Use images and video effectively

- Thumbnail and hero images
- Body images
- Image captions and alt text
- Video

This post is about how to use images and video to support your writing goals. If you're looking for technical details about how to create images and video for web.dev, see the Images and video post.

There are three types of images associated with a web.dev post:

- The **thumbnail image** appears in a post's card if the post is added to the Blog page.
- The **hero image** appears at the start of a post.
- **Body images** appear in the text of a post or codelab.

All images should be accessible.

Thumbnail and hero images

To maintain continuity between the blog page and the post page, the thumbnail image should generally be the same as the hero image. In some cases, it may be necessary to crop the two images differently or shift some visual elements to account for the different aspect ratios of the thumbnail and hero images.

Thumbnail and hero images should represent the main idea of the post in some way. It often works well to find a visual metaphor. For example, a post about the Layout Instability API uses an image of a precariously balanced tower of rocks to suggest the fragile layouts that the API detects.

Take a look at Stock photos that don't suck for a list of sites that offer public domain or Creative Commons-licensed images.

Body images

Body images should be related to body content in some way. Typically, an image illustrates an idea that immediately precedes it in the text of the post or codelab. Avoid including a body image just to break up text. Just as irrelevant text can be confusing, so too can an irrelevant image, especially for readers with cognitive differences.

Image captions and alt text

Read the Google developer documentation style guide. Captions should be in sentence case. End all captions and alt text with a period.

A Screenshot Showing the DevTools **Network** Panel

The DevTools **Network** panel.

Captions and alt text should not start with "An image of" or "A screenshot of." Instead, it should typically be a noun phrase describing the image or a sentence summarizing the idea the image is showing. Examples:

- *DevTools accessibility pane showing the computed name for a button.*
- *A teapot's handle is a natural affordance.*

Not all images need captions. If there's a preceding sentence describing the image, a caption is usually redundant. For example, the sentence below tells the reader what to expect in the subsequent image.

Let's look at a web app that uses JavaScript to render a collection of cat images entirely in the browser:

Image of a code sample next to the mobile site that it renders.

Video

Video has some tradeoffs that are worth considering when deciding whether to use it:

- Video is highly engaging.
- Video is generally much better than images for showing things that change over time.
- Video files are comparatively big.
- Videos require more authoring time (for example, to create closed captions).
- Beyond simple screencasts, producing videos requires a fair amount of effort.

Taking these tradeoffs into account, try to use video primarily when:

- You need to show something moving or changing
- You need to show a recording of an event (e.g., a conference talk)

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