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Writing Tips

Writing for comics is a bit different than writing Alt-Text. Your job is to recreate the comic experience: a visual storytelling medium. This means that your work may be more creative than the standard description you would write for Alt-text.

If you want to learn more about the art of writing comics you should check out *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices* by the legendary cartoonist, Will Eisner, as well as *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, by Scott McCloud. They will help you understand the *Visual Language of Sequential Art*, and it can help you in your own work. There are also endless resources online, and remember your co-writers and editors are here to help you. We are all learning together.

The following is a growing list of tips to help you write and edit. This list will be edited and amended as we learn more about the process.

General Tips

- under construction

Scene/Object Description

- When describing panel start big and the go small.
 - Start with the Big Picture: where we are, the time of day (if it has changed from the previous panel), etc.
- Then, you can describe the Medium Picture (fake patent pending on this term): where people and objects are in relation to each other, who/what is in the panel, what do they look like (broadly), are they holding something, etc.
 - Finally, describe the small details: facial expressions,
 - See overview descriptions for more details.
- When in doubt refer to the comic script (if it is available) for help with language and descriptions.
- When describing something think about what it is and what is its purpose. Include this in your description. This ties into being specific about description, avoid generalities and give key details.
 - Don't write Futuristic Car. Describe what about the car makes it a Futuristic Car.
 - i.e. The car hovered over the ground. Instead of wheels there are small powerful jets that face down to the ground. The exterior appears seamless and smooth like chrome with large dark windows. You want your reader to experience what is seen on the page through words.
- Space is useful in describing:
 - How far away is something. People with perceptual disabilities understand their surroundings through space between and around objects. Try to be precise but not clinical when describing distance (e.g. It would be better to say "She was a few steps behind him" rather than "She appeared to be 3.5 feet behind him")
- Use metaphor and simile when necessary.
 - Describe shapes, sizes, and other essential attributes of images by comparison to objects

- or items familiar to the intended audience. Use basic, simple objects, so the reader is not distracted by the image of the comparison object.
- e.g. "The ball is the size of an apple."
- Be sure to use metaphors that will be readily identifiable by a blind reader.
- Describe Colour.
 - Colour may have emotional connotations even for blind readers, and many readers may be partially or previously sighted, and therefore including color enhances their ability to better imagine a scene. Colour descriptions should therefore be included for most images.
 - e.g. The blue sky, or the green lizard.
 - You don't have to describe all colour, but remember the reader wants to have an authentic experience.
 - If it is important to the story then include it.
 - e.g. The character is known to wear a red scarf, or the sky is blue, or there are black and green storm clouds in the sky, etc.
 - If there is no color, describe details that can help fill in this gap.
 - an overcast sky, a cloudless sky, a starry night, a starless night.



When a comic is fully black and white, avoid describing everything as "light grey" or "dark grey". Instead, say whether things are "darker-coloured" or "lighter-coloured". This is because shades of grey represent colours, and it would be misleading to say that someone's sweater is "dark grey" when it may actually be brown or purple - things that black and white comics cannot show. It is usually OK to use "black" and "white" if that is what is depicted.

Character Description

- When describing characters include skin color with white people as well as POC. Please avoid comparing skin colour to a food or beverage. The following is a list of suggestions.
 - Terms for describing skin colour:
 - brown
 - dark brown
 - fair complexion
 - light brown
 - light tan
 - olive
 - pale pink
 - ruddy complexion
 - tan
 - white
- You only have describe a character once, and just the key physical descriptions.



The physique of a character is very important in comics to convey who they are: strong, weak, funny, a hero, a villain, etc.

- If something changes with the character then describe the change.
 - The character has a cut on their face, they cut their hair, they changed their clothes, etc.
- Use pronouns only when it is clear to whom or what the pronoun refers.



When you first come across a major character, check them out in a few other panels before giving the description. Depending on the angle, the character might look a little bit different, and it is important to not have conflicting descriptions.

Action/Emotion Description

- Under construction

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