

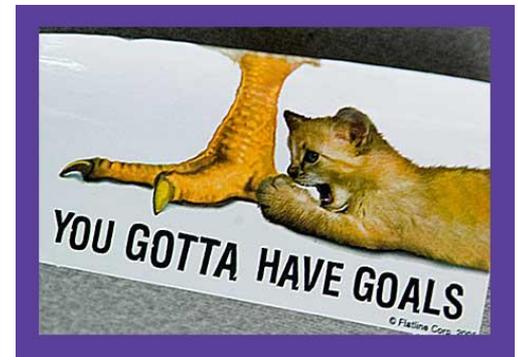


# A Bit About Audio Description

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## Today's Goals

- What is Audio Description?
- How does Audio Description work?
- What should one be aware of when needing audio description services?



## What is Audio Description?

Audio description (aka video description) is a way to provide equal access to people who are blind or have low vision. It's an audio based description of visual information which can be previously recorded or done live.

It has broad applications:

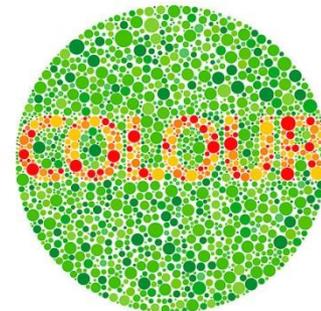
- Dance
- Theater
- Opera
- Film
- Education
- Video
- Television
- Sporting Events
- Art Galleries
- Museums
- Visitor Centers
- And lots more!



## A little bit about blindness:

- Blindness affects over 21 million in the USA alone
- It's primarily an acquired disability
- The prevalence of blindness is increasing with our aging society
- Someone who is legally blind often has some semblance of vision
  - Attorney with retinitis pigmentosa
  - Photographer – unknown
  - Teacher – unknown
  - Student (13) – brain cancer and subsequent radiation around optic nerve

Why does this matter?



SCIENCEPHOTOLIBRARY

**Experience design is the design of anything, independent of medium, or across media, with human experience as an explicit outcome, and human engagement as an explicit goal.**

Jesse James Garrett  
inspireUX

## A Describer's Job...

...is to provide services in various settings using words that are succinct, vivid, and imaginative. Describers convey the visual images from an event, television or film that is not fully accessible to parts of the population and often not fully realized by sighted people who see, but may not observe.



Concise descriptions of the key visual elements of a performance or movie are carefully woven by the describer into the natural pauses of the dialogue.

**Audio Description is a creative process!**



There are standards and a code of conduct for Audio Describers.

You can find these at:

<http://www.audiodescriptioncoalition.org/standards.html>

or I can send you a copy.

(email me at [Kkaelin@arabotzmedia.com](mailto:Kkaelin@arabotzmedia.com))



# PRINCIPLES OF AUDIO DESCRIPTION

1. Everything can't be described.
2. Prioritize the important visual information.
3. Don't describe what a listener can hear - UNLESS the sound doesn't make sense by itself.
4. Start with general information first getting more specific as time allows.
5. Use words everyone understands; no jargon.
6. Don't talk over the dialogue or other relevant audio.
7. Don't be repetitious.
8. Don't judge or interpret; be objective.
9. Conform the tone of voice, speed of the words and the words used to the specific video. Audio description should blend with and enhance the experience.
10. Make sure to describe names, titles and credits!

# This information is covered when possible:

Place

Time

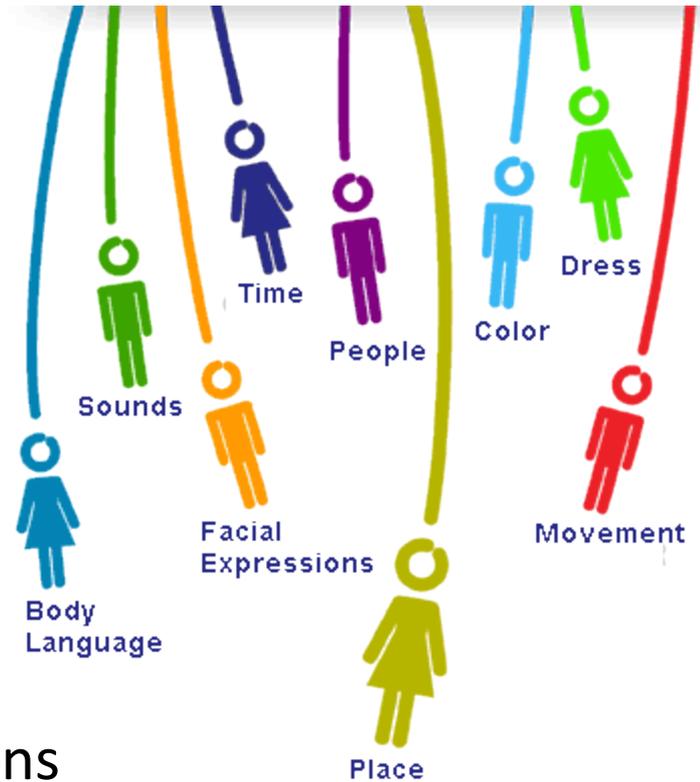
People

Dress

Body Language & Facial Expressions

Movement

Color



# Questions?

## How Audio Description Works

Generally, audio description is added at the end of a project.

It is often an afterthought  
(Oh yea, we need this to be accessible).

You need a budget for audio description.

It isn't easy and it isn't cheap.

Audio description is typically produced by trained professionals and requires significant time and precision to work out.

## What's required to add Audio Description to a project?

Generally:

- First, the describer has to watch and become familiar with the film.
- Secondly, the describer has to time the dialogue...actually it's the timing of the space between the dialogue and other audible sounds that's required.
- Third, the describer goes through the project determining the most important visual information to convey.
- Next the describer creates a script, timed to the spaces, that accurately and vividly conveys visual information in an audio format. This can be pretty intense and I'll show you this in a moment.
- Fifth, the audio description script is recorded in time to the actual video.
- Sixth, the description track is added to the project as an additional audio track.

# Whew!

That's a lot of work!

Let's try this for ourselves...

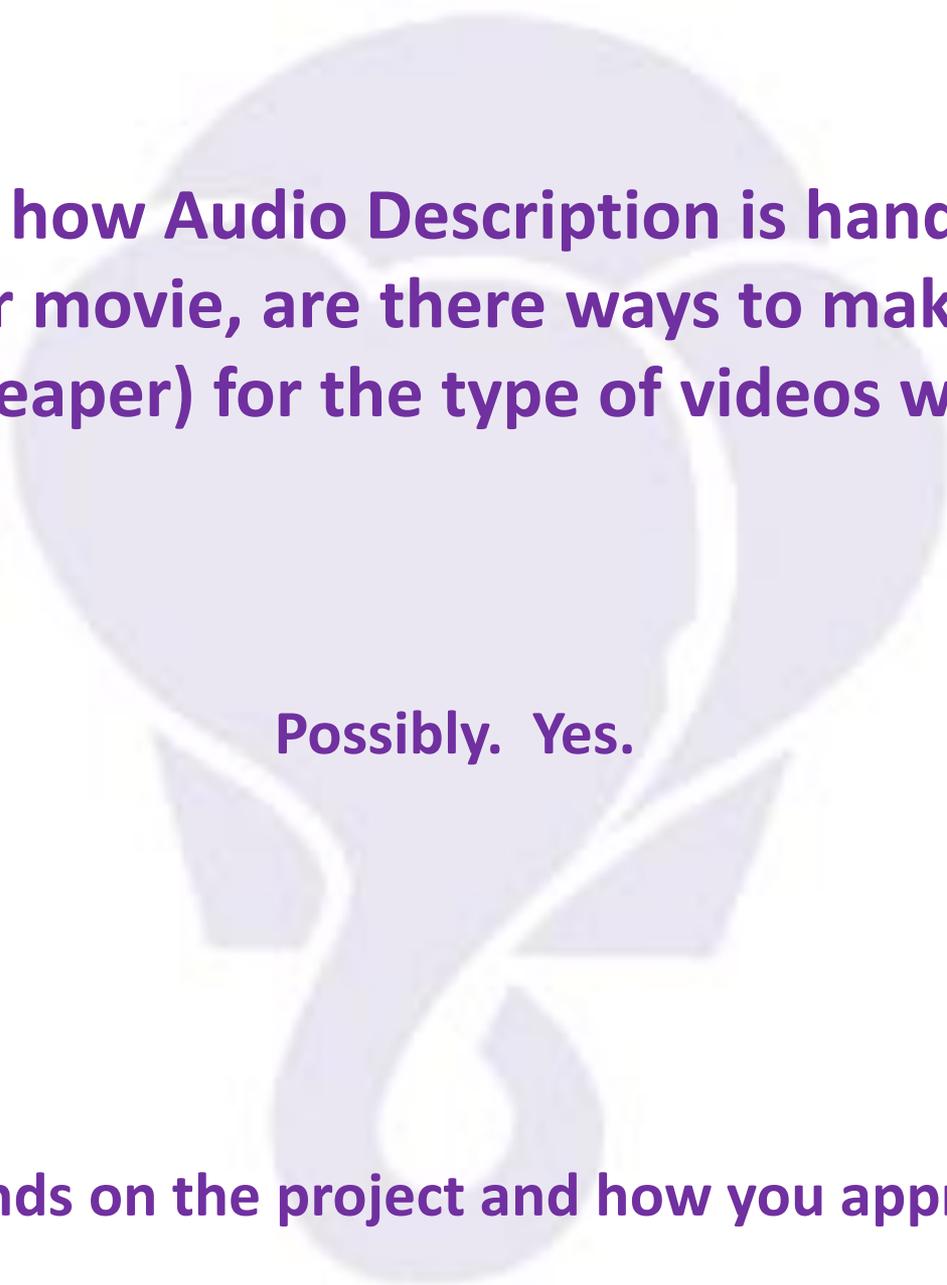
# A LITTLE EXERCISE





The opening to the Road to Perdition is an extreme example of Audio Description.

Most videos that are created are not blockbuster movies.



**If that's how Audio Description is handled for a blockbuster movie, are there ways to make this easier (and cheaper) for the type of videos we make?**

**Possibly. Yes.**

**It depends on the project and how you approach it.**

## Possible ways to reduce Audio Description costs:

A lot of information can be conveyed in a manner that reduces the need for a separate audio description track. This, in turn, will reduce your costs.

How you approach your project WILL make a difference. Include accessibility from the planning stages.

Very often, simple changes to the script can make a big difference in the AMOUNT of audio description needed. I cannot overemphasize the importance of scripting when Audio Description will be involved.

## Possible ways to reduce Audio Description costs (continued)

Simply designing the project with people who are blind or low vision in mind can reduce the audio description requirements. (Heard this before?)

You don't have to change the tone of your video; you don't have to make it boring. (What about this?)

Just this simple change in mindset can make a world of difference to the people you are trying to reach and to your overall costs.

**BUT:** This doesn't always work...depending on your project.

# Questions?

## How do you play an Audio Described video?

WHERE will you be playing this video?

- DVD
  - Most often uses an additional audio track that is played along with video only when the option for audio description is chosen.
- Television
  - SAP
- Internet or Intranet
  - Video Players
  - Duplication of project with additional audio track embedded into accessible project.

## A few things to keep in mind when your project needs Audio Description:

- Start your project with accessibility in mind – don't make it an afterthought. Retrofitting a script for audio description is the most expensive way to create a described project.
- Audio description requires a complete and separate additional script.
- The scripting phase can reduce audio description needed by using understandable oral and aural cues
- Audio description requires recording a second audio track and adding it to your project
- Know where your video will be played and the types and capabilities of players that can handle audio description or use two different versions of your project.

## A few things to keep in mind when your project needs Audio Description (continued):

- Audio description is not easy.
- Audio description will be different for every describer and every project. If you have multiple videos in a project, the description style should be consistent among the set (same voice not required).
- Don't forget to describe names, titles and credits
- Color commentary – typically used in sports radio to add emotion and entertainment to the description. Not used for standard audio description. Know your audience and add color commentary only if you deem it appropriate to the project.
- Include Audio Description in your budget!



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