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Maps

This is the most common complex image you will come across in your work. Again, context will also help you out a lot in your description. Below are the general guidelines for how to describe a map.

- Include the Name/Title of the Map and a Description of the Legend
- It is not necessary to describe types of lines/colour-coding and images when this information can be described using the information the legend conveys.
- Aim for clarity, even if detail is sacrificed. Focus on the information that is relevant in the greater context of the book.
- Ask yourself: What is this Map telling the reader? Only describe what is necessary to convey the intended meaning of the map. This will vary.

Spatial relationships are very important in maps. The reader needs to know where they are and where they are going within the description. The most common way to break down a map is with the compass technique, but this also is dependent on context. If you have a map that has a central focus, then the clock technique might be better. You also might find it easier to use the quadrant method. Again, you may have to experiment as you are writing. Remember it has to walk the reader through the image, and be recreated based on the description alone.

Do not simply list places on a map. This removes all spatial information, and can be meaningless to the reader.

Sometimes a meaningful list works, and other times paragraph breaks are enough. You will have to play with the modalities to see what works in the context of your make. The most important thing to remember is word choice and including spatial relationships. The reader should be able to move through the map with the description and know where they are going.

See examples on Samples of Alt Text: Maps

More tips on writing text descriptions for maps.

We also recommend checking out the DAISY webinars on the Resources page.

If you have any questions, post your question on the Alt-Text Q&A

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