

A VOLUNTARY INITIATIVE LED BY
ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC. (AMI) AND
THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS (CAB)

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Artistic and Technical Guidelines

Version 3.0

Described Video Best Practices (DVBP) Committee
Consisting of broadcasters, description producers and community representatives

For further information contact:

Chris O'Brien, Accessibility Officer,

Accessible Media Inc. (AMI), and

Chair, Described Video Best Practices (DVBP) Committee

AO@ami.ca

The intent of this document is to provide guidance to the producers of described programming in Canada in an effort to achieve uniformity.

FREE TO DISTRIBUTE

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Table of Contents

- [Background ... 2](#)
- [Described Video Working Group Membership ... 4](#)
- [History of Description in Canada ... 5](#)
- [Role of the Describer ... 10](#)
- [Instructions for Usage: Artistic and Technical Guidelines ... 12](#)
- **[Topics: Artistic Guidelines ... 13](#)**
 - [Individual/Physical Characteristics ... 14](#)
 - [Scene Transitions ... 16](#)
 - [Other Visuals ... 18](#)
 - [Non-Verbal Sounds/Communications ... 19](#)
 - [Titles, Subtitles, Credits, Text on Screen, Signing ... 21](#)
 - [Style and Tone ... 23](#)
- **[Topics: Technical Guidelines ... 25](#)**
 - [Channels ... 26](#)
 - [Loudness & Peak Levels ... 26](#)
 - [Soundtrack vs. DV Mix Levels ... 26](#)
 - [Equalization ... 26](#)
 - [Sync ... 27](#)
 - [Recording Quality ... 27](#)
 - [Output Parameters ... 27](#)
- [Next Steps ... 28](#)

[Appendix A: Sensitive-Topic Terminology ... 31](#)

Appendix B (attached): ATSC Recommended Practice: Techniques for Establishing and Maintaining Audio Loudness for Digital Television (A/85:2011)

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Background

In July 2012, Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) embarked upon a process to begin to develop Described Video (Audio Description) Best Practices for the Canadian broadcasting industry with the support of the Canadian Radio-Television & Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Producers of description along with broadcasting-industry and community-group representatives came forward to develop the Described Video Best Practices (DVBP) in an effort to standardize the delivery of description (DV) to bring context to a practice that is both a science and an art.

One of the intents of these Best Practices is to highlight how Canada has led the development of the conventions for DV since description's introduction to North America in the 1990's. In 2001, the CRTC began to impose conditions of licence requiring minimum levels of described programming on major English-language conventional television stations. In 2004, at the time of licence renewal, the Commission began to impose similar conditions of licence on those analog and Category 1 English-language pay and specialty services whose schedule was comprised mainly of programming that lent itself well to described video, i.e. drama, documentaries and children's programming. In 2009, AMI-tv (formerly The Accessible Channel, or TACTv) became the first and only worldwide to air "open described" and "closed captioned" programs for people who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing, 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Some broadcasters are now embarking on new types of DV such as "Live" simultaneous DV, and others are creating "Embedded" description during the production of the program.

We, as the DVBP Working Group, feel that with this established history and continuing progressive innovation, and because Canadians have been provided with many years of exposure to DV, that the time is right for viewers to expect a higher level of quality and best practices surrounding Described Video.

Though we acknowledge there are new ground-breaking initiatives, as mentioned above, as well as French description and description of non-Canadian programs, for the purpose of these Best Practices, we have kept the scope of this document limited, but with the awareness that it is a "living" document and will continue to evolve.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Scope

- English and French
- Canadian-produced
- Post-production only

Recognizing that the science of DV can easily be categorized, the focus of this DVBP initiative was on the artistic elements of DV, and to a minor extent some technical elements, that are open to interpretation based upon perspective and context. Furthermore, being a practice that continues to evolve, it is recognized that an industry-adopted best practice will be both a living document and one that will provide high-level context to the practice. The process of seeking agreement on the elements of high-level context began with a blind cross-comparison of the topics defined within a selection of best practices representing work previously conducted in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. Topics such as “race,” “profanity” and “scene transitions,” along with a detailed definition for each and industry-recommended techniques for implementation, were evaluated to determine which ones would be included in these best practices. By taking direction from the adopted topics, definitions and techniques for implementation, the unique practices of individual providers of description will continue to be protected, yet defined by the industry standard. These DV providers will further apply years of experience, community relationships, industry collaboration and quality developed through an understanding of consumer needs while producing a consistent product that is representative of more than a simple list of instructions for producing standardized good-quality DV.

The Canadian broadcasting industry as well as community groups and independent organizations have tried in the past to develop a set of guidelines as they relate to described video but these processes have either failed or proposed guidelines without consensus from interested parties. It is felt that given the current regulatory environment, the nature by which this process has been designed and the participation of broadcasters, program producers, DV providers and vested community groups that the product of this work is to be a required industry-adopted set of best practices.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Described Video Working Group Membership

Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC)	Anthony Tibbs
Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB)	Jim Tokos
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)	Marc Workman
Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)	Barry Crowell Brian Perdue David Errington Emily Harding Janis Davidson Pressick Mark Bialkowski Peter Burke Robert Pearson (former Chair) Ron Rickford Simone Cupid
Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB)	Karen Clout
Canadian Media Production Association (CMPA)	Jay Thomson
CBC	Heather Boyce
Fastfile Media Inc.	Colum Henry, Gabor Zoltan, Mike Menard and Joanne Henry
Bell Media Inc.	Harold Wesley Susan Saddi
Descriptive Video Works (DVW)	Brent Craven Diane Johnson Miranda MacKelworth
Extreme Reach	Ashley Allinson, Clinton Young, Erik van Zetten
John Hauber Productions	John Hauber
Shaw	Liz Thorpe and Marta Young
Urban Post	Christine Eagleson Erica Pascalides

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

A History of Described Video (DV) in Canada

Since the 1990's there's been a worldwide effort to expand the accessibility of television so persons with disabilities can enjoy this powerful medium and, thus, enable them to more fully participate in society. In December 2006 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted. The CRPD, signed by 155 countries and ratified by 127, clearly recognizes "the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms." Canada took an early lead in promoting media access to persons with disabilities and, in particular, has for the past 20 years offered to partially sighted persons options to access media and information.

Adopted in early 1991 by the government of Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Act gives a mandate to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to license broadcasters in the country and, particularly, to monitor the programming and broadcasting of content that addresses the concerns and respects the culture of all Canadian communities. Specifically, it requires that "programming accessible by persons with disabilities should be provided within the Canadian Broadcasting System as resources become available for this purpose."

Descriptive Video Works (DVW)

Descriptive Video Works (DVW) was launched in 2003 by Diane Johnson in response to the CRTC mandating Described Video for television programming.

- Acquired its first client in CTV (now part of Bell Media Inc.) and the network remains as a client today.
- A founding member of the first Canadian Described Video Committee, which attempted to establish industry standards and guidelines.
- Has provided live DV coverage of the Juno Awards, and continues to provide live DV of television programming today.
- Is the only company in North America training news anchors and reporters to include live DV in their newscasts.
- Described the opening and closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and described the Liberal leadership convention in April of 2013.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

- Has a Research and Development Team that is chaired by two people who are blind, ensuring that the needs of the target audience are met. To date DVW has completed DV on 700 movies and over 7,500 shows.

Diane is a member of the United Nations' International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Focus Group on Audio Visual Media Accessibility, providing recommendations for the development of standardized international guidelines and best practices for DV.

John Hauber Productions (JHP)

John Hauber was one of the two principals in Galaviz & Hauber Productions, a company that produced foreign-language versions of TV shows and movies until September of 2001, when it became the supplier of DV for Global TV, the first commercial TV network in the world to regularly schedule description in its programming.

Since then, John has worked on more than 10,000 hours of DV as writer, producer and talent. In 2011 Galaviz & Hauber Productions dissolved, and John went on with his own company, JHP, which currently describes material for networks and independent producers. JHP's work can be heard on Space, Bravo, Comedy, the CBC and Global, as well as in several colleges and universities, and within some IMAX movies.

Extreme Reach

For over 35 years, Extreme Reach (formerly DG MIJO) has offered media solutions to the Canadian broadcast, entertainment and advertising industries, including DV services. Extreme Reach creates, coordinates and encodes specific visual and audio files to master content in both official languages.

Fastfile Media Inc.

Fastfile Media's trained team of DV writers ensure the production of accurate, factual, rich and creative scripts that provide a strong visual image for relevant target audiences. Fastfile Media has produced DV across a range of genres, including: Movies, Documentaries, Sitcoms, Dramas, Reality Television, Children's programming and Webisodes.



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

CBC

In 1997, CBC became the first North American network to telecast a DV program (The Arrow: Parts One and Two). In the years following, CBC made several important drama specials available with DV, but dramatically increased the provision of DV programming in the 2003-04 broadcast year, with a total of 60 hours. Also in 2004, CBC initiated formation of a working group of broadcasters and describers with the intent to establish industry standards for communicating DV to the public.

CBC has significantly increased the total DV hours offered each year since. In addition, in relationship with the former NBRS (now AMI), the DV audio tracks of certain of these programs were offered on VoicePrint (now AMI-audio) in near-simulcast with CBC. Following the licencing of The Accessible Channel (now AMI-tv) many CBC programs are scheduled on AMI-tv, including live DV simulcasts of the Royal Wedding, Canada Day and Remembrance Day specials, Battle of The Blades, Canadian Women's Golf Championships, Spruce Meadows Show Jumping, Hockey Day In Canada and The Canadian Screen Awards. In total, CBC telecast some 2,200 hours of Described Video programming in the 2012-13 broadcast year and that volume will increase going forward.

Bell Media Inc.

CTV, owned by Bell Media Inc., has been committed to providing quality described video (DV) since 2003. It has been fully compliant with CRTC DV mandates and has always exceeded the required hours for DV. CTV became Descriptive Video Works' (DVW) first client in 2003 and DVW remains its service provider today with a shared vision of providing description of the highest quality to engage the partially sighted audience fully in the story.

Dedicated to expanding their DV offerings, in 2010 CTV and DVW pioneered live DV together, creating a new viewing opportunity for their audiences. The Juno Awards were the first program to be aired with live description, followed by So You Think You Can Dance Canada. CTV also provided live description for the opening and closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

Bell Media provides DV for the popular series W5, Motive, Flashpoint, and Cash Cab, and live description daily for the Daily Planet. If a program or movie has been described in the U.S. and it is being aired here in Canada, Bell Media will obtain the description as well.



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Rogers Broadcasting Limited

Rogers Broadcasting Limited (Rogers) recognized the importance of providing DV programming for its blind and low-vision audiences. City stations have included DV programming in their schedules since 2002 and currently broadcast well over 375 hours per year. In addition, OMNI stations broadcast over 175 hours per year.

Rogers provided funding to produce a Public Services Announcement to bring awareness to DV programming that is now broadcast across all Canadian television stations and specialty services.

Shaw Media

Shaw Media provides described video to audiences on both its specialty and conventional channels.

Since its Group Licence Renewal in 2011, Shaw's conventional network and several of its specialty services became subject to DV Conditions of Licence (COL) when they meet a particular threshold set out by the CRTC. Prior to this, the amount of DV required was established in individual licences. To meet and exceed these important Conditions of Licenses, Shaw engages external providers to create DV.

In addition to these requirements, through the Shaw acquisition of Canwest, benefits funds to describe new Programs of National Interest (PNI) were set aside.

Over the years, Shaw's broadcast partners and distributors have been delivering more content with DV already in place. For any content that contains DV, regardless of whether it airs on a channel with a DV COL or not, Shaw ensures that the DV version of the program is aired.

Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)

On January 19, 2009, AMI-tv (formerly The Accessible Channel, or TACtv), made broadcast history by being the first to air "open described" and "closed captioned" programs for people who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing, 24 hours a day and seven days a week. As a Condition of License, AMI-tv provides over 500 hours a year of programming that has never been described before.



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Since its inception, AMI-tv has also broken new ground by creating original programming with embedded description. Instead of simply adding a third voice in the post-production process, AMI specifically included description elements in the creative-production process. Programs such as A Whole New Light I & II, Accessibility In Action, AMI This Week and Canada In Perspective are examples of this new innovative process.

AMI-tv has also become a world broadcast leader in live described programming. Starting with the Royal Wedding in April 2011 and through August 2013 AMI-tv has broadcast over 120 hours of programs with live DV. Among these are Canada Day and Remembrance Day specials, Battle of The Blades, Canadian Women's Golf Championships, Spruce Meadows Show Jumping, Hockey Day In Canada, Canadian Screen Awards and Toronto Blue Jays Baseball.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Role of the Describer

These Described Video Practices have a living nature and, as such, the directions and guidance they provide will continue to evolve as the industry itself continues to evolve its artistic nature. We recognize the expertise that exists among Canadian DV providers. That said, those creating description should exercise discretion and common sense while respecting the content of the product they are producing. One may achieve this by having describers identify their biases, in an effort to understand where their personal point of views may originate from. Furthermore, describers should also consider the genre of the program being described and who the audience is and what the viewers' unique needs may be.

It is within the creative constitution of the describer to provide multi-level description, while using discretion in its placement, based upon the context of the program and intent of the director.

1. **Primary descriptions** – Descriptions that are absolutely crucial to the understanding of story development.
2. **Secondary descriptions** – Descriptions that are defined as being important but not absolutely essential to the understanding of story development.
3. **Tertiary descriptions** – Stylistic descriptions that are encouraged when time allows for them.

As well, describers should be consistently cognisant of the protocols of the practice while providing their services within any context. Those protocols include the following tenets with recognition that such a list of recommended and not-recommend protocols will continue to evolve and grow over time in recognition of the living nature of the practice.

Recommended

- Focus on the provision of description following the guidance of primary, secondary and tertiary description as outlined above.
- Describe actions within a program as they happen.
- Visuals should be accurately described and not be misleading.
- Fill in the video blanks by describing visuals on the screen that aren't evident through dialogue or sound effects.
- Place images in the minds of viewers.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

- Provide a consistent style and flow by avoiding redundancy, step-by-step wording and repetition.
- Constant description is not required. Even if there is space to describe doesn't mean there is a need for description.
- Stepping over dialogue or sounds or adding description after an action takes place may be required, but only when absolutely essential.
- Writing of description should follow guidelines of broadcast writing/writing for the ear. Description should be clear, concise, accurate, relevant, and written in the present active tense.
- There may be keywords occurring in dialogue that are not descriptive and they might need description for them to make sense. (here, there, this & that)
- Others have developed the story and the describer is making it available to those requiring a description of it.

Not Recommended

- Content of the story should not be revealed or spoiled.
- The story is not that of the describer to tell.
- DV content should not be positioned to lessen the sequential story-telling impact of the original content producer or diminish the effectiveness of a director's intentional stylistic or emotive effect.
- Only describe what is on the screen. Don't describe what you imagine is happening off-screen and don't exceed the visual perspective.
- Do not include technical jargon or industry terminology such as "camera angles" within the description unless there is relevance to the content of the program.

Industry-Adopted Described Video Best Practices +

Internally Developed Guidelines Based Upon the Unique Experiences of Each Producer

=

Consistent and Good-Quality DV in Canada

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Instructions for Usage: Artistic and Technical Guidelines

The Artistic and Technical Guidelines of the Canadian broadcasting industry's Described Video Best Practices are high level and designed to provide guidance to producers of description. They are not an instructional manual. It is the intent that these guidelines will be complementary to any internal established best practices producers may have developed based upon their experiences. Producers of description should ensure that the work they produce is in line with consideration of these artistic guidelines, and their technical equivalents, with the understanding that they be considered alongside any established internal best practices. Canadian broadcasting industry uniformity will be sought in this manner, by providing a common foundation on which to base all description.

These guidelines are not point-by-point instructions on how to produce good-quality DV. Rather they are an industry-agreed-upon aggregation of the important elements required to produce good-quality DV. The method of implementation of these guidelines along with any internal best practices will be at the discretion of the describer and may differ in each instance upon consideration of the work being conducted. Any description should be at a rate consistent with the pacing of the program and as allowed for by the original audio track. That which is not included in the original description track may be accessible through additional DV resources.

Each of the six artistic guidelines is divided into four sections:

- **Topic:** General grouping of multiple sub-topics of the same category.
- **Sub-topics:** Specific elements of consideration for inclusion in all development.
- **Recommendations:** Specific recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the sub-topics.
- **Techniques:** Specific techniques to facilitate the application of the sub-topic recommendations.



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Topics: Artistic Guidelines

Individual/Physical Characteristics
Scene Transitions
Other Visuals
Non-Verbal Sounds/Communications
Titles, Subtitles, Credits, Text on Screen, Signing
Style and Tone

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Individual Physical Characteristics	Race
	Ethnicity/Ethnic Origin
	Identifying Characters/People by Name/Physical Appearance
	Facial/Physical Expression
	Relationships
	Attire
	Age
	Accent
	Hair
	Clothes
	Height
	Weight
	Disability
	Gender
Avoid Character Objectification	

Recommendations

- An identification of characters by race, ethnic origin or disability is not required unless there is relevancy to plot, motivation or background, or if meaningful information is being communicated visually and would be otherwise unavailable.
- Avoid assumptions and the interpretation of emotion, reactions, character traits, relationships, levels of attractiveness and attire by using descriptive terms to illustrate, but not define, relevant individual/physical characteristics.
- Unknown characters should be described by their physical appearances until a name is established for them.
- Individual/physical characteristics that are clear in context need not be described unless relevant.
- Always avoid implying anything through the description and follow the lead of the program.
- When assumptions are made there is a risk the wrong story will be told?

Techniques

- Always describe an individual and his/her physical characteristics using the same generic attribute consistently.
- If the director has intended to provide an indication of an individual’s emotion or what they are thinking, then the describer should convey that indication in the most factual way possible.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

- Describe these characteristics using physical attributes that can be described factually and correctly.
- When describing disabilities, strive to put the person before the disability and use politically correct terminology. For example, “person who is blind” is preferred rather than “blind person”.
- Based upon the timing of the program, adding in non-repeating qualifiers may increase the level of the description being provided and can be utilized to express characteristics that are a combination of more than one attribute.
- For characters that are a part of regular series or recognizable within popular culture, the describer should refer to them by full name on the first occasion that they appear.
- As there is always a need for continuity, choose the most popular moniker for a character and maintain it throughout the length of the program. For example, JFK to refer to the 35th United States President.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Scene Transitions	Establishing Place/Time of Day
	Passage of Time
	Transitions and Time Changes
	Scene Changes
	Foreshadowing
	Real vs. Non-Real

Recommendations

- Scene transitions are significant changes to the locale in which the story is taking place. These changes may include, but are not limited to:
 - Establishing place/time of day
 - Passage of time
 - Transitions and time changes
- ex. Scene transition from the present to a scene in a different time:
 - “Flashback”: transition to a separate scene in the present, past or future
 - “Flash”: transition to a separate scene that has already been shown
 - “Re-enactment”: transition to the assumed scene of what has taken place
 - Other changes in quality, tone, footage, effect, focus or distortion
- Common terminology: “later,” “meanwhile,” “next day,” “that night,” “in daytime.”
- Specifying when, where and new locations is required only once per scene.
- Description of scene transitions should be included and should avoid using too many terms.
- Use specific landmark names as required.
- Visual elements that are imagined, remembered or surreal should be differentiated from “real” events.
- Whenever possible try to describe actions at the same time they occur. It may be necessary to set up the next scene slightly earlier or later than the scene change.

Techniques

- Whenever possible, weave scene transitions (place/time of day/passage of time etc.) descriptively into the natural flow of action using signifiers within a scene so as not to interrupt the viewing experience with too much technical language or clipped statements.
- In the instance of:
 - A straight cut; start the second description with the word “now.”

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

- Back-to-back scenes; start the second description with the word “then.”
- The passage of time: start the second description with the word “later” to provide continuity.
- Two or more concurrent scenes: start the second description with the word “meanwhile.”
- Avoid imparting information that isn’t there by not drawing assumptions during the transition while following the directors’ natural transition through the choice of elements that appear in a scene.
- Avoid using one-word descriptions to ensure a smooth transition for the viewer.
- Consider finding a balance between the description of live action and animation within a program by defining it the first time it appears.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Other Visuals	Colour
	Dancing and Choreography
	Lighting
	Setting
	Montages
	Respect the Content of the Program in its Usage and Placement of Branded Products

Recommendations

- Including colour in descriptions is recommended, particularly when colour has symbolic or stylistic significance for the director.
- Describe dancing and choreography to facilitate an understanding of a combination of movements, music and motions in addition to the dress and costume attire of the individuals appearing within the scene. Choreography is cultural, and without description audiences have limited access to this cultural art. For example, cultural-movement choreography can vary from a Bollywood dance sequence to a martial arts dagger fight.
- Summarize the extent of the condensing of space, time and information when describing the series of short shots that comprise a montage.
- Incorporate descriptions of changes in scene lighting within those provided-for scene transitions. For example, “day versus night” or “the warehouse is dark”.

Techniques

- On a case-by-case basis, describe in detail other elements whose context is only apparent visually, such as a flashing light, dancing or any usage of colour that is relevant to the context of the program and the director’s intent.
- Whenever possible, establish a transition by mentioning the setting within the first description by incorporating a character and action.
- Describe product placement and embedded marketing. For example, in it’s a Wonderful Life (1946) you might say, “the boy picked up a copy of the National Geographic.”

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Non-Verbal Sounds /Communications	Identifying Sounds and Sound Effects and the Placement of Descriptions
	Working with Music and Respecting the Soundtrack

Recommendations

- Describe what you can't hear.
- Give music, sound effects or ambient sound the ability to describe itself. When required, though, determine when to allow the music, sound effects or ambient sound to play through and when to describe through them.
- If description occurs over the entire musical or sound segment, the audience may have missed out on that aspect of the storytelling.
- Common well-known sounds usually do not require identification unless the sound is out of context.
- Identify new speakers if the dialogue or narration doesn't make it clear and re-identify throughout the program (for broadcast material once per segment/ break when possible).
- Describe the source of unidentified sounds and speech.
- Where sound effects may not be clearly distinguishable, the action resulting in said sound effect is described when time permits.
- The amount of description possible will be determined by the soundtrack.
- The lyrical content in songs sometimes explains the background of the story, or the history of the characters.
- Writing description around music and sound effects maximizes the dramatic impact of the story and minimizes potential obtrusiveness of the description.
- Popular music may associate with programs or particular scenes intentionally. Allow for as much of these songs to be heard, if in context, as possible.
- Ensure that description does not interfere with erotic sounds.
- If a description must fall on either side of a sound, it is better for it to be before the sound than after.
- Sometimes a describer will describe what's about to appear because there's no gap in dialogue for the information when it does appear. For instance, the audio description of what's currently occurring and the current background noise may indicate waterfall, while the describer may need to say "In a moment, racetrack with a dozen cars circling the track." This alerts viewers with low vision that the racetrack isn't on screen at present. Occasionally there's no gap in dialogue giving the opportunity to describe something essential to listeners' understanding while that specific visual image is on the screen.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Techniques

- Description of sounds isn't required. For example, "Sally laughs" or "the wolf howls". However it may need to be explained who is performing the action. If the scene portrays a room full of people and we hear only one person laughing, then the description "Sally laughs" would be appropriate.
- If a sound effect is identical to a scene, only describe it if it's out of place. Less is more unless more is required. For example, a phone ringing in a living room versus a phone ringing on an airplane.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Titles, Subtitles, Credits, Text on Screen, Sign Language	Titles
	Subtitles
	Credits
	Sign Language
	Any Text on Screen
	Signage Including Logos
	Captions/Captioning

Recommendations

- Titles, logos and bumpers should be described.
- Standard credits and those which are relevant to the course of the show should be included within the description track.
- Captions and subtitles are used to visually display information on the screen that may not be available in the original audio track, such as the translation of a foreign language, the passage of time or otherwise quiet dialogue. Other requirements may exist for the proper pronunciation of a foreign language. The inclusion of the description of these elements should be evaluated based upon the composition of the original audio track, the relevancy of the content and whether it develops the material as a whole.
- Sign language communication and content may be provided through captions that would be otherwise described. However, if they are not, then description of the content should be provided. In the case of on-screen signing, the original audio track is being provided and therefore no description is required unless it is relevant.
- In-program signage that is not relevant and does not develop the material as a whole does not require description. If it is, though, then placement within the description track should occur to ensure its relevancy and to respect the content.
- Captioning, as defined as text contained within a separate captioning track and which can be turned on and off, does not require description.
- Credits may change from one episode to another. Be sure credits match what is on screen.

Techniques

- When confronted with text on the screen, say the associated word, such as “title,” “subtitle,” “caption,” “logo,” “credits,” “end credits,” “sign reads” or “sign on the wall,” followed by the text being displayed or a description of its content. If the text appears in an abnormal fashion, such as through short-hand used in a text message, describe the context of the abnormal text if time permits.
- If the text onscreen is associated with a sound, narrate the text the first time it appears to allow the viewer to understand that when it occurs again, within the context of the program, it will have already been defined (as in the case of a game show).

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

- If sign language appears on the screen for the purpose of translation or within the context of the program, consider handling the presence of it the first time it occurs. In that manner a description of the signing will not impede the description of the program as their purposes are the same.
- Do not use a phrase such as “words appear on the screen”
- Do not presume the comprehension level of the person who is seeking to understand what is being described.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Style and Tone (Delivery & Narration)	Point of View and Tense
	Descriptive Verbs, Types of Language (ex. jargon, narration, slang) and Changes in Sentence Structure
	Definite vs. Indefinite Articles
	Visual vs. Non-Visual Perspective
	Repetition
	Description of Foreign Languages
	Identifying Relevant Objects, Information, Circumstances, Locations, Time and Action

Recommendations

- Describe the point of view when relevant, while respecting the content. It is important for the audience members to know when they are being addressed (as opposed to an on-screen character). One way to accomplish this is to refer to the audience as “you.”
- Narration should be in the third-person active voice using the present, continuous-present or present-participle tenses.
- A describer should not include or reference themselves in narration.
- Understand where subjectivity may be required.
- When possible, use descriptive verbs to reduce repetition and enhance the experience.
- The indefinite should be used unless the article has already been mentioned, is known or is understood as the only one.
- It should not be necessary to use offensive language, unless referring to content that is integral to the understanding of the program or if the words are mouthed and are clearly recognizable as a word.
- Use whole sentences when possible. It is acceptable, though, to identify characters by just giving their names, or to describe objects or settings in incomplete sentences.
- It is important to detail the interaction between two people in a romantic situation, but very generally speaking. Describe it to the extent that it is shown.
- A describer should avoid jargon and references to specific techniques, e.g., “close-up” or “fade to black.”
- If clauses of a sentence will be split up unnaturally, to accommodate dialogue or sound effects, then consider making two sentences for more natural pacing.
- Narrator should not have to read fast. Descriptions should be crafted to fit in the time allotted.
- The describer may need to omit a less significant description of what’s on screen in order to interject the critical description. (See Page 10: Role of the Describer)



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Techniques

- Consult the Post-Production Described Video Best Practices suggested terminology. (See Page 31: Appendix A)
- Create the description based upon the style and tone of the show.
- In the instance of narration, provide enough of a differentiation between the voices of the describer and the narrator (example: using a man and a woman for each purpose).



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Topics: Technical Guidelines

Channels
Loudness and Peak Levels
Soudtrack vs. DV Mix Levels
Equalization
Sync
Recording Quality
Output Parameter

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Note:

Differences will exist in every program and use of these guidelines is at the discretion of the technical team applying them. Nevertheless, in the absence of specific circumstances that might warrant an exception, following these guidelines is strongly encouraged as they will help to equalize the delivery of DV across different networks and providers in Canada.

Channels

DV output should be mono or stereo as requested by client/broadcaster. If output is stereo, DV should be centred in the **stereo mix of the two channels**. While an in-depth technical exploration of surround DV mixes are beyond the scope of this document at this time, it is safe to assume DV should be routed to the centre channel of a surround mix until and unless testing and research determines otherwise.

Loudness & Peak Levels

DV loudness should approximately track soundtrack loudness, adjusting DV levels as needed to match.

DV mix should fall within **2 LKFS of -24LKFS** over the course of the title, adjusting original soundtrack levels as needed, to meet loudness standards as defined in **A/85:2011, section 6 (Appendix B)**.

Soundtrack vs. DV Mix Levels

Soundtrack audio should be dipped under description as needed. Unless deemed necessary by producer/mixer, soundtrack should not be completely suppressed; it should be possible to hear the original soundtrack under DV, with no more reduction than judged necessary to ensure DV can be clearly understood.

Equalization

DV should be adjusted to emphasize clarity of speech.

DV is intended to be complementary to a program. Approximating soundtrack EQ is allowable if the original audio is of a significantly reduced frequency range than the DV or in an effort to maintain the aural atmosphere of a soundtrack; however, DV clarity should not be



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



Post Production Described Video Best Practices

compromised and should take priority over the creative wants should the two objectives come into conflict. **EQ matching as an objective in and of itself is inadvisable and is discouraged.**

Sync

Resulting DV mix should be in sync with the original soundtrack, preferably sample-accurate, no worse than within a frame of the original soundtrack. In cases where the original soundtrack is out of sync with the picture, the DV mix should sync with the audio.

Recording Quality

Description recordings should, at minimum, have the same bit depth and sample rate as the original soundtrack. Be wary of dithering artifacts if recordings are made at a higher bit depth than the resulting mix. For simplicity, match the sample rate (usually, but not always, 48kHz).

Signal-to-noise ratio should be of broadcast-quality standard. Recording environment should be as deadened and quiet as possible; mixer should not need to attempt to filter out reverberation and external noise. Talent and technician should be familiar with basic microphone setup and technique to avoid plosives and varied voice quality over the course of a recording.

Output Parameters

Sound resolution of the DV mix should match original soundtrack material. If client/broadcaster requests a higher bit depth/sample rate than the source, DV should be recorded at the requested bit depth/sample rate, and original soundtrack audio should be converted prior to mixing. It is recommended to work in as high a bit depth/sample rate as necessary, the higher of the source rate or client request, and down convert as needed after mixing.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Next Steps

Public Consultation and Research

Representatives with experience in the creation and standardization of description from Ryerson University reviewed and provided feedback on these Described Video Best Practices as they evolved into their current iteration. During this review the Ryerson group initiated a research project, focused on aggregating other sources of description research, for the purpose of supporting and critiquing the protocols developed within these best practices. This project brought forward several points for consideration and these best practices adopted and took under consideration those points relevant to English-only, post-production, Canadian-produced description for use in the Canadian broadcasting system.

It was identified during the course of this project that research could be embarked upon to assist with the on-going development of these best practices. Giving consideration to the mandate and timeline set forth for these best practices, it is the recommendation of the Described Video Best Practices committee that this research project be given a separate mandate to continue this aggregate research if consumer feedback indicates that research should be undertaken. As this project continues to evolve, its findings should be taken into consideration and adopted through the living nature of this document. Relevant recommendations that have been brought forward have already been adopted within these best practices. It is to be expected that this project will bring forward other relevant recommendations as it evolves.

Support for this work should be considered as there may be a long-term benefit to the Canadian broadcasting industry. This support could provide for an expansion of this research along with initiatives, such as public-consultation processes and the development of a public-feedback system, if consumer feedback supports this. At that time research initiatives could be explored with entities such as the AMI Research Panel to complement the community representation on the Described Video Best Practices committee. Funding sources may become available through entities such as the Broadcast Accessibility Fund once it is established.

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Emerging Types of DV

This being a living document, future analyses and best practices will be required for new and emerging initiatives of DV. As mentioned earlier within this document, broadcasters have already embarked upon the live description of broadcast events. Embedded description into the production of a program, instead of using a third voice in post-production, is being experimented with. The growth of French description will require similar high-quality guidelines.

More DV

“More DV” is a branding reference for a service that would provide extended or tertiary descriptive content. The intent of the More DV service would be to offer content that could further enhance and support the viewer experience beyond that which may be available in a time-delimited DV track that accompanies a program, but outside and in addition to the broadcast experience.

Producers would be able to utilize the More DV service to provide “tertiary” or extended description for their programming. Whether it would be a centralized service or a general service offering available individually from all producers of description, viewers could utilize the service to receive the More DV information to enhance their experience. Producers would take it upon their own initiative to produce the additional content, unless specifically requested by the client. It would be the assumption that the information would be made available free of charge to the viewer; however, in order to be viable some mechanism of financial support may be required so such a service may be more successful.

It may also be that this More DV content could add enhancement to on-air broadcast description in regards to the use of controversial (i.e., Race, Profanity) content not created for general consumption. The details of this service require further analyses of scope beyond the context of these best practices to determine its true viability.

Further

Given the mandate for this work, it is understood that these best practices will be submitted to the CRTC for its consideration and decision upon any next steps to be taken to further develop and implement this work across the industry. The Described Video Best Practices Working

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Group has found consensus on these guidelines and to that end has suggested some potential next steps for their continued evolution.

Recognizing that the process to develop these best practices has been a voluntary initiative, the signatories have agreed to adopt this work as a high-level set of industry guidelines. It is felt that this may be achieved through an agreement on enforcement at the association level to ensure that those providing DV, namely broadcasters, will engage those producers of DV who were either a participant in the development of this work or who may seek an understanding and adoption of these guidelines in the future.

Providers of DV would ensure that producers would be aware of these guidelines prior to engagement. New adopters of these best practices would then be required to show an understanding of the intent of consistency within this work in the product that they produce, which would be as defined by the industry standard. Providers will apply years of experience, community relationships, industry collaboration and quality developed through an understanding of consumer needs to develop a consistent product, all of which should be a consideration of a DV provider in the selection of a DV producer.

Recognizing that these guidelines have a living nature, it is anticipated that they will continue to evolve as the practice itself continues to evolve. Furthermore, upon industry adoption of these high-level guidelines, it is anticipated that public feedback on the consistent delivery of DV may increase and feedback methods and other forms of consultation may need to be developed. Following submission and consideration of this work by the Commission, it is suggested that other feedback methods could be explored. Either through the continuance of this group in some form or through other methods such as the AMI DV Guide Call Centre, which began to garner feedback of this nature following the implementation of the Described Video Working Group's DV Public Services Announcement.

Post-Production Description Track + More DV

= Enhanced Description Exceeding That Which Is Broadcast On-Air

Post Production Described Video Best Practices

Appendix A: Sensitive-Topic Terminology

Producers of description should recognize that sensitive topics will garner differing opinions and feedback from viewers of described programming content. It is recommended that individual producers create and consistently utilize suggested lists of recommended terminology specific to their line of business, which are to be based upon the direction and guidance provided by the living nature of these best practices and any related future research initiatives.

Once internally established, producers should ensure that they continuously utilize this standardized terminology for all sensitive topics to ensure consistency. As always though, it is at the discretion of the describer to determine what terms are utilized for what purpose and at what timing.

These topics include but are not limited to:

- Pornography
- Sex
- Nudity
- Profanity
- Disability
- Religion
- Violence

Appendix B (attached):

ATSC Recommended Practice: Techniques for Establishing and Maintaining Audio Loudness for Digital Television (A/85:2011)