Chrome descriptions of images will clue in blind and low vision users

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You can get image descriptions on Chrome. This is a real boost for blind and low-vision users, so that they can know what is on display.

Natasha Mathur, *Mashable India*: This advantage will be available for those with screen readers that are capable of outputting spoken feedback and braille.

Katharine Schwab, *Fast Company*, nailed the reason why this matters, when people who depend on special readers for viewers with low vision or blindness deal with coming up empty on feedback such as "unlabeled graphic." Thanks but no thanks.

Cal Jeffrey called out the same difficulty in *TechSpot*. "Unless web designers used alt text for images, much of a website's content is lost to the visually challenged reader, as screen readers and Braille devices can't otherwise interpret the picture."

Schwab quoted someone who knows firsthand about such drawbacks. "The unfortunate state right now is that there are still millions and millions of unlabeled images across the web," said Laura Allen, a senior program manager on the Chrome accessibility team. She has low vision. "When you're navigating with a screen reader or a Braille display, when you get to one of those images, you'll actually just basically hear 'image' or 'unlabeled graphic,' or my favorite, a super long string of numbers which is the file name, which is just totally irrelevant."

Image descriptions are now auto-generated. Here is a case where machine learning is being to generate descriptions for millions of images. *Fast Company*: "While it's more important that people who are

building websites commit to making them accessible for everyone, algorithms can pick up the pages that fall through the cracks."

The Google Chrome Help page carried the information that descriptions for unlabeled images were available: "When you use a screen reader in Chrome, you can get descriptions of unlabeled images, for example, images that don't have alt text. Images are sent to Google to create the descriptions. If Google cannot [describe](link) an image, the screen reader will say 'No description available.'"

Image descriptions are only in English, even if the user's browser is in a different language.

So, what will the information be like? Georgina Torbet in *Engadget* helped out: "An example of a descriptive text given by the feature would be '[Appears](link) to be fruits and vegetables at the market' for an image of a market stall. The descriptions are couched with 'appears to be' so users know they are generated by a computer and may not be fully accurate."

You can turn image descriptions on in Chrome Settings. Mathur said, "all that you need to do is go to settings and select 'advanced'. You then go to the "Accessibility" section and turn on the 'Get image descriptions from Google.'"

Here are [instructions](link) for Chrome Settings according to the Google Chrome Help page:

"Image descriptions for all pages work the same way if they are turned on in settings or the context menu. On your computer, open Chrome. Next to the address bar, select More and then Settings. At the bottom of the Settings page, click Advanced. Under 'Accessibility,' turn 'Get image descriptions from Google' on or off. You'll see a checkmark next to 'Get image descriptions from Google' if you have the feature on."

The page also advised that "Image descriptions are only available to screen reader users through spoken feedback or braille, and do not visually appear on the screen. The image descriptions may not be fully accurate."

 More information:
support.google.com/chrome/answer/9311597?hl=en

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