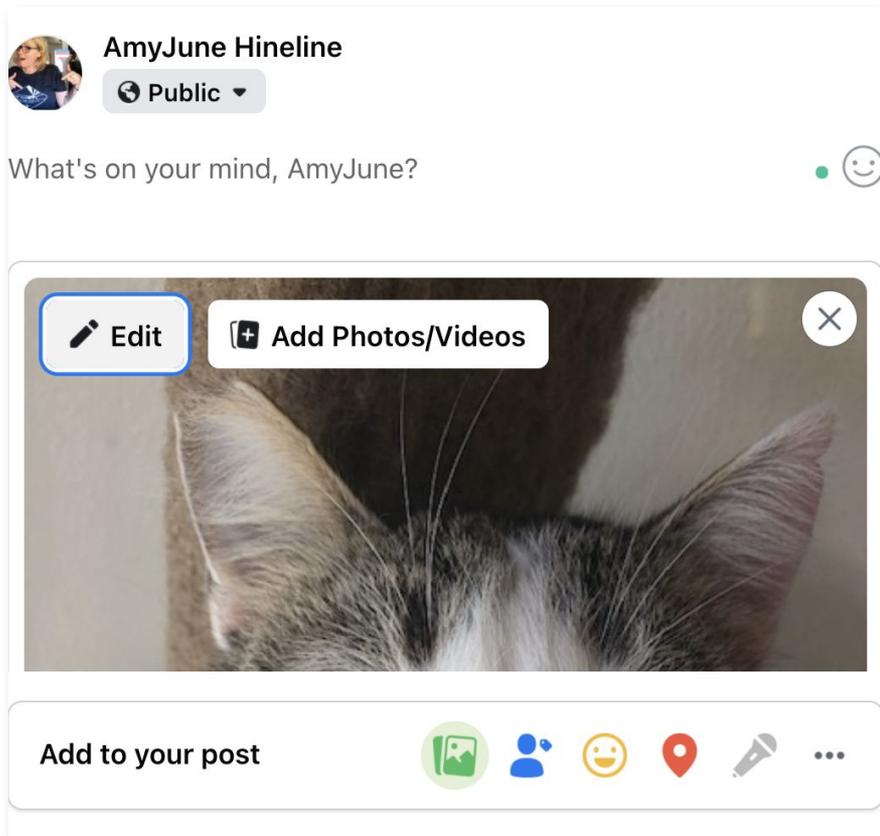


<https://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey8/>

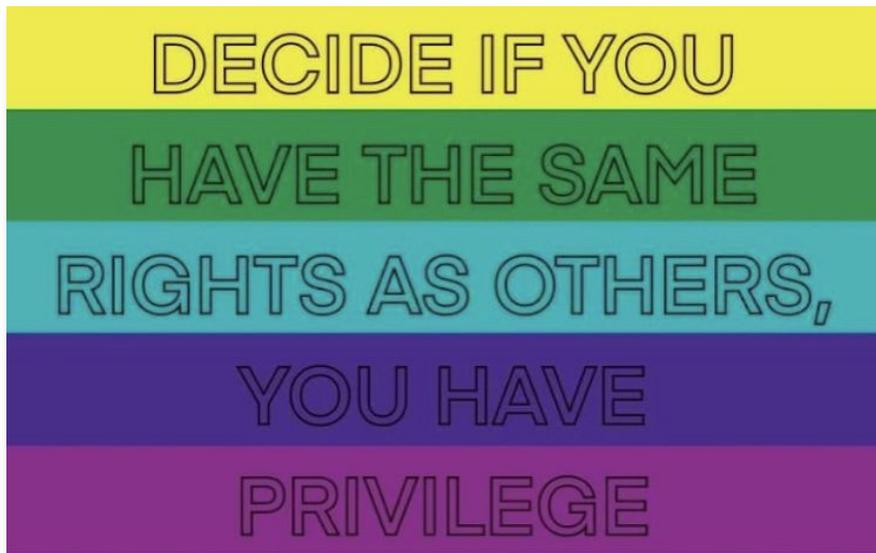
# Accessibility in apps



# Alt Text in Facebook



# Alt Text in Instagram



**volkswagenchick** Caption:

If you've never had a supreme court case decide if you have the same rights as others, you have privilege.

Share Your Posts to Facebook



Automatically share your photo and video posts to Facebook.

Facebook Audience

Only Me >

## Accessibility

Write Alt Text >

Alt text describes your photos for people with visual impairments. Alt text will be automatically created for your photos or you can choose to write your own.

# Alt Text in Twitter

Home

✕ Unsent Tweets

 This is how you add alt text

Caption: A11yTalks logo 



✕  Tag people  Add description

 Everyone can reply

  **Tweet**

Home

← Edit photo **Save**

 **ALT**

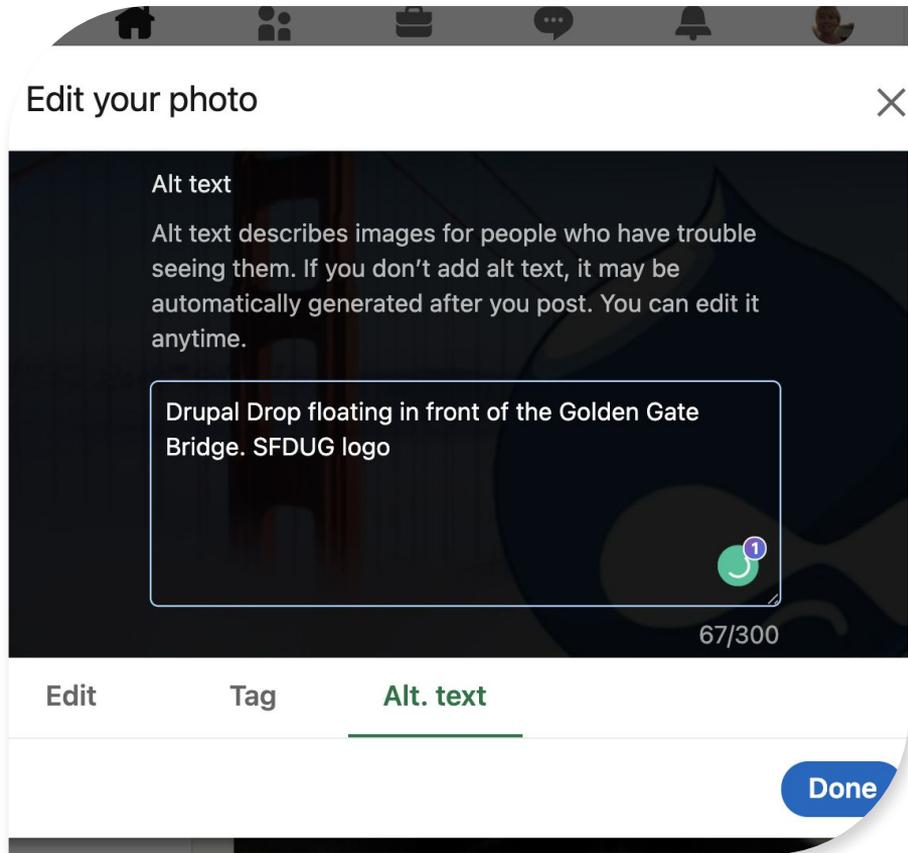
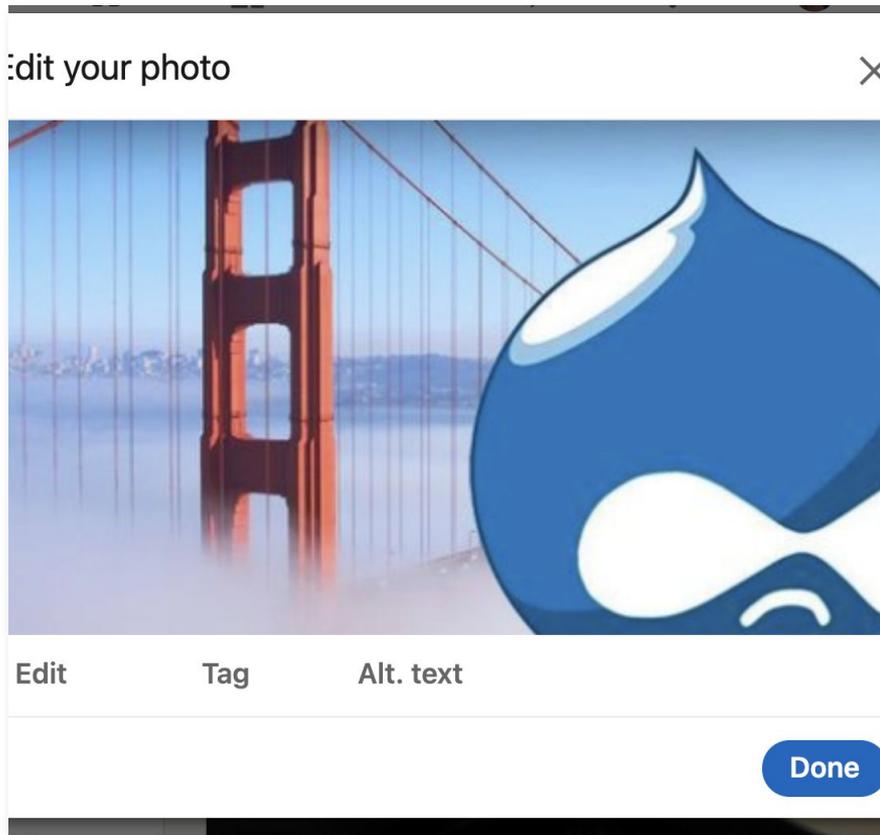


**Description** 14 / 1,000

A11yTalks logo 

[What is alt text?](#)

# Alt Text in LinkedIn



# Thanks!!



[linkedin.com/volkswagenchick](https://www.linkedin.com/company/volkswagen-chick)



[twitter.com/volkswagenchick](https://twitter.com/volkswagenchick)

# Slide Shows

The first rule of slideshows is  
not to use slideshows

# Slideshows

## Accessible controls



- ▶ The ability to turn off the player
- ▶ Visible controls
- ▶ Highlighted on focus
- ▶ No keyboard traps

# Slideshows

## Color contrast



- ▶ Make sure the controls are visible
- ▶ Size and color!
- ▶ Provide generous touch targets

# Slideshows

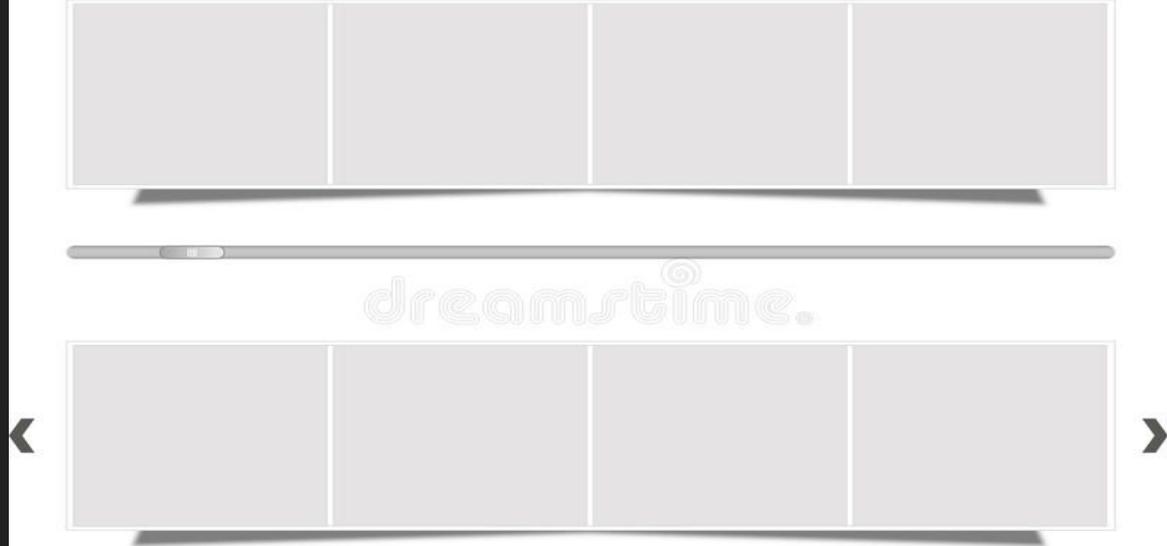
## Reasonable alternative



The slideshow does not need to function with style sheets disabled, but all the content needs to be available.

# Slideshows

Reasonable  
alternative



The slideshow does not need to function with style sheets disabled, but all the content needs to be available.



# Free tools

- WAVE
- aXe
- WebAim: Contrast Checker
- Siteimprove Accessibility Checker
- Tota1ly
- Section 508 Checklist
- CSS Validation
- HTML Validation
- Readability
- The A11y Project checklist

# Links for additional resources

- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- [Understanding the Four Principles of Accessibility](#)
- [ADA COMPLIANCE](#)
- [How to Design Great Alt Text](#)
- [W3C - Resources on Alternative Text for Images](#)
- [Fast Facts of Common Eye Disorders by the CDC](#)
- [Screen Reader User Survey #9 Results](#)