# Q&A from AHEAD Webinar, 2/4/21

**Question 1:** What about describing gender and race? Any advice there?

Answer: I try to avoid describing gender, race, or ethnicity unless it is important or relevant to the context. If it’s not relevant to the educational content, I leave it out. For example, if it’s a medical book and I’m describing a doctor and patient, in most cases their gender would be irrelevant to the meaning of the photograph. If it’s a photograph of protesters for Black Lives Matter, I’d be more inclined to discuss race and ethnicity to describe the scene.

**Question 2:** Should a person's race, gender, or other elements of appearance ever be described?

Answer: See Question 1 above. In terms of appearance, I would only describe what is relevant to the meaning of the photograph and take into consideration why it was included. If it’s a photograph of women in ceremonial dress, I would describe the appearance of their dress or costumes. If it’s a simple photo of women in an office environment, I would not mention their business suits or attire or appearance unless it was out of the ordinary.

**Question 3:** What if the purpose of the activity is to analyze the photo? Do you have an idea for an alternative assignment if the purpose is to analyze his emotions/state of mind knowing the time the picture was take?

Answer: For assignments and testing, describing images is far more complex. I am giving a webinar on Wednesday (Feb. 10, 2021) on this subject if you’d like to attend. I’ll include the link below in my answer to Question 8. It is very difficult for many people to analyze emotions from a photograph, even if they are sighted. I would describe the moment or set the scene for the student, and then allow them to answer in essay format.

**Question 4:** You already mentioned, but could you remind us how many characters we can put in the alt text field?

Answer: The default setting for the JAWS screen reading software pauses after 250 characters, but it very much depends on the software and the user’s settings. For simple images, I would suggest trying to keep your description to one or two sentences. Complex images may take four or five sentences, and beyond that you are risking auditory fatigue in your listeners.

**Question 5:** Can you share any good resources for math speak guidelines or chemistrian rules?

Answer: We have developed a robust set of Mathspeak and Chemistrian rules and standards at CIDI over the last decade, but I cannot share them publicly since they have taken quite a while to refine. Here are some links to resources that we pulled from if you’d like to get started in making math and chemical equations accessible: [General Math Speak MathSpeak™ Core Specification Grammar Rules](http://www.gh-mathspeak.com/examples/grammar-rules/index.php?verbosity=all&rule=0), [The Greek Alphabet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_alphabet), [The MathSpeak Initiative](http://www.gh-mathspeak.com/examples/grammar-rules/), [List of Elements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_elements), [How to Speak Chemistrian.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlRhLicNo8Q)

**Question 6:** If you're making images from a textbook into tables or lists, do you provide that as a separate word document or in the source document itself?

Answer: That is up to you as content provider, and I would ask the student what their preference is. Our work transforming textbooks makes it difficult because we are trying not to modify the original textbook too much while making it accessible. Since we are working with copyright constraints to a certain extent, we are not adding lists or tables into the books for students, but if I were faculty or staff, I would have more flexibility in adding material into the source document.

**Question 7:** Are there resources for standardized math-speak and chemistry-speak for alt text e.g., Upper N?

Answer: See Question 5 above.

**Question 8:** Do you have experience with diagrams for a test? For example, identify parts of a heart. How do you describe without giving too much information for them to be assessed?

Answer: For assignments and testing, describing images is far more complex. I am giving a webinar on Wednesday with the DAISY Consortium called [The Art and Science of Describing Images, Part 3](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_vkXSGckRSQ6jXuQ5xBj42A) where we focus on artwork, anatomy figures, and testing and assessment scenarios. To answer your question though, it is important to think through alternative methods of testing to test people fairly. A student could respond to that question by listing all the parts of the heart from top to bottom or clockwise, or match the parts of the heart to their function. These options work for nonsighted individuals and still allow them to demonstrate their knowledge.