



Inclusive Introductions and Visual Descriptions for Meetings and Events

What are visual descriptions and why are they important?

Visual descriptions are a practice where speakers describe their appearance and other visual context to improve accessibility and inclusivity those who are unable to access visuals in a virtual meeting. While optional, they are recommended to ensure equal access to information. Visual descriptions help provide important social cues, such as race, gender, or community identity, as well as anything in the background that may be relevant or come up in conversation, making events more inclusive.

When to provide a self-description

Meeting and event organizers should always have a method for participants and presenters to share and request any accessibility needs in advance. However, if the presenters and/or participants are not all known or there are folks calling in on the phone, best practice is to include a visual description. The facilitator should set the tone by reminding speakers to share self-descriptions, including name and pronouns (if they're comfortable) when they introduce themselves. The facilitator should also share this guidance document in advance.

How to self-describe

Prepare a short self-description in advance—one or two sentences (30 seconds or less) that focus on key, relevant details. Keep it concise, especially in larger groups, and only share what you're comfortable with.

What to mention (optional)

- Pronouns
- Hairstyle or color
- Race/ethnicity/skin tone
- Age or age range
- Gender
- Description of clothing
- Notable accessories, like glasses
- Culturally significant items (regalia, hijab, etc.)
- Mobility aids (mobility aids, hearing aids, etc.)

What not to mention

- Statements like “cis-appearing” or “female-presenting.”
- Value-based comments on appearance, especially those that perpetuate colorism, ageism, transphobia, fatphobia, etc.
- Remarks that could be considered microaggressions if you said them about someone else.
- Don't make it a competition or a joke.

Where to learn more

[How To Create a Helpful Visual Description](#)

[Self-description for inclusive meetings](#)

[Making a Case for Self-Description: It's Not About Eye Candy](#)

Examples of inclusive self-descriptions to share:

"I am a partially-blind white woman in my late 40s. I have thick purple glasses, a large purple headset and grey-blonde hair tied back in a ponytail."

"I am a brown-skinned Black man with a smooth shaven bald head, full neat beard wearing dark shades and a black hoodie with the words, "I am my ancestors" printed on the front."

"I am a light-skinned non-binary person with short brown hair and freckles. I'm wearing a red t-shirt and black-rimmed glasses."

"I am a white woman with long dark brown braided pigtails, rosy cheeks, black plastic framed glasses, and a Seattle Kraken navy and light blue hooded sweatshirt on, standing in front of a wall of green plants with a large smile on my face."

"I am a smiling, bald, light-skinned individual with wire-rimmed glasses wearing a blue polo shirt."

"I am a tall Korean-American woman with short black hair, wearing a green knee length dress and am seated in a wheelchair."

Examples of self-descriptions to avoid and why:

"I'm a fat person that could stand to lose a couple of pounds."

Why it's a problem: While fat is a label that has been reclaimed by the fat community, critical comments about one's weight perpetuate fatphobia.

"I am a cisgender..."

Why it's a problem: While useful in conversations around gender identity, in most contexts it provides information that could pressure closeted transgender people to either out themselves or lie about their identity. It also perpetuates the stereotype that transgender people look a certain "way" that is different from cisgender people.

"I'm female-presenting."

Why it's a problem: Uses vague, potentially loaded language that can reinforce stereotypes or assumptions.

"I look younger than I am—thankfully!"

Why it's a problem: Implies a value judgment that being younger is better, which can perpetuate ageism.

"I look normal, so I probably don't need to describe myself."

Why it's a problem: Suggests there's a "normal" appearance, which can marginalize people with visible or invisible differences.

Disclaimer: This document was created to support the work of the Best Practices Subcommittee of the RAIN BRG (Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network) for the State of Washington. The information presented doesn't represent the author(s) or any Washington State agencies past, present or future, unless specifically cited.