

Google Images best practices (Image SEO) - Google Search Central

Source (official): <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/google-images>

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Google — Search Central. Image SEO best practices (alt text guidance directly relevant to accessibility). Page footer: "Last updated 2026-03-02 UTC"; content licensed CC BY 4.0, code samples Apache 2.0.

Google image SEO best practices

Google provides several Search features and products that help users visually discover information on the web, such as the text result images, Google Discover, and Google Images. While each feature and product looks different, the general recommendations for getting images to appear in them is the same. You can optimize your images to appear in Google's search results by following these best practices: (1) Help us discover and index your images; (2) Optimize the image landing pages.

Help us discover and index your images

The technical requirements for getting your content in Google's search results applies to images too. Since images are a substantially different format compared to HTML, there are additional requirements for getting images indexed; for example, finding the images on your site is different, and the presentation of the images also influences whether an image is indexed at all, and for the right keywords.

Use HTML image elements to embed images

Using standard HTML image elements helps crawlers find and process images. Google can find images in the `src` attribute of the `<img>` element (even when it's a child of other elements, such as the `<picture>` element). Google doesn't index CSS images.

Good: `` | Bad: `<div style="background-image:url(puppy.jpg)">A golden retriever puppy</div>`

Use an image sitemap

You can provide the URL of images we might not have otherwise discovered by submitting an image sitemap. Unlike regular sitemaps, you can include URLs from other domains in the `<image:loc>` elements of the image sitemaps. This lets you use CDNs to host images. If you're using a CDN, we encourage you to verify ownership of the CDN's domain name in Search Console so that we can inform you of any crawl errors.

Responsive images

Designing responsive web pages leads to better user experience, since people can access them across a plethora of device types. Web pages use the `<picture>` element or the `srcset` attribute of an `img` element to specify responsive images. However, some browsers and crawlers don't understand these attributes; we recommend that you always specify a fallback URL using the `src` attribute.

Example (srcset): ``

The `<picture>` element groups different `<source>` versions of the same image, offering a fallback so the browser can choose the right image depending on device capabilities (pixel density, screen size) and enabling new image formats with graceful degradation. Per section 4.8.1 of the HTML Standard, provide an `img` element fallback with a `src` attribute when using `<picture>`. Example: `<picture><source type="image/svg+xml" srcset="pyramid.svg"><source type="image/webp" srcset="pyramid.webp"></picture>`

Use supported image formats

Google Search supports images referenced in the `src` attribute of `img` in the following file formats: BMP, GIF, JPEG, PNG, WebP, SVG, and AVIF. It's also a good idea to have the extension of your filename match the file type. You can also inline images as Data URIs (Base64-encoded string in `src`); while inlining can reduce HTTP requests, carefully judge when to use it since it can considerably increase page size.

Optimize for speed and quality

High-quality photos appeal to users more than blurry, unclear images, and sharp images are more appealing in the result thumbnail. That said, images are often the largest contributor to overall page size, which can make pages slow and expensive to load. Apply the latest image optimization and responsive image techniques; analyze site speed with PageSpeed Insights.

Optimize the image landing pages

The content and metadata of the pages where an image is embedded can have a great influence on how and where the image may appear in Google's search results.

Specify a preferred image with metadata

Google's selection of an image preview is completely automated. You can influence which image gets selected by providing your preferred image through metadata sources, e.g. the schema.org `primaryImageOfPage` property with a URL or `ImageObject`.

Check your page title and description

We use a number of different sources for this information, including information in the title and meta tags for each page. You can help improve the quality of the title link and snippet by following Google's title and snippet guidelines.

Add structured data

If you include structured data, Google can display your images in certain rich results, including a prominent badge in Google Images. Follow the general structured data guidelines as well as any guidelines specific to your structured data type; in each of these structured data types, the image attribute is a required field to be eligible for a badge and rich result in Google Images.

Use descriptive filenames, titles, and alt text

Google extracts information about the subject matter of the image from the content of the page, including captions and image titles. Wherever possible, make sure images are placed near relevant text and on pages that are relevant to the image subject matter.

Likewise, the filename can give Google very light clues about the subject matter of the image. When possible, use filenames that are short, but descriptive. For example, `my-new-black-kitten.jpg` is better than `IMG00023.JPG`. Avoid generic filenames like `image1.jpg`, `pic.gif`, `1.jpg` when possible. If your site has thousands of images, consider automating the naming; if you localize your images, remember to also translate the filenames, keeping in mind the URL encoding guidelines if you're using non-latin or special characters.

The most important attribute when it comes to providing more metadata for an image is the alt text (text that describes an image), which also improves accessibility for people who can't see images on web pages, including users who use screen readers or have low-bandwidth connections.

Google uses alt text along with computer vision algorithms and the contents of the page to understand the subject matter of the image. Also, alt text in images is useful as anchor text if you decide to use an image as a link.

When writing alt text, focus on creating useful, information-rich content that uses keywords appropriately and is in context of the content of the page. Avoid filling alt attributes with keywords (keyword stuffing) as it results in a negative user experience and may cause your site to be seen as spam.

- Bad (missing alt text): ``
- Bad (keyword stuffing): ``
- Better: ``
- Best: ``

Also consider the accessibility of your alt text, per the W3 guidelines (WAI Images Tutorial). For the `<img>` element, you can add the alt attribute; for inline `<svg>` elements, you can use the `<title>` element. Example: `<svg aria-labelledby="svgtitle1"><title id="svgtitle1">Googlebot wearing an apron and chef hat, struggling to make pancakes on the stovetop</title></svg>`

We recommend testing your content by auditing for accessibility (Chrome DevTools accessibility reference) and using a slow network connection emulator.

If an image is referenced on multiple pages within a larger website, consider the site's overall crawl budget. In particular, consistently reference the image with the same URL, so that Google can cache and reuse the image without needing to request it multiple times.

Opt out of Google Images inline linking

If you choose, you can prevent the full-sized image from appearing in the Google Images search results page by opting out of inline linking. To opt out: when your image is requested, examine the HTTP referrer header; if the request is coming from a Google domain, reply with a 200 HTTP status code, or a 204 HTTP status code and no content. Google will still crawl your page and see the image, but will display a thumbnail image generated at crawl time in search results. This opt-out is possible at any time, doesn't require re-processing of a website's images, and isn't considered image cloaking. Alternatively, you can prevent the image from appearing in search results entirely.

Optimize for SafeSearch

SafeSearch is a setting in Google user accounts that specifies whether to show, blur, or block explicit images, videos, and websites in Google Search results. Make sure Google understands the nature of your site so that Google can apply SafeSearch filters to your site if appropriate.