



# **Spoken Self-Description Tools: Enhancing Accessibility in Digital and Physical Spaces**

## **Introduction**

Spoken self-description is a powerful tool that enhances accessibility for individuals who are Blind or live with low vision. By providing verbal descriptions of oneself, including physical characteristics, personal identity, and surroundings, we can create a more inclusive online environment. This white paper outlines the importance and considerations/practices for using spoken self-description tools.

## **Understanding Spoken Self-Description**

Spoken self-description involves verbally conveying visual details about oneself to ensure that Blind/ low vision individuals can have a more autonomous and inclusive experience. This practice is particularly useful in meetings, conferences, and digital interactions where visual cues are otherwise inaccessible.

Example:

- *Spoken Self-Description*: "Hello, I am Alex. I am wearing a blue shirt and glasses, with short brown hair. I am in a home office with bookshelves behind me. My pronouns are they/he."

## **Importance of Spoken Self-Description**

Providing spoken self-descriptions helps individuals who are Blind or live with low vision engage more fully in social interactions by giving them access to visual information that they might otherwise miss. This promotes a sense of inclusion and equity.

## **Goals of Using Spoken Self-Description**

- **Inclusivity**: Ensure that everyone, regardless of visual ability, can participate fully in interactions.
- **Autonomy**: Allow visually impaired individuals to recognize and remember people based on audible descriptions.
- **Identity Awareness**: Convey the diversity (or lack thereof) present in a room or group, fostering an understanding of the cultural and power dynamics in that space.

## **Best Practices for Spoken Self-Description**

1. **Clothing and Appearance**: Describe your clothing, hairstyle, and any distinctive features.
2. **Environment**: Mention your surroundings, such as the type of room or notable background elements.
3. **Personal Identity**: Include relevant personal details like your name, pronouns, and any identity markers you would like to share.

4. Consistent Practice: Incorporate self-descriptions consistently in meetings, conferences, and digital events to normalize the practice.

## Examples of Effective Spoken Self-Descriptions

- *In a Meeting:* "Hi, I'm Taylor. I am a white woman. I have long curly hair and am wearing a green dress. I'm sitting in a wheelchair in a bright room with a large window behind me. My pronouns are she/her."
- *At a Conference:* "Hello, I am Jordan. I am a Black non-binary person wearing a suit with a red tie, and I have a beard. I'm standing on a stage with a podium in front of me. My pronouns are they/them."

## Tools and Resources

### Spoken Tools

- Self-Description: Verbal descriptions provided by individuals about their appearance, environment, and identity. This can be particularly useful in virtual meetings and in-person events where visual information is critical for inclusion.

### Written Resources

- Guides and Articles: Utilize resources such as [Introduction to Self-Description](#) for detailed guidance on implementing spoken self-description practices.

## Conclusion

Spoken self-description is an essential practice for promoting accessibility and inclusivity, especially for individuals who are Blind or live with low vision. By

adopting these practices, we can ensure that everyone has equitable access to social interactions and can more fully engage in various settings.

For more information and resources on creating accessible environments through spoken self-descriptions, visit [Introduction to Self-Description](#).

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*This white paper is based on guidelines and examples provided in the Alt Text and Visual Descriptions presentation by Birdability staff.*