WPA-GO 2023-2024 Accessibility Guide: Graduate Research Series

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Introduction

This document reviews guidelines for improving the accessibility of work submitted to WPA-GO's Graduate Research Series. Access needs vary by person due to social and material conditions, disabilities, and personal preferences. As such, designing for access is an ongoing and dynamic practice. Our goal is to provide a foundational resource with access points to build from while composing your presentation. We encourage you to explore the links and suggested materials as needed. You can quickly navigate this document using the Table of Contents at the top of this page.

These guidelines are split into two general categories. The first section has guidelines on "Preparing Your Presentation," which we assume will be designed in a slide presentation program like Microsoft PowerPoint. The second section has guidelines on "Recording Your Presentation," which we assume will be recorded in a free video conference program like Zoom to be able to capture both a webcam video of yourself presenting along with a screen recording of your presentation slides. **For all presentations, we ask that you provide a transcript of your remarks and embed captions into your video recording. If you notice that closed**

captioning in Zoom is not the most accurate, you are encouraged to use an external audio transcription service.

Preparing Your Presentation

Font Type and Size

When choosing fonts keep the following in mind:

- Avoid ornate fonts. Stay with the tried and true: Arial, Times New Roman, and Comic Sans (favored by some dyslexic people).
- At a minimum, font sizes should be 32 pt on slides. When there is room on the slide to make the font bigger, consider doing so.

Slide Layouts and Styling

When choosing color palettes, keep the following in mind:

- Use high contrast colors. Black on white is always safe. Check your contrast rating with WebAIM's Contrast Checker, and ensure your color combination passes criteria.
- If you have the ability to adjust key graphics, run them through Coblis' Color Blindness Simulator. Generally avoid stacking red and green on top of each other.
- Do not rely on color alone to differentiate information. Use typographical features like underlining, or apply patterns to different graphics to ensure that there are redundant ways to tell content apart from each other. For example: in a bar graph, one type of bar could be blue with diagonal lines while another bar could be orange with polka dots on it.
- Later, we will go over captioning your presentation. Leave room at the bottom of your slides for captions to appear in the recording, generally in the lower fifth of a slide.

Hyperlinks are a great way to connect your information directly to a source (text, website, video, etc). Accessible hyperlinks tend to:

- Use concise text to clearly describe what the information is that you are linking
- Avoid pasting in the entire URL because screen readers will pronounce every single character of the URL, which can be cumbersome.
- Use URL shorteners that can be easily remembered and accessed in wider contexts (social media posts, pamphlets, etc.)
- Check out NC State University's tips for accessible hyperlinks.

Image and Speaker Descriptions

The goal of descriptions is to relate key information to everyone in the audience.

- When you start your presentation, state the following, if comfortable: your name, your pronouns, your title, relevant physical information about yourself, and your affiliation. If there is a back and forth dialogue, it is important to identify yourself each time you speak. You can briefly re-introduce yourself by stating something like, "Paige from

Chapman University here again…" before making your comment. If there are two people with the same name at the same institution, add a differentiating piece of information like, "...researching brain scan rhetorics."
- Describe the key components of a graphic. For example, if you have a pie chart, read out the percentages. If you are analyzing a photo, describe the aspects key to the photo's rhetorical power. The more central it is to your point, the more time and detail it deserves. In short, be sure to describe key parts that are relevant to your argument/analysis.
- Keep decorative features to a minimum in your slides, and don't spend too much time describing them. For example, you don't have to say your slide background is pastel green with a geometric pattern unless that background serves a key purpose in your ideas.

Recording Your Presentation

Recording Environment & Audio Clarity

We are all limited by our specific environments and technologies. Do the best you can in applying this guidance to get clear audio quality. Perfect podcast quality is not expected, but some forethought and technology testing can go a long way.:

- Even when you are presenting, keep your headphones on, so any questions you are asked don't create an echo.
- Avoid echoey rooms. Rugs, curtains, and upholstered furniture generally cut down on echo.
- Try to find a room away from other people or potential noise sources. A towel or blanket under a door crack can also help cut out exterior noise. If you have access to your institution's library, consider requesting a private room to record from.
- Record yourself on your mic and listen to yourself ahead of time. You may be surprised to find out you had a crackly mic and everyone was too polite to tell you. Check to see if poor quality can be resolved by changing the positioning of the mic. If it's crackly or unclear because the technology is broken or dated, consider seeing if your institution loans out higher quality microphones or webcams. University ITS departments have them more often than you think!

Captioning

Captioning refers to text overlaid on a video to provide a written record of what speakers are saying in real-time for the video. **WPA-GO asks that you encode your own captions into your video recording.** This is because there are rhetorical and/or editorial decisions that come with editing captions that WPA-GO does not want to make for you.

There are several auto-captioning methods available online, and Editing automatically-generated captions for accuracy improves the reliability of those captions.

- Tools:
    - amara.org
    - dotsub.com
    - subtitle-horse.com
- Along with spoken words, make a decision about captioning background noises and filler words (i.e., “um” and sometimes “like”). Generally, it is best to caption what is relevant to the audience understanding what you are sharing, and keep irrelevant information out of captioning.
- Default captions most commonly appear centered at the bottom of a screen with an opaque black background against white text. The font size should be large enough for readability but not so large that it interferes with the background, so 18 to 24 point sizing is a good starting place.

Transcripts

Document Design

Transcripts are a separate document that acts as the written record of what was spoken during a talk or presentation. We encourage you to prepare your transcript in advance of your presentation so that you can use it to read along as you go through your presentation. This also puts you in a better position later to publish your work as an article!

- Transcripts can be prepared as a text document, using common word processing programs like Microsoft Word, LibreOffice, or Google Docs.
- Keep your document plain and use a consistent format throughout. If there are multiple speakers, then identify who is speaking in the record by using the common format of “NAME: text of what they are saying.”
- Use headings and subheadings to format the content. Check out University of Minnesota’s tips on how to style your headings
- You may also have an assigned minute taker to write notes during the presentation.

Share as a Google Document

Please follow this three-step process for sharing your transcript:

1. Please type up your speaker notes and/or transcript of the talk into a Google Document
2. Then, adjust the sharing settings to “Anyone With the Link Can View”
3. Include the share-able link to the transcript with your video submission. Consider including a slide near the beginning of your presentation that offers the transcript link to your audience.

Share as a PDF

If you prefer to share your transcript as a PDF rather than a Google Document, please follow these steps in Word:

1. Go to File > “Save As…” and select PDF

2. When saving in Windows, select *Options* and make sure that you check “Document structure tags for accessibility”
    a. For a Mac, make sure you select “Best for electronic distribution and accessibility”

For more support, visit the University of Washington’s suggestions for Creating Accessible Documents.

Examples/Models

- Dr. Christina Cedillo’s talk at Michigan State University’s *Writing Centers and Access Series*
    - Writing Centers and Access: Dr. Christina V. Cedillo
- Dr. Jay Dolmage’s 2021 talk for Wright State University’s Office of Disability Services
    - Academic Ableism with Jay Dolmage Part I
- Turnip Van Dyke and Sara Lovett’s (two WPA-GO members!)
    - 2021 talk at the Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association conference
- Universal Design for Learning - Implementation and Research Network
    - UDLHE Digicon 2021 (WPA-GO member, Summer West, is featured on the 16th video)

Conclusion & Contact Information

This document is an ongoing project that will be updated as we learn more. We appreciate your feedback!

If you have any questions or access requests while developing your materials for the Graduate Research Series then you are welcome to email WPA-GO at wpago1@gmail.com.

Thank you to our 2021-2022 Accessibility Committee (Paige Welsh, Veronica Wisnewski-Parks, Turnip Van Dyke, and Kathleen Lyons) for their work drafting the guide.