

Image alt tags and title tags for SEO

So if you're looking for how to add SEO value to your images by using **ALT** tags and **TITLE** tags then... Stop right there!

First off, I need to get this off my chest. The **** element is the **tag**, **ALT** and **TITLE** are **attributes** of that tag. It's common place to refer to "**ALT** tags" and I admit I do it myself but technically that's incorrect, **ALT** and **TITLE** are just **attributes**.

Admittedly adding **ALT** attribute to you image tag will no doubt help your SEO a little, in particular if used correctly it will help your images appear in Google Image searches, but that is not what it is for and should not be the sole reason for using them. I have so far found no evidence that **TITLE** tag has any SEO benefit.

It's important to appropriately use descriptive information for your image alt attributes. In the same way that it's better to have well written, grammatically correct and meaningful text aimed towards being read by a human being on your website rather than keyword stuffed babble aimed at a web crawler.

So let's get back to basics....

What is an ALT tag*?

*OK, so I know it's not technically a tag – but that's what everyone is used to so I'll carry on this way.

ALT is code speak for "Alternative Text", The **ALT** tag is attached to the image tag and is there to provide a description of the image which is read aloud by screen readers for blind or visually impaired users.

Following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) set out by The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) — "*All non-text content that is presented to the user has a text alternative that serves the equivalent purpose.*"

What is a Title tag (or attribute)?

As specified by W3C the image **TITLE** attribute "*offers advisory information about the element for which it is set*". When used in conjunction with the **ALT** tag it should complement the **ALT** tag not repeat it. In the same way search engines like Google are clever enough to penalise you for keyword stuffing your content, it is not best practice to simply copy and paste your alt tag content into your title tag.

Should I use both TITLE and ALT tag?

The **ALT** tag provides descriptive alternative text for when an image cannot be displayed; the **TITLE** tag is used for providing supplementary information about the element. It has been reported that Google focus on the alt tag text, so if you're only going to use one – use the **ALT** tag.

Be brief but be descriptive, and you don't need to include "image" or "picture" in the description (e.g. "this is a picture of ...") because the browser already knows it's an image from the **IMG** tag.

Depending on the browser you're using the content in the **TITLE** tag is displayed in a little pop up tool tip. Personally I find it annoying that this little tool tips flicker every time I move my mouse over the page. There's no reason to put a **TITLE** tag on every image so try and reserve them for when the image is a link, but in which case it would be advisable to add the **TITLE** attribute to the anchor link rather than the **IMG** tag anyway.

An example of how to use Alt and Title attributes with your image tag

Using this picture of Elizabeth Tower (yes that's the official name on the clock tower that houses the bell named 'Big ben') from Wikipedia I will try and give an example of the best way to use title and alt attributes.



So let's look at the code that makes that image display on the screen:

```
<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_ben" target="_blank" title="The Wikipedia page for Big Ben">  
  
</a>
```

You should notice the filename of the image itself is descriptive “[Big_Ben_Clear_Skies.JPG](#)” this is a HUGE thumbs up and will far outweigh any SEO value of the **ALT** attribute applied to the image.

The **ALT** attribute briefly describes what the image shows “[The clock tower that houses the bell named Big Ben](#)”.

And the **TITLE** attribute is applied to the link and explains where the link goes.

For more information check out W3C and WCAG

<http://www.w3.org/>

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag>

www.webnetism.com