

A VOLUNTARY INITIATIVE LED BY  
ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC. (AMI) AND  
THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS (CAB)

# Live Described Video Best Practices

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## Logistical, Technical and Artistic Guidelines

Version 2.0

**Described Video Best Practices (DVBP) Committee**  
**Consisting of broadcasters, description producers and community representatives**

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The intent of this document is to provide guidance to the producers of live described programming in Canada in an effort to achieve uniformity.

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# Live Described Video Best Practices

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## Live Described Video Best Practices

### A History of Live Described Video (DV) in Canada

#### Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)

Since April 2011 when AMI collaborated with CBC to live describe The Royal Wedding, AMI has live described over 220 hours of programming. AMI has partnered with the CBC, Toronto Blue Jays, APTN, Two Canadian Paralympic Committees, TSN, Rogers Sportsnet and Descriptive Video Works (DVW) to live describe sporting events; elections; National celebrations, and reality event television for the blind and low vision audience.

Between 2011 and 2014 AMI has delivered a wide variety of live described events such as:

- London 2012 Summer Paralympics
- Sochi 2014 Winter Paralympics
- Battle of The Blades (Reality Show)
- Canadian Federal Election
- Canada Day
- Remembrance Day
- CN Canadian Women's Golf Championships
- ISU Grand Prix Figure Skating Finals
- Spruce Meadows Show Jumping
- Canadian Screen Awards
- Hockey Day In Canada
- Brier Canadian Curling Championship
- World Curling Championship
- Toronto Blue Jays
- Aboriginal Day Live & Celebration 2014

AMI's live described versions have never garnered a zero audience (as per BBM 2+ All Canada). AMI-tv has an all-day average per minute audience of 5,500 viewers. As of June 2014, the four Saturday Blue Jay games described have averaged per minute audience (AMA) of 7,500 viewers. The July 2013 game against the L.A. Dodgers was our highest watched live event ever, as it did an AMA of almost 17,000 viewers.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### **Descriptive Video Works (DVW)**

Descriptive Video Works was the pioneer of Live Descriptive Video, which for the first time ever in Canada, made live programs accessible to the blind and low vision audiences. In 2010 CTV sought out DVW requesting live television description, at that time unheard of. It began with the Juno Awards in 2010 and since that time DVW has trained describers with the unique skills needed for live description and have completed over 500 hours of live television programs and events including So You Think You Can Dance Canada, the Royal Wedding Prime Time and Daily Planet each day for CTV.

In the summer of 2012 DVW made television history by describing for the first time in the world the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. DVW once again described these Ceremonies in Sochi, and additionally the daily highlights of the 2014 Paralympics.

### **Bell Media Inc.**

Dedicated to expand their DV offerings, in 2010 Bell Media and Descriptive Video Works pioneered live described video together, creating an entirely new viewing opportunity for audiences. The Juno Awards was the first program to be aired with live description, followed by So You Think You Can Dance Canada. Live description is challenging, yet Bell Media Inc. remains committed to the value of serving every viewer. They were honoured to make history by broadcasting live for the first time the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

CTV is proud of the many hours of programming a week that are currently described on their television stations and have done over 400 hours of Live Description. Each day, for the past 2 years they did live description for Daily Planet and plan to continue with this. Bell Media Inc. believes it is important to go the extra mile and to ensure accessibility to all audiences, by exceeding the required hours for DV.

Bell Media Inc. is committed to accessibility and has dedicated significant funds to the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund designated specifically to broadening media coverage to all viewers.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Live Described Video Best Practices Committee Membership

Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC)	Anthony Tibbs
Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB)	Jim Tokos
Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB)	Marc Workman
Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)	David Errington Peter Burke Brian Perdue Janis Davidson Pressick Mark Bialkowski Emily Harding Simone Cupid Ron Rickford Robert Pearson (former Chair)
Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB)	Sylvie Courtemanche
Bell Media Inc.	Paul Patenaude
Descriptive Video Works	Diane Johnson, Laura Davies, Sarah Mennell
*Centre for Digital Media, Festinger Law Strategy	Jon Festinger
*College of Sports Media	Jim Van Horne
Fastfile Media Inc.	Colum Henry, Joanne Henry
*Inclusive Media and Design	Rob Harvie, Charles Silverman
Shaw	Liz Thorpe, Marta Young
* TV 5	Regis Harrisson
* Indicates new committee member	

**See the Post-Production Described Video Best Practices for original member profiles.**

#### Centre for Digital Media, Festinger Law Strategy

Jon Festinger is a Vancouver, British Columbia based lawyer whose passion for teaching and law grew from his experiences as a lawyer and executive across the spectrum of media, communications, sports and entertainment. As a graduate of McGill University’s Faculty of Law, Jon began his legal career in private practice, in turn becoming General Counsel of WIC Western International Communication, Senior Vice President of the CTV Television Network and Executive Vice President, Business & General Counsel of the Vancouver Canucks and GM Place. Jon has returned to private practice with his own firm Festinger Law & Strategy

## Live Described Video Best Practices

LLP, and is the author of the first edition of “Video Game Law” published by LexisNexis in 2005 and a co-author of the 2nd Edition which was published in 2012. He has been an Adjunct Professor at the faculties of law at both UBC and the University of Victoria, was appointed Queens Counsel ("Q.C.") by the Province of British Columbia in 2009. Jon is a director of Ronald McDonald House British Columbia, City Opera Vancouver and the Simon Fraser University Foundation. Jon sits on the advisory board of Descriptive Video Works.

### College of Sports Media

Jim Van Horne is a Toronto based broadcaster/ teacher. He has over 40 years’ experience in both radio and television, working at the highest levels. He is currently the Director of Television at the College of Sports Media

Jim has acted as one of many describers for the Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) live described broadcasts of Toronto Blue Jays Games, Sochi Paralympics figuring skating, golf and more.

### Inclusive Media and Design

Inclusive is an innovation company focused on advancing accessibility of digital media for people with disabilities. It offers technical services of Web video captioning, description and other media transformation, and consults on information and communication issues, policy and practices for organizations.

### TV 5

Epilogue Services Techniques Inc. is a division of TV5 Québec Canada which has recently celebrated its 25 years of existence. They have been offering English and French subtitling and closed-captioning services for over 20 years and descriptive video French & English since 2011.

Epilogue Services Techniques Inc. offers its expertise in the following services:

- French and English closed-captioning
- French and English descriptive video
- Translation from French to English and from English to French
- Voice over in French and English
- Transcoding services on Tapes, DVD and Media Files

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Characteristics of a Live Described Event

**Definition:** A process of listening, watching and narrating while determining where the description is necessary as the performance, event or live broadcast takes place.

- A described broadcast that is broadcast live has no opportunity for revision.
- A broadcast is live if the turnaround to going to air is less than a day and they will either be considered live-to-tape or live-to-air.

### Guidelines Instructions for Usage

These high level guidelines are designed to provide guidance to producers of live description. They are not an instructional manual. It is the intent that these guidelines will be complementary to the Post-Production Described Video Best Practices as well as any internal established best practices producers may have developed based upon their experiences. Producers of description should ensure that the work they produce is in line with consideration of these artistic guidelines, and their logistical and technical equivalents, with the understanding that they be considered alongside any established internal best practices. Canadian broadcasting industry uniformity will be sought in this manner, by providing a common foundation on which to base all description.

These guidelines are not point-by-point instructions on how to produce good-quality Live DV. Rather they are an industry-agreed-upon aggregation of the important elements required to produce good-quality Live DV. The method of implementation of these guidelines along with any internal best practices will be at the discretion of the describer and may differ in each instance upon consideration of the work being conducted. Any description should be at a rate consistent with the remainder of the program and as allowed for by the original audio track.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Role of the Describer

These Described Video Practices have a living nature and, as such, the directions and guidance they provide will continue to evolve as the industry itself continues to evolve its artistic nature. We recognize the expertise that exists among Canadian DV providers. That said, those creating description should exercise discretion and common sense while respecting the content of the product they are producing. One may achieve this by having describers identify their biases, in an effort to understand where their personal point of views may originate from. Furthermore, describers should also consider the genre of the program being described and who the audience is and what the viewers' unique needs may be.

It is within the creative constitution of the describer to provide multi-level description, while using discretion in its placement, based upon the context of the program and intent of the director.

1. **Primary descriptions** – Descriptions that are absolutely crucial to the understanding of story development.
2. **Secondary descriptions** – Descriptions that are defined as being important but not absolutely essential to the understanding of story development.
3. **Tertiary descriptions** – Stylistic descriptions that are encouraged when time allows for them.

As well, describers should be consistently cognisant of the protocols of the practice while providing their services within any context. Those protocols include the following tenets with recognition that such a list of recommended and not-recommend protocols will continue to evolve and grow over time in recognition of the living nature of the practice.

### Recommended

- Focus on the provision of description following the guidance of primary, secondary and tertiary description as outlined above.
- Describe the live event as it occurs.
- Visuals should be accurately described and not be misleading.
- Fill in the video blanks.
- Place images in the minds of viewers.



## Live Described Video Best Practices

- Understand where subjectivity may be required.
- Provide a consistent style and flow by avoiding redundancy, step-by-step wording and repetition.
- Avoid redundancy by listening to the announcers and the program dialogue and sound effects and do not repeat the information that they are conveying.
- Understand that wall-to-wall description is not required; however, stepping over dialogue or sounds or adding description after an action takes place may be required, but only when absolutely essential.
- Others have developed the story and the describer is making it available to those requiring a description of it.

### Not Recommended

- The story of the live event is not that of the describer to tell.
- DV content should not be positioned to lessen the sequential story-telling impact of the original content producer or diminish the effectiveness of a director's intentional stylistic or emotive effect.
- Strive to not describe what is not on the screen; don't exceed the visual perspective.
- Do not include technical jargon or industry terminology such as "camera angles" within the description unless there is relevance to the content of the program.

## Industry-Adopted Described Video Best Practices

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**Internally Developed Guidelines Based Upon the Unique Experiences of Each Producer**

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**Consistent and Good-Quality Live DV in Canada**



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## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Topics: Logistical Guidelines

Preparation
Producer / Describer Relationship
Handling the Unexpected

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Preparation

#### Recommendations

- Gain an understanding of the who, what and where and develop a descriptive vocabulary specific to the genre.
- Study the show run down, script, press releases, credits list and planned on-screen graphics.
- Examine previous shows, talent, location and relevant website research.
- Participate in a rehearsal of the event and provide description for it if possible.

#### Techniques

- Determine if the broadcast is prepackaged or if it is strictly live.
- Engage with the broadcast production team and other producers by including description references in the production mail outs and by other means.
- Ensure that access is being provided to everything going to air.
- Communicate that everything in the broadcast will be described unless it has been specified that something shouldn't.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Producer/Describer Relationship

#### Recommendations

- Ensure an early arrival to be able to establish a workstation and perform tests.
- Understand that a producer may or may not be present and that the describer should never be required to take on any other role.
- Confirm that the describer will never be alone and that a technical resource will be provided by the broadcaster as it is that resource's responsibility to ensure the live description mix is going to air.

#### Techniques

##### Characteristics of the Narrator/Describer

- Will have experience in live recordings and be comfortable on a microphone.
- Will be a confident quick thinker with good listening skills, a sense of timing and a clear distinct voice who is able to convey tone and emotion.
- Will be educated in the genre of the performance, event or broadcast and able to commit to focusing on important information and the narration.
- Will enrich the audio track by understanding the style of the commentator and when they will take a breath or stop talking, to be able to fill in what hasn't been said.
- Will understand the principles of the role of a describer and be well versed in the best practices of described video.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Handling the unexpected

#### Recommendations

- Understand that the describer should expect the unexpected while describing a live program.
- Ensure that a technician is present during the broadcast that can facilitate the handling of the unexpected.
- Explain any audio or video technical issues within the description, if they occur, and indicate that they have been addressed once they have been resolved. (ie. “Due to technical difficulties, the video has cut out”.)
- Communicate with succinct, complete and concise sentences that are not snippets of thought.
- Evolve the description as the broadcast continues by monitoring pace and tone.
- Coordinate the description provided with the announcer by not beginning to describe while they are speaking and only describing over an announcer when necessary to clarify.

#### Techniques

##### Key, Slugs, Lower Thirds

- Utilize case by case consideration in the description of text on screen.
- Determine the most relevant and concise information by stating the speaker's name up front or in a natural pause (assuming they have not been introduced already). Or it can be said afterwards describe with techniques such as “That was...” to reference a past speaker and to avoid confusion.
- Abbreviate content as appropriate. (ie. CEO in regards to Chief Executive Officer)

##### Significant Musical Elements

- Show respect for significant musical elements (ie. a national anthem) with sparse description only if necessary.
- Consider not providing description over moments of silence.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Topics: Artistic Guidelines

Individual/Physical Characteristics
Scene Transitions
Other Visuals
Non-Verbal Sounds/Communications
Titles, Subtitles, Credits, Text on Screen, Signing
Style and Tone

Each of the six artistic guidelines is divided into four sections:

- **Topic:** General grouping of multiple sub-topics of the same category.
- **Sub-topics:** Specific elements of consideration for inclusion in all development.
- **Recommendations:** Specific recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the sub-topics.
- **Techniques:** Specific techniques to facilitate the application of the sub-topic recommendations.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

<b>Individual Physical Characteristics</b>	Race
	Ethnicity/Ethnic Origin
	Identifying Characters/People by Name/Physical Appearance
	Facial/Physical Expression
	Relationships
	Attire
	Age
	Accent
	Hair
	Clothes
	Height
	Weight
	Disability
	Gender
Avoid Character Objectification	

### Recommendations

- An identification of characters by race, ethnic origin or disability is not required unless there is relevancy to plot, motivation or background, or if meaningful information is being communicated visually and would be otherwise unavailable.
- Unknown characters should be described by their physical appearances until a name is established for them.
- Individual/physical characteristics that are clear in context need not be described unless relevant.
- Always avoid implying personal opinion through the description and follow the lead of the program.
- When assumptions are made there is a risk the wrong story will be told.

### Techniques

- Always describe an individual and his/her physical characteristics using the same generic attribute consistently.
- If the director has intended to provide an indication of an individual’s emotion or what they are thinking, then the describer should convey that indication in the most factual way possible.
- Describe these characteristics using physical attributes that can be described factually and correctly.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

- When describing disabilities, strive to put the person before the disability and use politically correct terminology. For example, “person who is blind” is preferred rather than “blind person”.
- Avoid assumptions and the interpretation of emotion, reactions, character traits, relationships, levels of attractiveness and attire by using descriptive terms to illustrate, but not define, relevant individual/physical characteristics.
- Based upon the timing of the program, adding in non-repeating qualifiers may increase the level of the description being provided and can be utilized to express characteristics that are a combination of more than one attribute.
- For characters that are a part of regular series or recognizable within popular culture, the describer should refer to them by full name on the first occasion that they appear.
- As there is always a need for continuity, choose the most popular moniker for a character and maintain it throughout the length of the program. For example, JFK to refer to the 35th United States President.



## Live Described Video Best Practices

<b>Scene Transitions</b>	Establishing Place/Time of Day
	Passage of Time
	Transitions and Time Changes
	Scene Changes
	Real vs. Non-Real

### Recommendations

- Scene transitions are significant changes to the locale in which the story is taking place. These changes may include, but are not limited to establishing:
  - Different locations (For example, in Ottawa, back in Vancouver, at the Rogers Centre)
  - Different sites within a location (For example, backstage, on stage, on the red carpet, on the field, in the dug-out, in the crowd, in the audience)
  - Scenes in a different time other than the present
  - Packaged materials (For example, archival footage, highlights)
  - Sports instant replays. (For example, replay, replay of the fumble)
- Specifying when, where and new locations is required only once per scene.
- Description of scene transitions should be included and should avoid using too many terms.
- Use specific landmark names as required.
- Visual elements that are imagined, remembered or surreal should be differentiated from “real” events.

### Techniques

- Whenever possible, weave scene transitions (place/time of day/passage of time etc.) descriptively into the natural flow of action using signifiers within a scene so as not to interrupt the viewing experience with too much technical language or clipped statements.
- Avoid imparting information that isn’t there by not drawing assumptions during the transition while following the directors’ natural transition through the choice of elements that appear in a scene.
- Avoid using one-word descriptions to ensure a smooth transition for the viewer.
- Consider finding a balance between the description of live action and animation within a program by defining it the first time it appears.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

<b>Other Visuals</b>	Colour
	Dancing and Choreography
	Lighting
	Setting
	Montages
	Respect the Content of the Program in its Usage and Placement of Branded Products

### Recommendations

- Including colour in descriptions is recommended, particularly when colour has symbolic or stylistic significance for the director.
- Describe dancing and choreography to facilitate an understanding of a combination of movements, music and motions in addition to the dress and costume attire of the individuals appearing within the scene. Choreography is cultural, and without description audiences have limited access to this cultural art. For example, cultural-movement choreography can vary from a Bollywood dance sequence to a martial arts dagger fight.
- Summarize the extent of the condensing of space, time and information when describing the series of short shots that comprise a montage.
- Incorporate descriptions of changes in scene lighting within those provided-for scene transitions. For example, “day versus night” or “the warehouse is dark”.

### Techniques

- On a case-by-case basis, describe in detail other elements whose context is only apparent visually, such as a flashing light, dancing or any usage of colour that is relevant to the context of the program and the director’s intent.
- Whenever possible, establish a transition by mentioning the setting within the first description by incorporating a character and action.
- Describe product placement and embedded marketing. In a sponsored event narrators can describe brand placement if time permits.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

<b>Non-Verbal Sounds /Communications</b>	Identifying Sounds and Sound Effects and the Placement of Descriptions
	Working with Music and Respecting the Soundtrack

### Recommendations

- Describe what you can't hear.
- Give music, sound effects or ambient sound the ability to describe itself. When required, though, determine when to allow the music, sound effects or ambient sound to play through and when to describe through them.
- If description occurs over the entire musical or sound segment, the audience may have missed out on that aspect of the storytelling.
- Common well-known sounds usually do not require identification unless the sound is out of context.
- Identify new speakers if the dialogue or narration doesn't make it clear and re-identify throughout the program (for broadcast material once per segment/ break when possible).
- Describe the source of unidentified sounds and speech. Identify new speakers.
- Where sound effects may not be clearly distinguishable, the action resulting in said sound effect is described when time permits.
- The amount of description possible will be determined by the soundtrack.
- The lyrical content in songs sometimes explains the background of the story, or the history of the characters.
- Writing description around music and sound effects maximizes the dramatic impact of the story and minimizes potential obtrusiveness of the description.
- Popular music may associate with programs or particular scenes intentionally. Allow for as much of these songs to be heard, if in context, as possible.
- Ensure that description does not interfere with erotic sounds.
- If a description must fall on either side of a sound, it is better for it to be before the sound than after.

### Techniques

- Description of sounds isn't required. For example, "Sally laughs" or "the wolf howls". However it may need to be explained who is performing the action. If the scene portrays a room full of people and we hear only one person laughing, then the description "Sally laughs" would be appropriate.



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## Live Described Video Best Practices

- If a sound effect is identical to a scene, only describe it if it's out of place. Less is more unless more is required. For example, a phone ringing in a living room versus a phone ringing on an airplane.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

<b>Titles, Subtitles, Credits, Text on Screen, Sign Language</b>	Titles
	Subtitles
	Credits
	Sign Language
	Any Text on Screen
	Signage Including Logos
	Captions/Captioning

### Recommendations

- Titles, logos and bumpers should be described.
- Standard credits and those which are relevant to the course of the show should be included within the description track.
- Captions and subtitles are used to visually display information on the screen that may not be available in the original audio track, such as the translation of a foreign language, the passage of time or otherwise quiet dialogue. Other requirements may exist for the proper pronunciation of a foreign language. The inclusion of the description of these elements should be evaluated based upon the composition of the original audio track, the relevancy of the content and whether it develops the material as a whole.
- Sign language communication and content may be provided through captions that would be otherwise described. However, if they are not, then description of the content should be provided. In the case of on-screen signing, the original audio track is being provided and therefore no description is required unless it is relevant.
- In-program signage that is not relevant and does not develop the material as a whole does not require description. If it is, though, then placement within the description track should occur to ensure its relevancy and to respect the content.
- Captioning, as defined as text contained within a separate captioning track and which can be turned on and off, does not require description.
- Credits may change from one episode to another. Be sure credits match what is on screen.

### Techniques

- When confronted with text on the screen, say the associated word, such as “title,” “subtitle,” “caption,” “logo,” “credits,” “end credits,” “sign reads” or “sign on the wall,” followed by the text being displayed or a description of its content. If the text appears in an abnormal fashion, such as through short-hand used in a text message, describe the context of the abnormal text if time permits.
- If the text onscreen is associated with a sound, narrate the text the first time it appears to allow the viewer to understand that when it occurs again, within the context of the program, it will have already been defined (as in the case of a game show).



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## Live Described Video Best Practices

- If sign language appears on the screen for the purpose of translation or within the context of the program, consider handling the presence of it the first time it occurs. In that manner a description of the signing will not impede the description of the program as their purposes are the same.
- Do not use a phrase such as “words appear on the screen”
- Do not presume the comprehension level of the person who is seeking to understand what is being described.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

<b>Style and Tone</b> (Delivery & Narration)	Point of View and Tense
	Descriptive Verbs, Types of Language (ex. jargon, narration, slang) and Changes in Sentence Structure
	Definite vs. Indefinite Articles
	Visual vs. Non-Visual Perspective
	Repetition
	Description of Foreign Languages
	Identifying Relevant Objects, Information, Circumstances, Locations, Time and Action

### Recommendations

- Describe the point of view when relevant, while respecting the content. It is important for the audience members to know when they are being addressed (as opposed to an on-screen character). One way to accomplish this is to refer to the audience as “you.”
- Narration should be in the third-person active voice using the present, continuous-present or present-participle tenses.
- A describer should not include or reference themselves in narration.
- Understanding where subjectivity may be required.
- When possible, use descriptive verbs to reduce repetition and enhance the experience.
- The indefinite should be used unless the article has already been mentioned, is known or is understood as the only one.
- It should not be necessary to use offensive language.
- Use whole sentences when possible. It is acceptable, though, to identify characters by just giving their names, or to describe objects or settings in incomplete sentences.
- It is important to detail the interaction between two people in a romantic situation, but very generally speaking. Describe it to the extent that it is shown.
- A describer should avoid jargon and references to specific techniques, e.g., “close-up” or “fade to black.”
- If clauses of a sentence will be split up unnaturally, to accommodate dialogue or sound effects, then consider making two sentences for more natural pacing.
- Narrator should not have to read fast. Descriptions should be crafted to fit in the time allotted.
- Distinguish new from known objects with the use of indefinite and definite articles.
- The describer may need to omit a less significant description of what’s on screen in order to interject the critical description. (See Page 7: Role of the Describer)

### Techniques

- Create the description based upon the style and tone of the show.



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- In the instance of narration, provide enough of a differentiation between the voices of the describer and the narrator (example: using a man and a woman for each purpose).





## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Topics: Technical Guidelines

Equipment and Facilities
Input and Output Specifications
Loudness and Peak Levels
Program vs. DV mix levels
Equalization

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Note:

Differences will exist in every program and use of these guidelines is at the discretion of the technical team applying them. Nevertheless, in the absence of specific circumstances that might warrant an exception, following these guidelines is strongly encouraged as they will help to equalize the delivery of DV across different networks and providers in Canada.

Live DV may occur in a wide variety of circumstances, with differing access to resources. These best practices we codify acknowledge such likelihoods while encouraging producers and broadcasters to devote as many resources to producing a high-quality DV mix as possible.

### Equipment and Facilities

The following equipment represents the minimum gear necessary to carry out a described live broadcast:

- Headsets
- Microphones
- A display showing the program being described
- A talkback system, for off-air communication from producers to narrators
- A mixing console or digital audio workstation that can be configured to automatically duck program audio under description

The following equipment is not strictly essential, but would likely prove highly beneficial in producing broadcast-quality live description:

- Integrated headsets (i.e. headsets with built-in microphones)
- Configurable mute/talk buttons for narrators
- A full intercom system, for verbal off-air communication between producers and narrators
- A form of nonverbal communication between producers and narrators (i.e. erasable slates, text messaging, etc.)
- Internet access within the narration booth, for on-demand research purposes
- A display of the off-air feed, with audio, for producers and technicians to double-check the resulting mix

Narrators should be situated in a well-isolated, acoustically-treated space, to avoid unwanted leakage from external sound sources into the narration. Narrators and technicians should be

## Live Described Video Best Practices

familiar with basic microphone setup and technique to avoid plosives and varied voice quality over the course of a session

### Input and Output Specifications

Input channels will depend upon what the broadcaster provides to the DV team, but will likely be mono or stereo. Output channels will be mono or stereo depending upon broadcaster requirements, likely the latter. If output is stereo, DV should be centred in the stereo mix of the two channels. The broadcaster{s} should provide any other specifications regarding transport, format, bitrate, or sample rate.

While an in-depth technical exploration of surround DV mixes are beyond the scope of this document at this time, it is safe to assume DV should be routed to the centre channel of a surround mix until and unless testing and research determines otherwise.

### Loudness and Peak Levels

DV loudness should approximately track source program loudness. Loudness and peak specifications should be obtained from the broadcaster and adjusted based upon feedback from production staff and testing. If specs cannot be obtained, or the live DV team is situated outside the main program workflow (i.e. producing DV for an outside broadcaster using the original production's off-air feed), DV mix loudness should fall within 2 LKFS of -24 LKFS, as recommended in ATSC A/85:2013, section 6, while peaks should not exceed 6dB over source peaks to avoid triggering downstream limiters or other processing that can negatively affect mix quality.

### Program vs. DV Mix Levels

DV should be noticeably louder and more present than coinciding source audio. Unless deemed necessary by producer or mixer, source audio should not be completely suppressed; it should be possible to hear the original program audio underneath description, though priority should be given to DV clarity in the event of a conflict between voices in the source audio and the narrator.

### Equalization

DV should be adjusted to emphasize clarity of speech over similarity to the source program.

## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Next Steps

With the completion of both the Post-Production Described Video Best Practices as well as the Live Described Video Best Practices, the work of the committee will continue in various aspects.

As has been previously acknowledged, both of the completed Best Practices are living documents. They will continue to evolve as the practice itself evolves. Especially in regards to Live Description, this is itself only just beginning to become a recognized medium for the delivery of described video in Canada. As such the work of the Described Video Best Practices Committee will continue in fostering of that evolution, by meeting bi-annually to assess new protocols and practices in the field as they occur and to assess whether inclusion of them within these Best Practices is important. It is anticipated that these updates will occur on an irregular frequency and upon agreement by the committee, as itself continues to grow with the addition of new members.

Further to that, the work of the committee and its various subcommittees will now focus on three additional priorities.

- Multilingual Described Video Best Practices; specifically French
- Embedded Described Video Best Practices (EDV)\*; to be guided by AMI, in conjunction with DVW, along with representatives of the broadcast industry and the community
- Digital Described Video Best Practices; with a focus on digital accessible media

Work on these new priorities will occur through concurrent streams and involve past, current and new membership on the committee to continue to build the knowledge base for described video and continued consistent delivery of it to Canadians.

This will be further achieved by continuing to connect to the community to understand if description is being provided effectively. It will also be further achieved by ensuring producers continue to be compliant to these Best Practices by providing documentation to the effect.

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\* EDV is a method of creating described video, whereby the identification of key visual elements is incorporated into the original production of the program, such that traditional DV is not required. In essence, the program is produced from the onset in consultation and collaboration with an experienced describer in order for blind and visually impaired audiences to understand and enjoy it without the addition of traditional DV.



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



## Live Described Video Best Practices

### Contributors

### Logistical and Technical Guidelines

- Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)
- Bell Media Inc.
- Descriptive Video Works

### Artistic Guidelines

- Post-Production Described Video Best Practices Committee

### Signatories:

- Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC)
- Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB)
- Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB)
- Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB)
- Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)
- Bell Media Inc.
- Descriptive Video Works (DVW)