

Recommendations

4.3. Accessibility for blind and partially sighted learners

Visual content (e.g., videos, images, diagrams, tables) can be made accessible to people with visual impairments through **Audio Description (AD)**.

AD is a technique that provides spoken descriptions of key visual elements of a resource. It narrates details such as actions, settings, facial expressions, and other important visual information, **ensuring a full understanding of the content.**

AD is mostly used by people with total blindness but also helps those with low vision. Besides, it is also useful for individuals whose first language is not the one used in the OER content, and it can assist those who want to follow a video or a lesson via audio for other reasons: lack of time, multitasking, etc.

The recommendations below will help you create an AD that is as tailored as possible to the needs of your students. Try to implement as many of them as possible in your work.

4.3.2. Audio description for videos

Audio Description (AD) for videos is a **narration added to a video to describe visual elements**, such as actions, settings, and characters, making the content accessible to blind or visually impaired viewers. It provides spoken information during natural pauses in dialogue, ensuring that all viewers can understand and enjoy the video equally.

See an example of commercials with AD here: <https://adp.acb.org/commercials.html>

To adapt your AD of video content for blind and low-vision children, it is needed to **prioritise clarity, engagement, and accessibility** while **considering the developmental stage and learning styles of children.**

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LANGUAGE: CONTENT	RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE
DESCRIPTIONS: KEY VISUAL ELEMENTS	Describe what’s most important. Clarify important details like “when,” “where,” “who,” “what,” and “how” in each scene. Focus on visual details that are relevant to the storyline or learning goals.	
DESCRIPTIONS: ACTIONS	Explain actions and provide context for the ones that are hard to infer from dialogue or sound, like facial expressions, gestures, or colours that hold significance to the lesson.	If a teacher is smiling, say, “The teacher smiles happily.”
TRANSITIONS BETWEEN SCENES	Children may struggle with changes in scenes if there is no context for the transition. Explain transitions clearly to avoid confusion. Use simple phrases like “Now we’re in…” or “Next, we see…” to prepare children for changes in scene or time.	“Now we’re outside at the playground, and it’s sunny.”
DESCRIPTIONS: EMOTIONS	Include descriptions of emotions. Children may rely heavily on understanding emotions and actions to follow a story or lesson. Highlight facial expressions, body language, and character interactions in a vivid yet concise way.	“The boy looks excited—his eyes are wide, and he’s smiling.”
CHARACTER’S DESCRIPTION	Focus on essential, easy-to-visualize traits like height, body type, and age, but keep it simple and relevant to the story. Mention traits that will help children distinguish between characters, such as a noticeable accessory or clothing item, while omitting unnecessary or overly detailed descriptions.	“Lily is a tall girl, about the same height as an adult. She’s wearing a leather jacket, and her hair is tied back in a ponytail.”
CHARACTER’S NAMING	Always use characters’ names when they first appear in the story and refer to them regularly in the narration to help children follow who is who. Repeat names frequently, especially for primary characters, to reinforce their identity throughout the story.	“This is Emma. Emma is an adventurous girl with long brown hair, and she’s wearing a green coat.”

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LANGUAGE: CONTENT	RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE
SENSORY DESCRIPTIONS	Refer to other senses. Use rich, multisensory descriptions to engage the student’s imagination. Consider including sounds, smells, or textures that cannot be conveyed visually but help in building a mental picture.	
TEXT AND SYMBOLS	If a text is present, explain that a text is shown in the video and read it aloud. Be sure to explain symbols or numbers as they appear.	“The words say, ‘Water is important for all living things.’”
INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS	Incorporate interactive elements into the AD by prompting children to guess or anticipate actions, recall information, or solve a problem. Ask simple questions or prompt the student to think about what is being described.	“Can you guess what the rabbit is going to do next?” “Can you guess what animal will come out next?” “Remember, that’s the same bird we saw earlier!”
FUN AND ENGAGING DESCRIPTIONS	Infuse descriptions with a sense of fun where appropriate to enhance the learning experience. Use adjectives and verbs that evoke excitement and curiosity without overwhelming the listener.	“The superhero zooms through the sky with a big smile!” instead of “The superhero flies quickly.”
POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT	Include encouraging phrases in AD to motivate students, especially when describing challenging or unfamiliar content. This will make the learning experience more enjoyable and supportive.	“Great job if you remembered the answer! You’re doing awesome!”
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY	Be mindful of cultural references. Ensure AD includes context for cultural references that might be unfamiliar to children, explaining in a way that is accessible and relatable for their age group.	If a character is performing a cultural dance, describe what the dance represents and why it’s important, but in simple, relatable terms.

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VOCABULARY & SENTENCES	RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE
AGE-APPROPRIATE VOCABULARY	Tailor vocabulary to match the age and comprehension level of the students.	Instead of “The child retrieves the book from the shelf,” you could say, “The boy picks up the book from the shelf.”
SPECIFIC VOCABULARY	Avoid complex vocabulary or abstract concepts not suitable for the age of the students. Use specific words for objects and actions, avoiding vague descriptions or figurative language.	Avoid for example: “to fly into a range”, or “to take on the world”).
SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION	Use short, clear sentences . Each sentence conveys one idea. Avoid overly complex sentences and subordination. Use active voice and direct action verbs that are easy for students to understand.	
NEW CONCEPTS AND WORDS	If you use or introduce unfamiliar concepts or words, explain them in a simple way, embedded in context.	“The teacher points to the ‘volcano,’ a big mountain that can erupt with lava.”
CLEAR EXPLANATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS	When complex concepts are introduced, make sure the AD provides clear, concise explanations. Provide simple analogies or comparisons to help children grasp difficult concepts. Break down explanations for scientific or historical concepts into smaller, more understandable parts for younger audiences.	

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TONE AND VOICE	RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE
PACE AND TIMING ADJUSTMENTS	Ensure that the pace is adequate. Provide longer pauses for younger learners. Modulate the rhythm to enhance understanding.	“The girl hugs the dog,” instead of “The girl quickly bends down and hugs her dog tightly.”
TONE AND VOICE	Adopt a warm and friendly tone appropriate for the content. The narrator’s voice should be engaging, warm and expressive to maintain the child’s attention.	
AD WITH AI SOFTWARE	Use a human-like voice with an expressive tone.	
PROFESSIONAL NARRATOR	If possible, contact a professional narrator.	
TAILORING AND ADAPTATION	RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE
TAILOR DESCRIPTIONS TO DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES	Use simpler descriptions for younger children (e.g., ages 3-6) and progressively add more details for older students. For younger children, focus more on action, while older children might need more detailed explanations of context and visuals.	
TAILOR DESCRIPTIONS TO COGNITIVE ABILITIES	Take into account language comprehension and cognitive abilities: children may have a range of abilities beyond visual impairments, such as learning or intellectual disabilities.	

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TAILORING AND ADAPTATION	RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE
<p>ENGAGE OTHER SENSES</p>	<p>Where possible, add tactile or kinaesthetic cues in conjunction with AD (e.g., in live educational settings or with physical learning tools). For example, pairing AD with touchable objects related to the video can enhance learning for children with multiple disabilities.</p>	<p>If the video is on a type of flower, provide one to the student to explore using other senses.</p>
<p>CUSTOMIZATION AND ADAPTABILITY</p>	<p>Be ready to adapt the AD based on feedback from children, educators, or caregivers. What works for one group of children may need to be adjusted for others. Incorporate flexibility to adjust descriptions based on the developmental needs of children with varying visual impairments.</p>	