



# Image Descriptions

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Josie Gray (she/her)

BCcampus

[jgray@bccampus.ca](mailto:jgray@bccampus.ca)

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# What to expect

- 15-minute presentation
  - 10-minute activity to practice
  - 5-minute discussion/questions
- 





# What is accessibility?



When we design and create resources, experiences, tools, and spaces that enable the diversity of our bodies and minds and centres the needs of people with disabilities.





# An image description



is a verbal or written description of an image for someone who can't see it.



# Who are image descriptions for?

Someone who has

- A disability affecting vision (i.e., blindness)
- A brain injury that causes sensitivity to screens
- A cognitive disability where a written explanation may be helpful
- Poor internet connection that causes images not to load



# Why are image descriptions important?

Images have huge explanatory power. They allow us to give context, represent spatial concepts, show relationships, and provide examples in minimal space.

In education, images are often crucial parts of course materials. Image descriptions ensure that important information is provided for all students from the very beginning.



# Where are image descriptions used?

Image descriptions can be used anywhere digital images are used:

- Websites
- Social media
- Course materials
- E-books



# Where do image descriptions go?

- Alternative text
- Surrounding text
- Long description section





# What is alternative (alt) text?

A type of written image description that is added to the HTML of a digital image.

It will not appear visually but can be accessed by assistive technology.

### Image Details

Alternative Text

[Describe the purpose of the image.](#) Leave empty if the image is purely decorative.

Caption

DISPLAY SETTINGS

Align








Figure 1 The Numbered Treaties

Map of Numbered Treaties of Canada by [Themightyquill](#) is licensed under a [CC BY-SA 2.5 licence](#).





## Does the image need a description?

**A decorative image** is an image that is primarily for design and doesn't convey information.

It does not need a description.



**A functional image** is an image that conveys information that is not described elsewhere.

It does need a description.





## Example of a decorative image

A bag of potato chips weighs 48 grams.

How many milligrams is that?

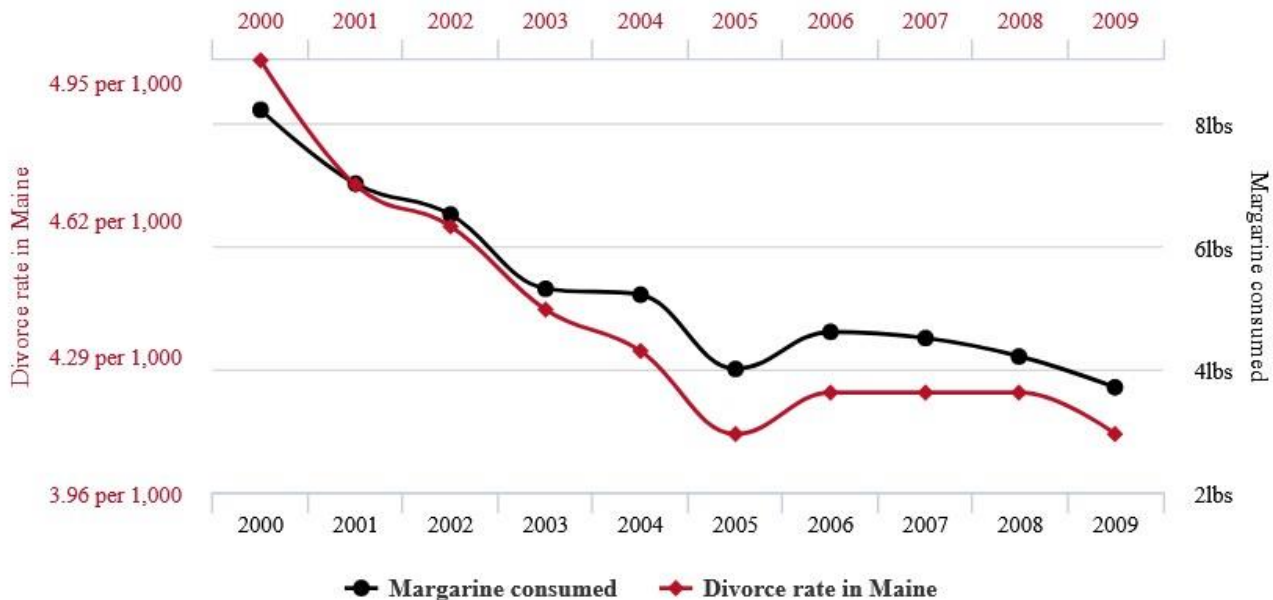


# Divorce rate in Maine

correlates with

## Per capita consumption of margarine

Correlation: 99.26% ( $r=0.992558$ )



tylervigen.com

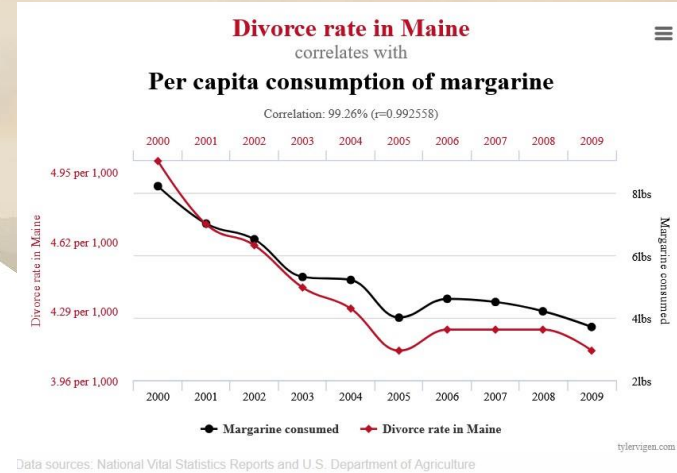
Data sources: National Vital Statistics Reports and U.S. Department of Agriculture

Spurious Correlations by Tyler Vigen is licensed under a CC BY 4.0 licence.



# Object – Action - Context

- **Object:** A line graph
- **Action:** shows a close correlation between the divorce rate in Maine and the per capita consumption of margarine between 2000 and 2009.
- **Context:** The lines fall at the same rate from 2000 to 2005, then there is a slight rise before it levels off again.



Chen, A. (2020).



# Things to keep in mind

1. **Context:** Why is the image there?
2. **Audience:** Who is accessing the image?
3. **Concise:** Keep it short
4. **Objectivity:** Avoid judgements
5. **General to specific**
6. **Tone and language**

The DIAGRAM Center. "How to Describe Images." *Poet Training Tool*. <https://poet.diagramcenter.org/how.html>



# Activity: What do you see?

Take one minute.  
Write down 5-10  
things that you  
see.





# Activity: Try to describe

Write a description for this image.

**Remember:**  
Context, Audience,  
Concise, Objective,  
General to specific,  
Tone & language.



# Activity: Possible description

A college math classroom. Students sit in 4 rows of tiered desks. An instructor stands in front of a projector.



# Questions and Discussion



# Tools and Resources

- [Alt Text as Poetry](#)
- [POET Training Tool](#)
- [Accessibility Toolkit's chapter on Images](#)
- [Complex Images for All Learners \[PDF\]](#)
- [Extract text from an image](#)
- [Character counter](#)





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# Thank you!

**Register for upcoming Accessibility Bites sessions:**

<https://bccampus.ca/events/>

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# References

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