# How to Make Non-Text Objects Accessible in MS Word

This exercise is designed to show you how to make non-text objects accessible in an MS Word document.

## Adding Alt Text to Images

Like the HTML “alt” attribute that is used to add alternative text to images in a web page, you can add alt text in MS Word so that you can AUTOMATICALLY transfer them to a PDF file with the alt text intact.

## Benefits of Adding Alt Text

**For users who are visually impaired: Alt text is used by screen readers to describe non-text objects so that a user who is visually impaired can understand non-text content.**

**For sighted users: Alt text is for users that have their images turned off in their browser. It is also used to provide additional information about a non-text object particularly an image.**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

* Alt text can be added to objects other than images (for example, tables, form fields, etc.)
* Good alternative text should:
  + Present accurate and equivalent information about the object
  + Be to the point (succinct)
  + Use 100 or less words in a sentence format
  + NOT include phrases like:
    - image of
    - picture of
    - table of
  + **WHY?** When JAWS reads an image, it will automatically announce that it is an image. For example, if you wrote an alt text of “flowers in a field”, then JAWS would read this as “an image of flowers in a field” even though you did not include the phrase “image of.”  
    However, you can use other descriptive words in the front of the alt text:
    - a sketch of
    - a drawing of
    - a painting of
    - an illustration of
    - a blueprint of
* If the image is for decoration only, an alt text is not necessary.
* Alternative text will not be transferred to the PDF if the image is in the header or the footer of a MS Word document.

## Making an Image Accessible

1. Right-click each image below, select **Format Picture…** from the menu, and then select the **Layout and Properties icon**. Click the **triangle next to the Alt Text** link to expand it.
2. In the panel that appears, add a concise **alternative text** (e.g., Accessible Logo) in the **Description field** (not the Title field).



Figure : Accessibility Logo with no Alt Text set in the Format Pictures settings.

Figure : Accessibility symbol on a keyboard (Alt Text is NOT set in the Format Pictures settings for this image.)

**NOTE**: In MS Word 2007, the menu’s option is **Size** instead of **Format Picture**.