

Script for Canvas RCE Accessibility - Text Alternatives

Screen:

Title slide with background showing the Pylons.

Text reads as follows:

Canvas Accessibility

Text Alternatives 1

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Narrator: If you use images in your content, it is important that you provide alternatives to those images in the form of text that can be read by screen reading software. This is called alternative text, or alt text.

Screen: Narrator navigates to https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/69527/pages/text-alternatives-non-example?module_item_id=844613 in the Safari browser.

Narrator: Let me show you how alt text works with an example that is close to my heart. Here is a page about a guitar that I own. I love this guitar. It is beautiful. I want to share my love of this guitar with the world, but the way I've made this page will leave people who are blind and who use screen reading software out in the cold.

Let me demonstrate with VoiceOver, the screen reader that comes with macOS. The first thing VoiceOver will do upon loading is read the page title.

Screen: Narrator turns on VoiceOver (VO) by pressing CMD+F5 and lets it read the page title before silencing it by pressing the Control key.

VoiceOver: VoiceOver on Safari, Text Alternatives (non-example): RCE Examples, window

Narrator: I'm going to start by navigating to the main part of the page using a keyboard shortcut.

Screen: Narrator presses CTRL+OPT+CMD+H

VoiceOver: heading level 1 Text Alternatives (non-example), You are currently on a heading level 1

Narrator: Then, I'll navigate through the page, line by line.

Listen to what happens when I get to the picture of my guitar.

Screen: *Narrator presses CTRL+OPT+Right Arrow until he gets to the image and presses Control after it says "blue.png, image" to silence it.*

VoiceOver: heading level 2 Ibanez AFS80T Hollowbody Electric Guitar,
blue.png, image

Narrator: It just says, *blue.png*. A blue what? I dunno. I guess, given the context, I could assume that it was a blue guitar, but maybe it is someone playing the blues, or feeling blue. Heck, it could be a blue potato for all I know from what the screen reader said. As someone who loves this guitar, I find this deeply unsatisfying.

I'm going to turn off the screen reader, so we can see where this offending text, *blue.png*, is coming from.

Screen: *Narrator turns off VO (CMD+F5)*

VoiceOver: VoiceOver off

To see the source of the alt text, we click the **Edit button** to bring up Canvas's rich content editor,

Screen: *Narrator clicks **Edit button***

Narrator: Click on the picture of the guitar,

Screen: *Narrator clicks the guitar image*

Narrator: And click the **Embed Image button**.

Screen: *Narrator clicks the Embed Image button*

Narrator: There, under **Attributes**, we find a field called **Alt text**, which contains the text that was spoken by our screen reader.

Screen: *Narrator selects the text in the **Alt text field**.*

Narrator: Now, by default, anytime you select an image to add to the rich content editor, it will use the filename as the alt text, which is almost *never* what we want. I could change the alt text to something meaningful right here, by altering the text in the field and clicking the **Update**

button, but I want to demonstrate how the **Check Accessibility wizard** in Canvas's rich content editor will find accessibility issues for you and help you fix them.

To do this, I'm going to close the **Insert/Edit Image dialog**.

Screen: Narrator closes dialog.

Narrator: And, in the rich content editor toolbar, click the **Check Accessibility button**.

Screen: Narrator clicks Check Accessibility button.

Narrator: The **Check Accessibility drawer** slides in from the side, and it identifies two accessibility issues on the page.

Screen: Narrator selects the text Issue 1 / 2 in the Check Accessibility drawer.

Narrator: The first issue that it points out is that there is an image that has its alt text set to the image filename.

Screen: Narrator selects the error description in the Check Accessibility drawer.

Narrator: It highlights that image on the page, my lovely guitar (Oh no!),

Screen: Narrator hover over the guitar

and provides a field labelled **Change Alt Text** where I can set the alternative text to something more descriptive, in this case, "Blue hollowbody electric guitar with a white racing stripe."

Screen: Narrator selects the text in the Change Alt Text field and replaces it with, "Blue hollowbody electric guitar with a white racing stripe."

This text is what will now be voiced when a screen reader comes across this image. Much better!

Now, when I click the **Apply button** to apply this new alt text

Screen: Narrator clicks Apply button

it tells me I have only one issue left

Screen: Narrator selects the text Issue 1 / 1

which is another case of an image whose alt text is just the filename.

In this case, that image is just a gradient line, located below the **Overview heading**. Now, we could provide alt text here that reads something like, "gradient line", but really, that line isn't communicating anything meaningful. It would be better if it was just ignored completely by the screen reader. We could try to accomplish this by deleting all of the text from the field,

Screen: Narrator deletes the text in the **Change Alt Text field**

but if we do this and click the **Apply button**

Screen: Narrator clicks **Apply button**

it just gives us a new error, saying that "Images should include an alt attribute describing the image content."

Screen: Narrator selects the error message.

Narrator: To make it so the image is completely ignored by a screen reader, we need to take an additional step by clicking the **Decorative image checkbox**.

Screen: Narrator clicks the **Decorative image checkbox**.

Narrator: We could accomplish the same thing in the **Insert/Edit image dialog** by clicking the **Decorative image checkbox** there.

Screen: Narrator closes the **Check Accessibility drawer**; then clicks on the gradient line image; then clicks the **Embed Image button**; then clicks the **Decorative image checkbox**, and then, finally, clicks the **Update button**.

Narrator: Doing it either way will make it so nothing is read when the screen reader encounters that image.

Now, providing meaningful alt text--or marking images as decorative, as the case may be--doesn't just benefit people who use screen reading software. It can also be useful in situations where bandwidth is limited. For instance, maybe there is severe network congestion that has slowed the loading of web pages to a crawl, preventing images from loading. Or maybe your students are using way more data than usual on their phones and have exceeded their monthly cap, so they've turned off images in their browser. If you provide meaningful alt text, then, when images are unavailable, the alt text is displayed.

Let me demonstrate with the fixed version of the page.

Screen: Narrator navigates to <https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/69527/pages/text-alternatives-example> in the Brave browser.

Narrator: Using the Web Developer extension, we can see what this will look like by clicking the **Web Developer icon button** in the browser and choosing **Disable Images** under the **Images Tab**.

Screen: *Narrator refreshes the page*

Narrator: Notice that where the guitar was, we see, instead, the alt text we provided,

Screen: *Narrator hovers over the guitar alt text*

Narrator: And where we had indicated that the gradient line was decorative, we see nothing.

Screen: *Narrator hovers over where the gradient line would be*

Narrator: Great! Now we have a page that all users can perceive and understand as intended, and which is robust in the face of limited bandwidth.

Screen: *Graphic of person with a speech bubble containing an image icon with text reading Keep C.A.L.M. assist.vt.edu/calm/describe-images*