

Accessible Events, Meetings and Presentations Guidelines

For the District of Saanich



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General Guidelines

Location Selection

When selecting a venue for an event, it's important to consider the location and whether or not the facilities onsite would work for the majority of participants. Select a location that:

- ✓ Has accessible or universal washrooms (if there are none, consider renting accessible washroom facilities).
- ✓ Includes an elevator in a multi-story building and step-free access to all main areas where the event will be held.
- ✓ Provides ample accessible parking close to entrances.
- ✓ Maintains clear, wide pathways around the venue/event site.
- ✓ Ensure doors are easy to open and have accessible handles or automatic door operators.
- ✓ Has areas of lowered counter space or a table set up with knee clearance at ticketing/reception/will-call.

Additional Outdoor Considerations

The outdoor ground surface should be level and smooth, noting that concrete, asphalt or compacted crushed gravel surfaces are far more accessible than grass or wood chips.

Wood chips or bark mulch are not accessible surfaces.

Event organizers may wish to install temporary pathways (Mobi mats, plywood etc.) for outdoor events especially if the weather has been very wet.

Avoid sites with more than a 5% slope.

Consider providing a "Welcome & Orientation Tent" with accessible maps, large print schedules, QR codes for screen reader-friendly versions, and verbal orientation by staff.

Parking

Parking near the entrance and primary event amenities is of key importance. Consider the location of the accessible parking stalls and whether or not it meets the needs of the attendees of the event.

- ✓ There is accessible parking near the entrance.
- ✓ Accessible parking ideally includes an access aisle connected to a path of travel preventing individuals from having to navigate behind parked vehicles.
- ✓ If insufficient numbers of accessible parking stalls are available consider providing temporary additional parking (especially for large scale public events and events that are targeted towards seniors).
- ✓ Ensure that vendors and the event team members have dedicated parking including loading areas, so that accessible parking doesn't become limited.



Emergency Procedures

Emergency procedures are important to consider for people with disabilities and ideally instructions should be accessible and available in multiple formats.

- ✓ Emergency evacuation plans include people with disabilities.
- ✓ Staff and volunteers are trained to assist people with mobility, sensory, or cognitive disabilities in emergencies.
- ✓ Audible and visual alarms are in place (where applicable).
- ✓ Clear signage or instructions are provided for shelter-in-place locations or evacuation maps.

Attendee Communications

For ticketed or registered events and programs, it is always a good idea to ask attendees if they have any accessibility needs or accommodations. You can do this within your existing systems, or by email or survey if tool features are limited. It is standard practice to leave this question as open ended but if there are limitations to what accommodations can be provided then providing the list of selections is also reasonable.

For all events it is best practice to provide information to attendees on what accessibility features are available but particularly at public events.

Let attendees know of:

- ✓ The location and availability of accessible parking and washrooms.
- ✓ The availability or ability to request ASL interpretation or alternative format materials.
- ✓ Any additional accommodations such as a sensory-friendly space, available notetakers etc. or who to contact (email and phone number) regarding an accessibility request.
- ✓ Any elements of concern such as strobe lights intense sounds or smells.

Event Registration

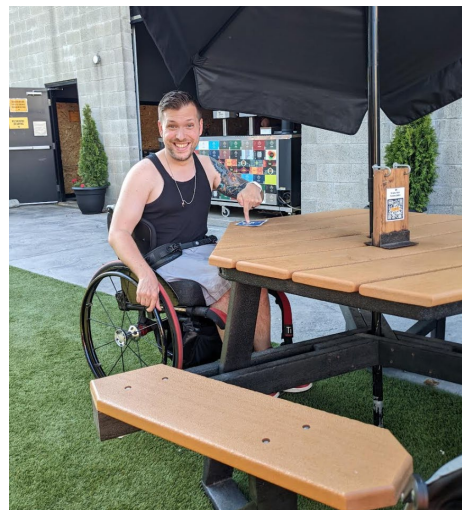
Event registration is the initial point of conversation between an event organizer and an attendee and is the perfect place to begin the accessibility journey for the attendee.

The key factor for event registration is to include the opportunity for an individual to highlight their accessibility needs. It's important to avoid asking for proof or limiting requests related to medical disabilities. Keep it values-based and trust-based.

- ✓ Use an accessible registration platform. Choose a registration tool that is WCAG 2.1 AA compliant (e.g., Jotform, Eventbrite with accessibility enabled and SurveyMonkey are good examples).
- ✓ Test for screen reader compatibility. Ensure all form fields are labelled, error messages are announced, and users can tab through without getting stuck. This requires professional accessibility training or lived experience with screen readers.
- ✓ Avoid CAPTCHAs if possible. If needed, offer an accessible alternative (like audio CAPTCHA).
- ✓ State your accessibility commitment as the event host for transparency.
- ✓ Send confirmation in an accessible format avoiding PDFs if possible unless made accessible and include details such as the location of accessible entrances and washrooms maps with large print and information about accessibility accommodations including sensory-friendly spaces.

Seating

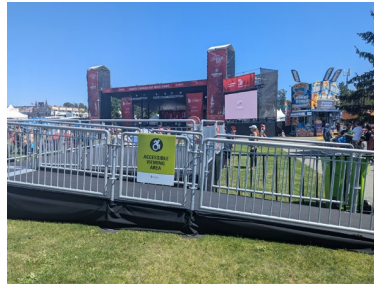
- ✔ Offering a variety of seating options is preferred, ideally some with armrests and backrests, including spaces for wheelchairs and those with mobility devices.
- ✔ Reserve accessible seating near entrances and exits for easy access.
- ✔ Consider seating and table setups – options can create the greatest amount of access for everyone.
 - Include both cocktail and standard height tables.
 - Include tables with knee clearance.
- ✔ Accessible seating areas should always include an area adjacent to the accessible seating area where a companion can be seated.
- ✔ Floor-length tablecloths can create barriers for people using mobility devices so consider using half height tablecloths.
- ✔ Consider providing a few cushioned resting chairs in low-traffic areas for participants who experience fatigue, chronic pain, or postural challenges.
- ✔ If anticipating lengthy lines, consider options to provide seating along line up areas to assist people with standing for long periods.



Outdoor Considerations

When planning for a festival or an outdoor venue with a stage, consider providing an **elevated viewing platform** for individuals with disabilities which offers direct line of sight to the stage.

- ✓ It should be connected to a path of travel and feature a ramp for access and
- ✓ Feature signage that indicates its intended purpose;
- ✓ Be located near an accessible washroom;
- ✓ Provide a line of sight to the stage;
- ✓ And provide some shade and removable seating for companions.



Gala/Reception Event Considerations

- ✓ Accessible seating should be located near entrances and exits.
- ✓ Should a VIP with a mobility device be seated at the front of the room, then ensuring the path of travel is accessible and sufficiently wide is to be prioritized.
- ✓ Ensure that an individual with a disability is placed at the table at an area without a table leg.
- ✓ Include both cocktail and standard height tables.
- ✓ If there is a stage or presentation, ensure that the accessible seating has clear line of sight.
- ✓ For an individual who is D/deaf or hard of hearing, placing them near to the front of the room would help with lip reading or viewing the sign language interpreter.

Event Setup

When selecting a venue for an event, it's important to consider all the amenities and programming elements. Consider the path of travel and how someone may be able to navigate from the accessible parking stall to the majority of the key event spaces.

- ✓ Consider paths of travel from the entrance to accessible washrooms.
- ✓ Ensure ample space between tables and other event elements to allow guests to walk comfortably without accidental injury from someone moving a chair quickly.
- ✓ Are all primary elements of an event reasonably accessible?
- ✓ Where possible, offer shaded seating along key routes for people to rest while navigating longer distances.
- ✓ Consider scheduling “low-stimulation hours” or quiet windows, especially at all-ages or family-focused festivals.

Food Service Considerations

- ✓ Consider access to any food or beverage stations:
 - Menus and information are easily legible from a seated position.
 - Self-service food is at counter height, easily reachable.
 - Allergens are clearly marked.
- ✓ Provide accessible water fountains or bottle refill stations.
- ✓ Staff or volunteers are on hand to provide assistance to attendees in serving or carrying food and beverage items.

Ticketing or Payment Systems

- ✓ Ensure point-of-sale is accessible (height, reach, digital interface).
- ✓ Offer multiple payment methods, including contactless options.
- ✓ Consider an accessibility discount or free support person pass.

Staging for Award Winners

- ✓ If people will be asked to approach a stage unexpectedly, ensure:
 - There's an accessible path (no surprise stairs).
 - Someone is available to assist, if requested.
 - A backup plan exists for alternative presentation (e.g., presenter comes to recipient).

Stages

Accessibility for performers and presenters is frequently missed. As with asking attendees, asking performers and presenters for their accessibility requirements is best practice.

- ✓ Consider stage setup needs including whether or not a stage requires a ramp.
- ✓ A stage ramp should be no more than a 5% grade and ideally feature handrails.
- ✓ Include both cocktail and standard height tables.
- ✓ Provide a wireless microphone or one with an adjustable stand for people who need to sit or use mobility devices.
- ✓ Podiums or lecterns should be placed at least one metre away from the stage edge, to prevent accidents and falls for speakers who are blind or partially sighted, who may not be able to see the end of the stage.
 - A height adjustable or universally designed lectern is highly recommended to provide access to people of all heights.
- ✓ The edge of the stage should be high contrast to the surrounding areas providing additional visibility for people with low vision.

Communication Access

Communication access is particularly important for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and is equally important for neurodivergent individuals. One such methodology is providing a hearing loop or other similar assistive listening device in key areas where information is communicated. A hearing loop is a form of assistive listening device that transmits sound from the AV system directly into someone's cochlear implant or in hearing aids via radio frequencies.

Another key element to communication accessibility is ensuring that anyone speaking is using a microphone. Oftentimes people say that they have a loud booming voice and choose not to use a microphone however, it is best practice that anyone speaking utilize a voice amplification system.

- ✓ Is a hearing loop or other assistive listening device available for the primary stage/announcements?
 - A temporary hearing loop can be installed for special events such as galas and VIP receptions.
- ✓ Has an ASL interpreter been hired for primary announcements? (An ASL interpreter should be hired for all public events for primary announcements and for ticketed or registered events upon request).
- ✓ Are closed captions enabled?
- ✓ Has live transcription been considered for large events such as workshops or focus groups?

Signage

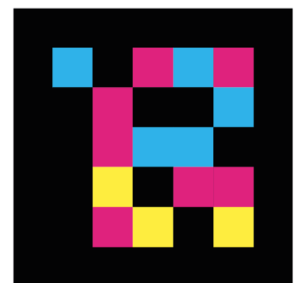
Signage is extremely important to individuals with disabilities. Correct signage allows people to determine the shortest path of travel from their location to the amenity they are seeking and can reduce feelings of anxiety.

- ✓ Signage should be robust and include directional signage at decision points as well as maps with clear icons in key locations.
 - Use consistent icons and include the location of accessible services such as washrooms, accessible parking, sensory-friendly spaces and viewing platforms.
- ✓ Use a text size of at least 14 point font and sans serif fonts as they are easier to read, particularly for those with literacy disabilities.
- ✓ Use high contrast, ideally seventy percent contrast between the background and the text or icons.
- ✓ When using icons, choose ones that are universally understood and obvious as to their intent.
 - Iconographic signage should be used for washrooms, parking, and the information booth, at minimum.
- ✓ Place signage at eye-level for people seated in mobility devices, roughly 1200 mm from the floor.
- ✓ Ensure that signage does not block sidewalks or paths of travel or create tripping hazards.

Technology

Technology can be an incredibly useful tool particularly for large event space navigation.

- ✓ Consider implementing a navigational tool such as [Blindsquare](#), a self-voicing GPS app that delivers information about location and points of interest at a large-scale event.
- ✓ NaviLens is a wayfinding technology that empowers people who have low vision or are blind, as well as sighted users, to navigate the environment with ease. The system uses codes similar to QR-codes that are placed strategically around the environment. For blind users, the app announces the distance to the code as they pan their phone around the space. It provides immediate spatial orientation, letting users know where the code is located and how far away it is. It also provides information that is stored in the code such as the name of the location, information about the location and details of the surrounding area.



Sensory Considerations

People with sensory-based disabilities, including people with dementia, sensory learning disabilities, or those who are neurodivergent, require additional considerations for full participation.

Informing attendees in advance of any sensory stimulation (strobe lights, flashes, loud sudden noises, etc.) is just as important as letting event attendees know of any accommodations that are available on site.

Consider the lighting and sound levels within an environment. Can the speaker or performers be heard across the entire venue? Are there areas where someone can go to have a quiet conversation? Is there significant glare, heat or differences in lighting levels?

Sensory-Friendly Spaces

Sensory-friendly spaces are calm and quiet areas with activities and seating designed to be supportive for those with sensory sensitivities. The spaces contain sensory toys (items such as stress balls, fidget toys) and other calm activities and seating that is designed to create a sense of calm when overstimulated, for whatever reason.

They are places where someone can retreat to if they are feeling overstimulated by the environment, allowing for a safe place where they can reintegrate their senses.

Sensory-friendly spaces are highly recommended for large scale events.

Sensory-Friendly Kits

Some event organizers provide loanable sensory-friendly kits , often available at information booths or the sensory-friendly space to attendees with items included such as:

- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Sunglasses
- Fidget toys or stress balls
- Basic picture symbols to be used as communication tools

Service and Guide Animals

In British Columbia, guide and service dogs are recognized under the Guide Dog and Service Dog Act (GDSDA) which governs their certification and establishes specific rights and protections under the BC human rights code.

Guide and service dogs are not pets. They're highly trained partners in mobility and accessibility for people who are blind, Deafblind, who have low vision, have a mobility disability or a health disability such as epilepsy.

Certified guide and service dogs have the same rights as individuals when accessing public services, places and events. These animals are exceptionally well-trained to ensure they are safe, calm, and stable in public settings. It's important to note that emotional support animals are not covered under this same act and do not have the same rights as guide or service dogs. While they may be accommodated in certain situations, it is up to the venue or event organizers to make that accommodation.

- ✓ Guide and service dogs are not to be approached, touched, or distracted while they are working. Service and guide dogs can be clearly identified by the vests and harnesses they wear while working.
- ✓ Providing water and an area designated for pet relief is best practice at large outdoor events.
- ✓ Guide and service dogs must be provided access to public areas (except food and beverage preparation areas and pools), provided that the animal is well behaved.



PADs Service Dog, Alma

Credit: [Pacific Assistance Dogs Society \(PADS\)](#)



CNIBC Guide Dog

Credit: [CNIB Guide Dogs](#)

Event Accessibility Checklist

Physical Access

Parking and Transportation

- ☐ Is there accessible parking with clear signage?
 - ☐ Is it sufficient for the event or is temporary additional parking required?
 - ☐ Is it close to an accessible entrance?
 - ☐ Is public transportation readily available and accessible?

Entrances and Exits

- ☐ Is there step-free access to the venue?
- ☐ Are there automatic doors or doors that require minimal force to open?
- ☐ Is the entrance wide enough for wheelchairs and mobility devices?

Onsite Navigation

- ☐ If there is slope, is it low-grade slope (5%) and/or ramps with handrails?
- ☐ Do stairs or steps have handrails?
- ☐ Are elevators working and accessible?
- ☐ Are pathways wide enough for two people to pass each other?
- ☐ Can primary facilities be set up along primary paths of travel?
- ☐ Are there any overhead obstructions along the path of travel?

Washrooms

- ☐ Are there accessible, gender-neutral, and family restrooms available?
 - ☐ Are they clear of obstructions? (no items stored inside, for example)
 - ☐ For large events, is there an adult-sized change table available, or one nearby?
- ☐ Is there a sufficient number of accessible washroom stalls or have additional ones been rented?
- ☐ Are washrooms located near primary event activities?

Seating and Tables

- ☐ Is there a range of accessible seating types offered?
 - ☐ Does some seating include armrests and backrests?
- ☐ Are there standard height tables (in addition to cocktail height)?
- ☐ Do any tables have knee clearance?
- ☐ Are tablecloths half length?
- ☐ Do any of the tables need to be marked as “accessible”?
- ☐ Has the placement of individuals with disabilities been considered when creating seating charts or event layouts?
- ☐ Is there an elevated viewing platform or does a person using a mobility device have a clear line of sight to the main attraction?

Food and Beverage

- ☐ Are there accessible water fountains or beverage stations?
- ☐ Are food and beverage options clearly labelled?
- ☐ Are food and beverage options at a height that is accessible for someone seated?
- ☐ Is the point of sale for food and beverage options an accessible height and reach?

Communication Access

- ☐ Have event attendees been able to make accessibility requests?
- ☐ Do event publications, invitations, websites, etc. include information on accessibility or where to find out more about the accessibility of the event?
- ☐ Does the venue have a hearing loop or has a temporary one been considered?
- ☐ Do electronic communications include accessible best practices (alt text for images, large font, etc.)?

Signage

- ☐ Are signs clear, large, and in high contrast?
- ☐ Is signage tactile or in braille where appropriate?
- ☐ Does a map indicate the location of primary amenities and accessible features?
- ☐ Has technology been considered?

Interpretation

- ☐ Has an ASL interpreter been booked?
- ☐ Are closed captions enabled?
- ☐ Have speakers been reminded to use microphones and repeat questions from the audience?

Event Materials

- ☐ Can event materials be requested in alternative formats (e.g. braille or electronic)?

Sensory Access

- ☐ Is there a sensory-friendly space or quiet area?
- ☐ Is a sensory-friendly kit available for loan?
- ☐ Are noise-canceling headphones available for loan?

Lighting

- ☐ If indoors, is the lighting adjustable? Can it be dimmed or brightened as needed?
- ☐ Are there shades on the windows to reduce glare?

Acoustics

- ☐ Is there a public address (PA) system?
- ☐ Are assistive listening devices available?
- ☐ Are there measures to minimize background noise or a quiet area?

Smells

- ☐ Is the venue aired out to minimize strong smells, especially from cleaning supplies or construction materials?
- ☐ Does the venue have a scent-free policy?

Staff and Volunteer Training

- ☐ Are staff and volunteers trained in communicating with people with disabilities?
- ☐ Are there staff or volunteers available to assist people on site such as with scribing, assisting with food or beverage service, providing general information, etc.?
- ☐ Are staff or volunteers at key event amenities such as at information, will-call, or ticketing familiar with the onsite accessibility accommodations?
- ☐ Is a staff member or volunteer available to act as an escort for individuals who are blind or who have low vision?
- ☐ Have staff been trained to interact with a service or guide dog?

Volunteer Training

Accessible and Inclusive Language

Language changes our perceptions and how we interact with each other. The "Golden Rule" applies to everyone, including people with disabilities. Remember, when in doubt, treat someone the way you wish to be treated and put the person first. It's easy! Talk to the person, not the person they're with. Look at the person, not the interpreter. Make no assumptions about the person's ability or disability.

The best place to start is with the person!

If you need to refer to the person, in relation to their disability, use person-first language and these words with dignity.

- Person with a disability
- Person who uses a wheelchair/walker/scooter/mobility device
- Wheelchair user, white cane user
- Person who is D/deaf or hard of hearing
- Person who uses sign language
- Person who has a developmental disability
- Person who has an intellectual disability
- Person who has a mental illness/mental health injury
- Person who has bipolar disorder/schizophrenia/anxiety/depression, etc.
- Person who has low vision or is blind
- Person who has dwarfism
- Person who has a communication disability
- Person who has a stutter
- Person who has autism/autism spectrum disorder
- Person who has an amputation
- Person who has a prosthetic limb
- Person who has cerebral palsy/spina bifida/Down syndrome etc.
- Person who has a learning disability

Note: Within the neurodiverse community in particular, there are differences with how people relate to person-first language. A best practice is to use person-first language unless otherwise indicated, or use the term that is preferred by the individual. Many members of the neurodiverse community prefer autistic person over person with autism, for example.

In General

- Ask “How can I help?”
 - Allow the person to tell you how they would like to be helped.
 - If they say “no”, listen.
 - If you know of a piece of equipment that could help them, let them know of the availability.
- Let them know you are available if they need you.
- Focus on the ability not the disability.
- Avoid words like “inspirational” unless the person has done something inspirational.
 - For example, attending event is not necessarily inspirational but achieving a new personal best or trying something that scares them is.
- Avoid trying to relate to the person based on their disability.
 - For example, when talking to someone who uses a wheelchair, don’t tell them how you used a wheelchair for a week when you broke your leg and know how hard it can be.
- Speak directly to the person, not the caregiver or interpreter.
- Allow the person to speak for themselves. If they can’t communicate with you, the caregiver/attendant will let you know.
 - Never speak about them as though they are not there.
- Always assume a person can understand you, even if they are non-verbal.



Mobility Device Users

- Always ask before you touch, push or move someone’s mobility device.
- Ask before pushing someone using a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are seen as an extension of someone’s personal bubble – don’t lean on them.
- Sit down and be at eye-level with the person if possible, don’t necessarily lean in, reducing their personal bubble.
- For many, a mobility device can be part of someone’s self-identity. Colour preference, style, equipment and lights are all custom features that reflect someone’s individuality.

People Who Are Blind or Who Have Low Vision

- Introduce yourself and anyone else who is part of the interaction.
- When passing someone who is visually impaired, let them know where you are and what side you are passing them on rather than trying to sneak past, which can be very disconcerting.
- Assume that they can see you – many individuals have some vision or partial vision.
- Never grab or touch someone without them knowing your intention.
- Ask *if* they would like to be guided and ask *how* they would like to be guided. People who are blind or have low-vision have different ways they like to be guided: some like to take the inside of your elbow, others prefer a hand on your shoulder.
- Offer to provide a tour of the space and narrate for them where key features are such as the washrooms.
- Provide clear verbal cues using directions such as “on your left” or “there is a set of 5 stairs ahead of you.”

People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Get the person’s attention via visual cue or a gentle touch on their arm.
- Speak clearly and normally – avoid over-enunciating words.
- Don’t shout or speak unnaturally slowly, this makes lip-reading more difficult.
- Face the person and make eye contact.
- Find a quieter environment to communicate, if possible.
- Use gestures.
- Write messages.
- Minimize background sounds.
- Avoid chewing gum.



Did you know?

Deaf, spelled with a capital D is culturally significant as this indicates that a person is part of the Deaf culture. Often, though not always, the person uses ASL and feels connected to their Deaf identity.



People Who Have a Communication Disability

- Be face to face and make eye contact.
- Watch for understanding.
- Say one thing and stop. Give the listener a chance to respond.
- Offer a choice of two options (or limited options).
- Keep your language simple.
- Don't ask questions you already know the answer to.
- Speak age-appropriately, don't use baby talk, especially with an adult or youth.
- Use gestures, pictures, written words to help the person understand.
- Stick to one conversation topic at a time.
- If someone can't think of the word, ask them to describe it.
- Ask for clarification when you don't understand.
- Listen and wait. If someone has a stutter or difficulty expressing themselves, don't interrupt, just give them time.
- If someone is using a communication board or device, remain face to face rather than looking at the board.
- If someone has speech that is challenging to understand, repeat back what you've heard for confirmation.
- Be patient.

What About Expressions?

This one is a bit tricky and it depends on context. Expression such as “Let’s go for a walk,” “It’s nice to see you,” “I haven’t heard from you in a while,” and “Did you see that?” are fine and those with a disability will unlikely take offence.

Someone who uses a wheelchair may say that they are going for a walk or choose to say that they are going for a wheel, but don’t feel uncomfortable if you are walking or inviting them for a walk.

Questions like “Are you blind?” “What are you, deaf?” “That’s so retarded.” are examples of offensive language that should be avoided.

Expressions and Terms to Avoid

Some people and organizations advocate for the use of “diverse abilities” as a euphemism intended to highlight the person’s abilities rather than disabilities. Disability is not a shameful word and many with disabilities do not identify with the term ‘diverse ability.’ This particular term is used almost exclusively by those in Community Living and generally is understood to refer to someone with cognitive and mobility disabilities. For that reason, it is not encouraged to use this term in general use to mean someone with a disability.

Other expressions to avoid include:

- Anything that labels a person in an unflattering way. For example, “she’s insane” or “he’s a schizo”.
- Using the word “challenged” or “handicapped”.
- “Special needs” is also not a preferred term outside of the school system and generally not preferred by people with disabilities.
- Try to avoid using mental health and mental illness related words that increase stigma such as “happy pills,” “psycho” or “lunatic”.
- Words that restrict ability such as “wheelchair-bound,” “suffering from,” “affected with” or “victim”.

Accessible & Inclusive Vocabulary

**Accessible
Parking Stalls**



**Accessible
Washroom**



**Manual Wheelchair/
Day Chair**



Power Chair



Scooter



Sport Wheelchair



White Cane



**Guide Dog/
Service Dog**



Para Ice Sledge



Prosthesis



Hearing Aid



Cochlear Implant



Accessible Meetings & Presentations



Planning

- ✓ Ask all participants what accommodations they may need to fully participate in the meeting or presentation.
- ✓ Enable captioning for the meeting, including breakout rooms.
- ✓ Hire an ASL interpreter, if requested.
- ✓ Provide materials in advance to the ASL interpreter.
- ✓ Suggest that speakers and participants consider wearing a colour that contrasts with your skintone. Lighting can wash out people's faces and make lip reading difficult.
- ✓ Provide attendees information on how to access and participate in the meeting, including alternative means such as keyboard shortcuts and voice commands for virtual meetings and the location of accessible washrooms and other facilities for in-person meetings.
- ✓ If meeting in person, a U-shape configuration is most accessible for people who are D/deaf and those relying on lip-reading.
- ✓ When meeting in person, provide all pertinent information on parking, wayfinding, sign-in protocols, etc. to guests.
- ✓ Provide an email and phone number for anyone experiencing accessibility or connection issues for hybrid or digital-based presentations.
- ✓ For engagement sessions, consider providing note takers or scribes to help people communicate written information.
- ✓ Ensure that signage directing people to the meeting room is clear and uses high contrast.
- ✓ Consider providing an area that is quiet, allowing people to take a break from the meeting or presentation, or allowing people the opportunity to communicate more comfortably, especially when someone is hard of hearing.
- ✓ Consider providing materials in advance in digital large print or braille formats if requested.
- ✓ Communicate accessibility requirements to presenters and ensure that presentation materials are accessible.
- ✓ Ensure stage or speaking area is accessible. If using a podium, confirm it is height-adjustable or there is space to present without it.



Preparing A Presentation

- ✔ Limit the text on each slide.
 - Use bullet points and spacing to avoid clutter and long paragraphs.
- ✔ Choose a font that is sufficiently large (24 point) and sans serif.
- ✔ Avoid excessive use of italics and underlines.
- ✔ If linking to webpages, ensure the text is a large font.
- ✔ Be thoughtful in your use of motion and animations. Avoid sensory overload. Be mindful of flashing content, loud or abrupt sounds, or visually busy slides.
- ✔ Use high contrast colours for text. For example white text on a dark background or dark text on a light background.
- ✔ Run an accessibility check on your presentation (found under the “Review” tab in PowerPoint).
- ✔ Include alt text for any visuals, particularly if the presentation will be shared with attendees.
- ✔ Make multimedia presentations fully accessible: turn on closed captions, provide transcripts of videos, and give visual descriptions of pertinent visual content.
- ✔ Avoid using tables.
- ✔ Don't rely on colour alone, use shapes labels and patterns to help convey information.
- ✔ Use consistent visual cues. Predictable design elements (like heading styles) help with cognitive processing.



Presenting Best Practices

- ✓ Speak clearly, using simple language and at a moderate pace.
- ✓ Avoid the use of technical jargon and acronyms.
- ✓ Give people time to process the information. Pause regularly.
- ✓ Ensure that you are visible. Use good lighting and, if presenting digitally, be centered on camera.
- ✓ Describe all relevant visual information including graphs, charts and pictures.
- ✓ Use a microphone. Even if you have a “voice that carries.”
- ✓ Limit distractions.
- ✓ Pause to give the audience a moment to read what is on the slide.
- ✓ Repeat questions from the audience, especially if a microphone has not been provided to audience members.
- ✓ Avoid pointing without context. Describe what you’re referencing instead of just gesturing.

Presenting Digitally

- ✓ Keep both the presenter and the ASL interpreter visible at all times by fixing their videos in place (e.g. using the “pin” or “spotlight” feature).
- ✓ Enable closed captioning, and provide instructions to attendees to ensure they are aware of the ability to turn on closed captions should they need it.
- ✓ Make sure all audience members can see and hear you! Good lighting, microphone and bandwidth are key.
- ✓ Utilize both the chat and “raised-hand” feature for questions .
- ✓ Verbally repeat questions asked in the chat.
- ✓ Enable the “Mute Participants Upon Entry” feature.
- ✓ Limit the use of the Zoom’s polling feature as this feature has some accessibility barriers.
- ✓ Describe what you are annotating if you are using the whiteboard feature.
- ✓ Make eye contact with your camera.
- ✓ Record your presentation for later distribution.



Meeting Digitally

- ✓ Keep both the presenter and the ASL interpreter visible at all times by fixing their videos in place (e.g. using the “pin” or “spotlight” feature).
- ✓ Enable closed captioning, and provide instructions to attendees to enable the captions themselves.
- ✓ Make sure all audience members can see and hear you! Good lighting, microphone and bandwidth are key.
- ✓ Utilize both the chat and “raised-hand” feature for questions.
- ✓ Verbally repeat questions asked in the chat.
- ✓ Enable the “Mute Participants Upon Entry” feature.
- ✓ Limit the use of the Zoom’s polling feature as this feature has some significant accessibility barriers.
- ✓ Describe what you are annotating if you are using the whiteboard feature.
- ✓ Make regular eye contact with your camera.
- ✓ Record the meeting and transcription for later distribution.
- ✓ If possible, enable AI assistants for notetaking and live transcription.

Zoom Best Practices

- ✓ Review [Zoom's Accessibility page](#).
- ✓ Zoom features include: dark mode, focus mode, auto-generated captions, manual captions, multi-spotlight, multi-pinning, re-arrange gallery view, record meetings.
- ✓ Under Settings, Accessibility Settings, users can:
 - Customize the font size of the chat and captions.
 - Explore keyboard shortcuts.
 - Get screen reader support.

Microsoft Teams Best Practices

- ✓ Review [Accessibility tools for Microsoft Teams](#).
- ✓ MS Teams features include: sign language view, transcriptions, auto-generated captions, record meetings, using headings in the chat, add alt-text to images in the chat.
- ✓ Team’s polling feature is accessible for screen readers.

Why Do Icons Matter?

Iconography

Icons are important for accessibility because they provide visual cues that can be quickly and easily understood by a wide range of users, regardless of their language skills, cognitive abilities, or sensory impairments.

Universal understanding: Well-designed icons transcend language barriers and can be interpreted by people from diverse backgrounds including people who don't speak English as a first language.

Cognitive accessibility: Icons can help people with cognitive disabilities or learning difficulties to better understand and navigate their environment. Simple, clear icons reduce the cognitive load required to process information.

Wayfinding assistance: Consistent use of standardized icons throughout a building or site can aid in wayfinding, especially for individuals with intellectual disabilities or those who are unfamiliar with the space.

Benefit for people with low vision: When designed with high contrast and sufficient size, icons can be more easily perceived by people with low vision compared to text alone.

Supports non-readers: Icons can convey important information to individuals who have difficulty reading, whether due to a visual impairment, learning disability, or language barrier.

Key Considerations

- Use internationally recognized symbols, like the International Symbol of Access.
- Ensure adequate size and contrast for visibility.
- Place icons on signage that is mounted at an accessible height and providing clear floor space for approach.
- Utilize tactile icons with braille labels on signage to support users who are blind or have low vision.
- Maintain consistency in the design and use of icons throughout a site.
- Incorporate well-designed, universally understood icons to create environments that are more intuitive, easier to navigate, and accessible to a broader range of people.

Why Is Contrast So Important?

Contrast to Support People with Low Vision

- Contrast makes things easier to identify and distinguish. High contrast between an object and its background helps those with low vision better perceive shapes, edges, and boundaries.
- Contrast improves legibility and readability. When there is strong contrast between text and its background, it is easier for people who have low vision to read and interpret letters, words, and symbols.
- Contrast provides visual orientation. Things like doorways, handrails, and signage stand out better when there is significant contrast with surroundings. This aids navigation and independence.
- Reduced contrast contributes to eye strain and fatigue. Insufficient contrast makes visual tasks more difficult and tiring for those with low vision.

Contrast for Balance

- Contrast highlights edges and boundaries. When moving from seated to upright, high contrast along the edges of steps, floors, and thresholds makes these changes in level clearly visible. This prepares the body for adjustments.
- It defines spatial orientation. Contrast provides visual cues that help the brain orient itself in space, allowing for better balance control such as knowing where a wall, handrail, or counter is helps stabilize our vision.
- Distinct edges guide movement. Clear definition where surfaces change, facilitated by contrast, guides body motions like getting up from a chair or exiting a vehicle.
- It draws attention to tripping hazards. Significant contrast makes irregularities in floors, pavements, ramps readily apparent so they can be navigated safely.
- Low contrast obscures surroundings. With inadequate contrast, visual environment blends together, depriving brain of key reference points needed to maintain equilibrium.