

VisualDescription

Add visual description of the image: what does it look like?

Simply describing the image as it appears, without its scientific meaning, is not helpful and is unsatisfying for audiences who are blind or low-vision

Intertwin visual and scientific description, so that "concepts" are taken in small chunks

When describing images and rendering of scientific phenomena, integrate the science into the description

- Explain what is the subject
- Convey why it is important
- Describe what it looks like

1. Overview
 - Of the phenomenon being depicted
 - Of the image
 - The kind of image (photo, composite, digital rendering...)
2. Organize and elaborate
 - Start from visual, then the concept, or the other way around; case by case
 - Describe also what is NOT there (e.g.: black hole)
3. Add details
 - Ensure that the mental picture you're helping to create is complete
 - Make the description reach and evocative

Use analogies and similarities
Can go back to previously explained parts and expand

Terminology: explain terms that are not commonly understood

Images are made also to inspire awe and engage the audience. The visual description should do the same

Analogies:

- consider blind from birth. Clouds, mountains, etc. are already a stretch. Birds flight is already out of understanding
- Consider culture context (ex: food analogies)

Colors: do include references in the description

- Description written for various people (BVI, people previously sighted)
- Even blind from birth may have relationship with colors
- Beware of pre-existing color associations. Eg.: blue stars are hotter than red ones, but usually red is hot and blue is not

Hints

Style is important: a proper style helps by delivering ideas in discrete packages that are easier for the questing mind to parse

- Short sentences
- numerous commas - Frequent pauses give mind time to take in the concepts. NO DASHES (screen readers don't handle it right)
- frequent use of proper nouns - Minimize use of "it"

Test with a screen reader

Clearly link aspects of the phenomenon and the visual aspect

Text length limit (alt-text, social media, ...): write full text and publish separately with link on web page then summarize (usually the overview) it in Alt-text, and embed full text in IPTC metadata

In social media, combine with post text

Format: publish as plain text, maybe on the same page; PDF / docs are less convenient

New trend: incorporate some of visual description in the image caption

Visual description recorded in audio is useful also for sighted people

- It's like having an astronomer by the side that drives through the exploration of the image

Publish as alt-text (standard html)

New IPTC tags, supported by Photoshop/Adobe Bridge:

<https://iptc.org/news/iptc-announces-new-properties-in-photo-metadata-to-make-images-more-accessible/>

Resources:

- List of resources from OAO-CXC:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12LV1pfc298YexrSvMMWjoyFZwQGwXhJdfExQ-y31s5Y>
- Handout by Kim Arcand: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sokb3zYn6LaHfCpNP9DFV2TEWLTev/view>
- Material from a NASA Chandra workshop:
https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1ZgMAu5xHmM4_UYswVJqI8CJQn8-3K9jV