

Webinar and Virtual Meeting Best Practices

Here are a few easy ways to make your next webinar more accessible and enjoyable for everyone, allowing you to reach a larger audience.

Before the meeting

1. Include a statement on your website, registration, and all other communications that ask attendees to specify their accessibility/accommodations needs, give a deadline for requests, and provide the individual's name, email address, and phone number to contact.
2. Ensure that the individual hosting the meeting is trained to set up and implement the platform's accessibility features.
3. List in all event communications accessibility/accommodations you will provide without needing attendees to request, such as captioning.
4. Provide materials that help orient participants to your chosen platform. Offer practice sessions in advance of the main event.
5. Provide all materials and PowerPoint slides in an electronic format, share via email or the chat function, post on a website before the event, and create a short URL.
 - a. **Use High Contrast colors on the Slides.** This ensures that slides are legible to everyone, including attendees with low-resolution monitors, those with vision impairments such as low vision or color blindness, or those watching via a mobile device. For more on this and other ways to design your slides more inclusively, [read our post](#) about accessible design.
 - b. **Limit the Amount of Text on Slides.** This is my pet peeve during all presentations, live or virtual. It might be because I'm near-sighted and don't always wear my glasses, but I also hate reading paragraphs of text while someone is talking. It distracts the audience from what the speaker is saying. Instead, include key take-away ideas as short bullet points.
 - c. **Refrain from Relying on Color to Distinguish Key Elements.** If your presentation includes data visualizations like graphs or charts, ensure your audience can clearly distinguish between the different segments.
 - d. Illustration of charts using hashing as well as color to distinguish elements
 - e. Use patterns as well as colors to distinguish between elements of data visualization.

- f. Don't rely solely on color-coding for this; also include unique patterns or textures to accommodate viewers with color vision impairments and variations between monitors and other displays.
6. Try to schedule your event to stay within two hours.
7. This ensures that slides are legible to everyone, including attendees with low-resolution monitors, those with vision impairments such as low vision or color blindness, or those watching via a mobile device.

During the Meeting

1. Begin recording the meeting.
2. In the meeting, invite and ask if any participants need assistance.
3. On Zoom or Google Meet, screen readers read the comments in the chat aloud, distracting screen reader users from hearing the conversation effectively. As a result, the chat feature sparingly; alternatively, you can designate a person whom everyone privately messages, and have that person read the chats aloud and keep a record of URLs posted in chat and save the chat to make it available to users after the meeting.
4. Consider your audience and language level. Use plain language when appropriate. Ask attendees if they can hear everyone or if anyone needs to speak more quickly.
5. Have a staff person monitor the chat or Q&A function for accessibility issues during the event and read aloud the author and questions or comments to be addressed. The host may also offer an outside contact point, such as an email address, for anyone who cannot access the in-platform functions and monitor it before and during the program.
6. Advise everyone orally and in the chat or Q&A function about the accessibility features/accommodations offered and how to use them at the event's start. Do a check of access features. Invite attendees to raise access concerns during the event and instruct them on how to do so.
7. Offer the option for people using chat or Q&A functions to have their messages read aloud.
8. Offer different ways that individuals can access the event, including via the Internet and dial-in.

9. Announce how to access copies of materials at the event, share the link on the presentation's first page and in the chat/Q&A function, and read it aloud.
10. Provide CART (real-time captioning) for all events, even if the virtual platform generates automatic captions, as these are often unreliable. Captioning creates a transcript of the event that everyone can use, including those who attend the live event.
11. Describe all images and videos for blind/visually impaired individuals and those joining by phone. Some videos with descriptive audio can be found on YouTube or youdescribe.org.
12. Sharing your screen is not accessible for blind persons, so send or post materials electronically on a web page before the event. On the day of the event, provide a link to the materials in the Q&A or chat function and add a visual description.
13. Video sharing is inaccessible for blind and/or deaf or hard-of-hearing persons. Ensure that the video is captioned and describes what is happening during the event.
14. Allow people to turn off self-view if it is distracting to them.
15. Have the event host show the person presenting and the active ASL interpreter.
16. Advise attendees to stay in gallery view to see all presenters and the ASL interpreters simultaneously.
17. Avoid loud and distracting noises. Encourage all attendees to stay muted when not speaking.
18. Avoid flashing or strobing animations in presentations or other materials.
19. For people who read lips, ensure that presenters have their cameras on and are well-lit.
20. Ensure that the environment behind presenters is not distracting. Use a virtual background if it is, but note that some can wash out faces.
21. Eliminate background noise by muting everyone except for the person speaking. At the start of the meeting, instruct attendees on how to mute and unmute themselves.
22. Allow only one person to speak at a time. This will also help the captioner(s) and ASL interpreter(s) more accurately interpret.
23. Have each person say their name each time they speak so that attendees, captioners, and interpreters know who is speaking.

24. Ensure that any voting, polling, or other forms of participation are accessible. Provide alternative ways for attendees to participate.

After the Meeting

Make Your Feedback Survey Accessible

Ensure that an event feedback form is accessible, especially to users who might not be using a mouse or accessing the form on a mobile device. Learn more about creating accessible forms on the Digital Accessibility website:

- Clearly label form fields
- Use sufficient color contrast
- Indicate required fields
- Provide helpful error messages

Posting a Video Recording of the Meeting

If a video recording of a live event is posted to a public-facing website, the video must be posted with accurate captions. Live captions don't meet the accuracy level required for post-production captioning, so the captions would need to be updated and corrected to include punctuation, speaker names, etc. You may update the captions yourself for accuracy or hire a vendor to provide accurate captions.

Please see [instructions for submitting your Zoom recording](#) for upload to YouTube.