

Pacific ADA and IT Center

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Pacific ADA & IT Center (Pacific DBTAC) is committed to building a partnership between the disability and education communities and to promoting full and unrestricted participation in society for persons with disabilities through training, outreach and technical assistance. The Center's work is made possible by a grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).

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ACCESSIBILITY *Accessibility Tips*

Series #2

**Quick tips for enhancing
the learning experience of
students in all schools.**

Overcoming Barriers For People Who Are Blind in Curriculum Development



To request further materials or information on Accessible IT, please call us on our free Technical Assistance hotline at 1-800-949-4232, send an email to adatech@adapacific.org or use the contact form on our web site. We hope that you'll find this series valuable.

Many people who are legally blind retain some residual vision. Some may be able to see objects with the help of magnification. Others may be able to sense light and dark but little else. Because of the wide range of visual sensitivity found among those who are legally blind, a well-designed interface should assume that the end user has no vision, while allowing that person to make use of whatever residual vision they possess.

To access online material, blind users depend on screen-reading software that digests the contents of the computer screen and sends information to a text-to-speech synthesizer or refreshable Braille display.

Curriculum developers can do much to support screen reading software and to help blind users perceive and understand screen content.

To support screen reading software curriculum developers can:

- ❑ Embed descriptive text in graphic images in such a way as to make the text known to screen-reading software. This addresses the problems that can arise when text is rendered as a graphic image and cannot be read by software.

- ❑ Assign logical names to controls, even if the name is not visible on the screen. Screen readers can access this information and use it to describe the type and function of the control on the screen.
- ❑ Use consistent and predictable screen and dialog layouts.
- ❑ Use single column text whenever possible.
- ❑ Provide keyboard equivalents for all tools, menus, and dialog boxes.

Since screen readers can only read text (or give names to separately identifiable icons or tools), it is a good idea to:

- ❑ Avoid non-text menu items when possible or at least incorporate visible or invisible text cues to accompany these items. Screen readers can see text even if that text is written to the screen invisibly.
- ❑ Avoid non-redundant graphic tool bars. Make any tool bar command available in a menu.

Finally, documentation and training materials are always more accessible when:

- ❑ Documentation and online help can be understood independent of graphics. Text descriptions should occupy their own space in the program or correspond to graphics, graphical tables, and graphical charts by alphanumeric reference.
- ❑ Help dialogs are not displayed in independent pop-up windows.
- ❑ Synchronized audio descriptions are available to play alongside animated graphics or movies.

This document is available in alternate formats, on CD, in large print and on audiotape, by contacting the Pacific ADA & IT Center (Pacific DBT AC). Please call us on our free Technical Assistance hotline at 1(800) 949-4232, send an email to adatech@pdbtac.com or use the contact form on our web site: <http://www.pacdbtac.org>