



# Considerations for Providing Audio Description (AD) to People who are DeafBlind Tip-Sheet

Although **Audio Description** is often associated with describing visual information through speech, it can also include auditory information relayed through close vision sign language, tactile sign language, or text. This tip sheet summarizes findings from a study conducted by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) on the audio description (AD) preferences of blind, low vision, and Deafblind focus group and interview participants (Conway et al., 2022).

- 1. Respect Preferences:** Always ask the DeafBlind individual's preferences for AD, which can vary based on factors like age of onset and personal background (ex. inclusion of color).
- 2. General to Specific:** Begin with general information before specific details, prioritizing the most important or prominent elements first (ex. large metal sculpture in the shape of a goat).
- 3. Include Facial Expressions and Tone:** Ensure that descriptions include facial expressions and/or the tone of voice for individuals or portrayed characters to relay intent and emotion (ex. stern voice or dry humor).
- 4. Describe Directly from the Source:** Instead of relaying text-based descriptions (e.g., "this oil painting depicts consumerism in the 1950's..."), describe the elements directly from the source to better depict the visuals of the art piece.
- 5. Incorporate Auditory Information:** To offer a more comprehensive understanding, include auditory details to create a whole picture of an event or play (ex. laughter)
- 6. Educated Guess:** If you are unable to learn how a person self-identifies, it can be appropriate in some contexts to "make an educated guess" by saying "this person seems to be..." and then describing visible cues (ex. a white woman with white hair who appears to be in her 70's approaches the stage).

For access to the full research paper, *Describing People and Portraits Through Audio Description: Preferences of People who are Blind, Low Vision, and DeafBlind* visit <https://www.helenkeller.org/audio-describing-people-and-portraits-2022/>

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