Making Memes Accessible

Memes have become a part of culture and communication both online and off. Due to their visual nature, memes present major accessibility concerns for students who are blind or have low vision. While memes are usually considered unessential and solely for humor, their use often builds connections within the learning community; therefore, those who cannot glean the full meaning often feel left out. However, there are ways of making memes more accessible. .

General Meme Guidelines:

1. Consider the context of the meme:
    a. Memes that rely heavily on knowledge of the source material can be inaccessible for anyone who is not familiar with the meme's original source.
    b. These memes should almost always be removed due to the difficulty of making them accessible.
2. Currently, the best way to make memes accessible is to describe them with Alt-Text.
    a. Meaning memes will need to be fully explained in 150 characters or less.
3. Alt-Text needs to explain the text and the image to be accessible.
4. Repetition is best:
    a. Using the same base meme with different text is the best way for your students to access your memes.
    b. Using the most common base memes is another way to increase the accessibility of memes.

Writing Alt-Text:

1. Before trying to write Alt-Text for a meme, check our glossary at the bottom of this document.
2. If your meme is not there, or if it is less common, answer these questions when writing the Alt-Text:
    a. Who are the character(s) in these memes?
    b. What actions are the characters performing, if any?
    c. What emotions or facial expressions do the character(s) exhibit in these examples?
    d. Do you recognize the source of the image (TV show, movie, etc)? If so, what is it?
    e. Is there anything notable, or different about the background of the image?
3. Above all, don't try to describe the meme, describe what the character/subject of the meme is saying and/or doing.
4. When you have your description, copy and identify the text
    a. Overlaid text on top: [top text] Overlaid text on bottom: [bottom text]

Some contents in this document have been adapted from the study *Making Memes Accessible* (2019) by Gleason, Cole and Pavel, Amy and Liu, Xingyu and Carrington, Patrick and Chilton, Lydia B. and Bigham, Jeffrey P.

Common Meme Glossary

Base Meme	Alt-Text Template
Confession Bear	Baby black bear staring into the distance with paws on a tree branch. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].
Success Kid	Toddler clenching fist in front of a smug face. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Over- laid text on bottom [bottom text].
Awkward Moment Seal	Close-up of a seal's face with wide eyes and a straight face. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].
Interesting Man	A man with gray hair in a nice shirt and jacket smirking while leaning on one elbow. A bottle of Dos Equis beet is in front of him. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].
Philosoraptor	A drawing of a dinosaur raptor with a claw to its chin and mouth open as if it is contemplating something. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].
First World Problems	Close-up on a woman with her eyes closed head in one hand and a stream of tears running down her cheek. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].
Bad Luck Brian	A young kid in an awkward school photo. He is wearing a plaid vest and has an open smile where you can see his braces. Over- laid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].

Futurama Fry (Suspicious) shout	Fry from the show Futurama a cartoon man with orange hair squinting his eyes as if he suspects something. Overlaid text on top [top text]. Overlaid text on bottom [bottom text].

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