How and when to add ALT or title text to images and links

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title text in Firefox

ALT text in IE8

ALT and title text are a bit like tooltips. Hover your mouse over the Start button or almost any menu and up pops a little box with some information.

Generally, you use ALT text as alternative text for an image. So, if the image can't be displayed by someone's browser they will at least have something to tell them what they're missing. It is also important for people who use screen readers as what you put in ALT text will be read out and can help those with poor sight to get a better 'picture' of what's going on.

Whenever you put an image on a web page that is anything other than a design feature you should add an ALT tag briefly describing the image in a helpful way to someone who cannot see it.

All browsers will display the text when the image isn't displayed and most will also show it as a tooltip when you hover over the image. Unfortunately Internet Explorer doesn't show ALT text as a tooltip so if you want to help users by providing some extra information they can see you need to have a title tag.

Title tags are also able to contain more text and display better, with wrapping in boxes better controlled than ALT tags.

You can have both for images but only the title will be displayed. So it makes sense to use alt="" to avoid the reader announcing things twice and alt="" will also avoid an empty box being displayed where you have no title text either (e.g. for decorative images only).

Title text can be added to text links as well as images, so is pretty useful. The html code below shows where to add ALT and title text for a text link.

```
<a href="http://google.co.uk" alt="" title="visit the google web
site">google</a>
```

The Properties panel in Dreamweaver has a space for ALT text for images but not for text links and there is no provision in design view for adding any title text other than the page title itself. So it has to be done in the code view.

alt-titletext