WORKSHOP

I’ve created a workshop that you can do on your own time either by yourself or with others, as a way to spend a little more time with the topic of alt text / image description.

This workshop started out as a school assignment in the Graphic Design program I attended at Virginia Commonwealth University. I conducted a variation of this workshop twice with different groups of people but it started out as an in-person workshop geared towards other Graphic Designers who may or may not have ever heard of alt text. I wanted to introduce it as something designers can do to incorporate accessibility into their work.

Ultimately, I wanted to introduce the concept of alt text- explain it a little bit and then give an opportunity to practice by making minizines.

I also shared a project called “Alt Text is Poetry”, as it served as a major source of inspiration for my workshop. I shared some of the things I learned through engaging with the alt text as poetry project / website / workbook.

When deciding to make this website, I wanted to adapt this workshop into something asynchronous- something someone could do on their own time, adapting it as they wish / need to.

(note about conducting workshop with non-sighted person).

The workshop is hands on and requires some materials.

MATERIALS YOU’LL NEED:

* At least one magazine (you can use more if you have access to more and want more options to leaf through!)
* Piece of paper (printer paper, looseleaf- whatever you’d like)
* Glue or tape (something to attach magazine clippings on paper)
* Scissors
* Writing utensil

INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the whole workshop, what you’ll be doing. Then go through steps?

* Fold paper in mini zine
  + Offer other ways of binding doing zine?
* Go through magazine and find images you’d like to describe.
  + Feel free to start with something you’re comfortable with or challenge yourself with something that feels a bit harder! This is just practice and this workshop is intended to be fun / low-stress. Writing alt text and image descriptions is a skill that thrives best with practice – which is what we’ll be doing!
* Glue images to zine.
* Write alt text or an image description for the images you chose.

If you’re doing this workshop with other people, you can talk things out verbally before you write things down, or you can spend time free-writing and then share with each other what you came up. I’ve found it to be really helpful to join forces with someone else’s brain when writing alt text and it’s also cool / interesting to see what other people come up with when trying to describe an image.

Something I noticed through doing this workshop the first 2 times was that it helps to read the surrounding text when trying to think of what you would say if you were writing alt text or an image description for your photo.

Sometimes the surrounding text will give you important information about what’s going on in the photo, but you can also just notice and observe how other people went about describing that photo (as image captions often include descriptive language).

Share questions from alt text as poetry workbook.

Share alt text as poetry workbook

Next page (opportunity to practice)

A picture is worth 1,000 words. (word counter)

What words come to mind when you look at these photos? Feel free to share by clicking the spot on the screen where you want to enter your text, typing your response and pressing enter. Feel free to list adjectives, nouns, feelings. You can describe it like you are describing it to a friend. You can try describing it like you are describing it to a stranger.

From alt text is poetry “People who are new to alt-text often feel like they are learning  
a totally new skill, but in fact, most of us engage with description all the time — talking on the phone, in literature, hearing about a friend’s travels, in art history and art criticism.

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* From alt text is poetry workbook: List things (objects, people, stuff, nouns) that are present in the image or related to the image.
* List descriptive words or adjectives that describe the image, a part of the image, or your response to it. What’s the mood of the image? What associations do you have?
* Describe this image as though you are a complete stranger who has stumbled across it for the first time. Pretend that you’ve never seen it before and have no context for the image.
* → Describe the image again, this time from your own perspec- tive, as though you were describing it to your best friend.