



Writing Equivalent Text Descriptions

Some people, such as individuals who are blind or who have perceptual problems, need equivalent test description for non-text information. An “Equivalent Text Description” (EqTD) is essential to increase accessibility of non-text information by providing meaning and clarity to inaccessible information. EqTDs supply users with an alternative and supplemental form of information access. They provide meaning, application and clarity to otherwise inaccessible information and expand information accessibility.

FOR ACCESSIBILITY

1. **Brief Description** – Short statement or title that includes type and purpose of non-text information. (Typically 10 words or less).
2. **Essential Description** – Focused description that conveys the meaning and core content of non-text information in the context of its use. What does the creator want the audience to understand? [This is the legal mandate for web documents.] (Approximately 1 – 2 paragraphs).

FOR USABILITY

3. **Detailed Description** – Finer description, distinctly different from the essential description in that it includes content that is not integral to understanding the intent of the non-text element. It may include layout, colors, logos, designs, etc. (May be one or several paragraphs).

EqTD’s: Where do they go?

Source	BRIEF Description	ESSENTIAL and DETAILED Descriptions
Textbook	Caption	Appendix
Article	Caption	Before References/Appendix
Brochure	Caption	Brochure text



The Importance of Context

The essential description is determined by what the author is discussing in the text, as seen in the examples below

1. Brief Description: J. Howard Miller’s “We Can Do It!” poster, commonly mistakenly called “Rosie the Riveter”

2a. US History Essential Description	2b. Women’s Studies Essential Description	2c. Art and Design Essential Description
This image of a strong, determined woman wearing work clothes, saying “We can do it” conveys the ability of women to assist the war effort in jobs previously reserved for men.	The expression of the woman in this poster shows strong determination and competence, in contrast to the “weaker sex” image	The dark blue of the woman’s shirt, the bold red of her scarf, and the bold yellow gradient colors of the background all convey power and strength.

3. Detailed Description: J. Howard Miller’s “We Can Do It!” poster shows a young woman, facing right, with her sleeves rolled above the elbow, her elbow flexed, and her right hand in a fist. She is wearing a red scarf with white polka-dots over her hair, and has an expression of competence and determination. Above her head, in a dialog balloon, are the words “We Can Do It!”

To convey the idea that doing “a man’s work” does not require sacrifice of her feminine nature, the woman is wearing a subtle shade of lipstick and eyeliner. Her outline in the poster shows a suggestion of her figure, while not suggesting or emulating the pinup girl posters of the era.

(2009) Anson, D., Hirschman, A. & Smith, R.O.

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