

## Guide to Inclusive Self-Descriptions for Presenters

In recent years, presenters have increasingly been following their name up with self-descriptions. This practice creates a more accessible and inclusive space for participants who are blind or who have low-vision. As Thomas Reid, a black, blind, audio description professional states in, “Making a Case for Self-Description—It’s Not About Eye Candy,” “A self-description supplies information about a person that non-blind people passively glean. This includes identity characteristics such as skin color, gender identity, hair length and texture, wardrobe, and more.” He continues, “the process should be encouraged, but remain optional. It should be stressed that the intent is to verbalize what’s already visible to most and does not need to make anyone uncomfortable or self-conscious.” (Reid, 2022).

It’s generally a good idea to think about what you want to say for your self-description in advance. VocalEyes recommends considering, “If you were arranging to meet a non-blind person in a public place who you have not met before, how would you describe yourself so that they could pick you out from the crowd?”

### Suggestions for a Suitable Self-Description:

- Restrict yourself to about 4 key elements.
- Keep it to 1 or 2 sentences.
- Include your gender, and consider mentioning your pronouns.
- Be general when supplying your age, such as using a decade, like 40’s, rather than a number.
- Include skin color, and consider including your ethnicity/race.
- Briefly mention aspects of your hair, clothing, and any distinct accessories you’re wearing.

### Example Self-Descriptions to Inspire You:

“I am a brown-skinned Black man with a smooth-shaven bald head, full neat beard wearing dark shades and a black hoodie with the words. “I am my ancestors” printed on the front. My pronouns are he, him, his.” (Thomas Reid).

“I’m a white cis man, in my mid-50s. I’m tall, with greying dark curly hair. My pronouns are he / him.” (Unknown)

“I’m a white, elder-millennial person with blue-streaked, chin-length, brown hair. I’m wearing a black top and holding a white cane. My pronouns are she/they.” (Gretchen Maune)

(Reid, T. (2022, April 12). Making a case for self-descriptions—It’s not about eye candy. Disability Visibility Project. <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2022/04/12/making-a-case-for-self-description-its-not-about-eye-candy/>

IDEA Inclusive AD Forum, Royal Holloway University of London and VocalEyes, Self-description for inclusive meetings (May 2021). VocalEyes. <https://vocaleyes.co.uk/services/resources/digital-accessibility-and-inclusion/self-description-for-inclusive-meetings/>