



Disability Resource Centers' Access Technology Center (ATC)  
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## Techniques and Strategies when working with students with Vision Loss:

### A Guide for Instructors

#### Guidelines for Instructional Materials:

- **Provide ALL text in a digital format to the student.** This is important because the content must interface with any assistive technology the student may use to read it (e.g., screen reader, screen magnifier).
  - Be sure that the digital file is text-based, not a scanned image of text. [Palomar College's Accessibility Portal](#) provides information and links to detailed instructions, trainings, and workshops for ensuring that course documents are accessible to all students, including those who are blind or have low vision.
  - If after reviewing your course material, you have questions about accessibility contact the Access Technology Center [drc\\_atc@palomar.edu](mailto:drc_atc@palomar.edu)
  - All course material needs to be accessible (including quizzes/exams or any optional or recommended material).
- **Many students with blindness/low vision access textbooks in different formats such as audio or Braille.**
  - The sooner students know which textbooks they need for their courses, the more likely they will be to get the books in the preferred format by the start of the semester.
  - It is strongly advised to submit [textbook adoption information](#) as soon as possible.
- **The visual elements of multimedia presentations such as PowerPoint or films will need to be communicated orally to students who can't process the information visually.**
  - Be sure to describe photos and graphics, paraphrase text, and identify relevant data from graphs and tables.

- **Fully accessible videos include voice/audio descriptions of what is happening on-screen when what is being conveyed visually is not also coming through auditorily.**
  - For instructions on describing media, go to the [tip sheet](#) prepared by the Described and Captioned Media Program.
  - For support in adding audio descriptions to videos that have already been produced contact the DRC right away ([interpretercoordinator@palomar.edu](mailto:interpretercoordinator@palomar.edu))
- **Graphs and other visual/spatial sources of information will require adaptation or alternative formats for blind students.**
  - The Alternate Media Specialist works with faculty members to create tactile versions or devise other means of access.
- **If you include websites in your instruction/course, make sure that the content is accessible to those with sensory disabilities, including blindness/low vision.**
  - If you use a website that is not accessible with document and screen reading software, you will need to provide the content to the student in an accessible format.
- **Many students who have been blind or had low vision for a long time are particularly adept at processing oral communication.**
  - When blind/low vision students use screen reading software to render text into speech, they will often set the reading speed to a much higher speed than the average speaking rate. For reasons of efficiency, therefore, students with vision disabilities may be among those who prefer to access a transcript of a podcast or interview rather than listening to the original content at the normal pace.

### **Possible Accommodations**

- Alternative testing (extended time, screen reading programs, distraction reduced setting, and/or computer)
- Peer Note-taking assistance
- Textbooks in alternate format (electronic, Braille, audio)
- Use of assistive Technology (screen reader, screen magnifier, audio recorder)
- Enlarged or Braille printed materials
- Tactile maps/images or embossed materials
- Preferential Seating: Front Row

- Use of a CCTV
- Videos with audio descriptions

### **Teaching Strategies:**

There is a range of inclusive teaching and assessment strategies that can assist all students to learn but there are some specific strategies that are useful in teaching a group which includes students with vision impairment.

We often take for granted the amount of visual information received every day. Many blind/low vision students do not have a lifetime of visual experiences to draw upon. It may be necessary to consider the amount of assumed visual content in your subject when designing learning tasks.

- Teach your class as you normally would but provide more detailed oral descriptions
- When you have written on the board, read out loud what you have written. If it is a graph or chart, describe it verbally and give rich verbal descriptions of concepts, since students with visual impairments may not be able to clearly see visual cues or models. When using visual aids in the class, be as descriptive as possible. Words like “this”, “that”, “here” can be confusing; try to avoid these.
- Use dark markers on the White Board and use contrast.
- Speak to the class, not facing the board.
- It is never impolite to ask if a student with a visual impairment needs or would like assistance; do so in a private and confidential setting.
- Academic activities which take place off-campus (such as industry visits, interviews, or field work) may pose access barriers and prep work and planning may be needed.
- Provide an individual orientation to laboratory equipment or computers to minimize the anxiety likely in an unfamiliar environment
- Provide the student prior notice (preferably the beginning of the semester) that you plan to use a film or video in class to allow them the option to have audio descriptions applied.
  - Connect with the DRC ([interpretercoordinator@palomar.edu](mailto:interpretercoordinator@palomar.edu)) for audio descriptions to be added to the video for the student.

- What are audio descriptions? Visit [3Play Media's Beginner's Guide to Audio Descriptions](#)
- A student may use a Guide Dog. Service dogs have been trained to guide people who are blind, to keep out of the way, and to be quiet. These working dogs should not be treated as pets and should not be engage with while working. Visit Palomar College's [Service Animal information page](#).
- Be aware that the student may need a peer notetaker for your class. Some students may be able to take their own notes on a laptop or by using a Braille Display. However, not all blind/low vision students are proficient in Braille. The student may request shared notes from a student volunteer enrolled in the same class. When the student sharing the notes e-mails the notes to the student, the student is able to use assistive technology to access them or download them and print in Braille. Refer to DRC's tips on [peer notetaking](#).