

Principles of Audio Description

1. You can't describe everything.
2. Prioritize the important visual information.
3. Don't describe what a listener can hear - UNLESS the sound doesn't make sense by itself.
4. Start with general information first getting more specific as time allows.
5. Use words everyone understands; no jargon.
6. Don't talk over the dialogue or other relevant audio.
7. Don't be repetitious.
8. Don't judge or interpret; be objective.
9. Conform the tone of your voice, speed of your words and the words used to the specific video. Audio description should blend with and enhance the experience.
10. Make sure to describe names, titles and credits!

Cover the following information whenever possible:

1. Place

- a. Country, state, city, etc. if not obvious.
- b. Give general ambiance information first. Add specifics as time allows and as needed.
- c. Helpful tip: select a reference point and describe things in order from that point.

2. Time

- a. Be specific where possible (e.g., "It's 4am.")
- b. Using less specific times is fine; morning, afternoon, evening, night.
- c. "Later" is often used to describe the next action.

3. People

- a. Identify the number of people on the screen; one, two, five, several, crowd, etc.
- b. Identify pertinent characteristics – age, sex, etc.
- c. If important for understanding, point out pertinent characteristics of the people. This might include unusual size, tattoos, unique way of dressing or styling hair, disabilities, etc.

4. Dress

- a. If the clothing is specific to an era, identify the era (80's, 1800's, etc.)
- b. Identify clothing as formal, informal, casual, sloppy, dress, slacks, suspenders, pajamas, etc.

5. Body Language and Facial Expressions

- a. Distance between two people – especially when communicating
- b. Is the body of the person relaxed, tense, shrinking, looming?
- c. Find ways to describe facial expressions that is not repetitive or interpretive. For instance, using "His brow is furrowed" can be used for many facial expressions. Also, don't say someone is angry, sad, afraid, etc. These terms are interpretive and not descriptive of what is being seen.
- d. Tone of voice of the actors will usually allow the audience to discern the emotion.

6. Movement

- a. What are the people doing? Walking, running, strolling, shuffling, etc. Use specific words to describe the motions of the actors.

7. Color

- a. Don't be afraid to name colors as color has meaning to most people. If the color of something is relevant to the understanding of the scene, name it. For instance, the use of red in the movie *Sixth Sense*.
- b. Colors can also help set the mood of a stage or scene.