



# How to be inclusive online

Online presentations and web-based seminars (webinars) are becoming more mainstream as educational institutions and training providers look for more efficient ways of supporting learners. But how do webinars work for people with disabilities? This document looks at how to get the most from webinar opportunities.

Some of these materials can be found at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1823&v=OnliDXHeE6Q&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1823&v=OnliDXHeE6Q&feature=emb_title)

## Three Ps

The 3 Ps of accessible webinars are Planning, Presentation and Post event follow-up. Different webinar systems have markedly different degrees of accessibility, but an accessible system does not guarantee an accessible experience because the way the webinar is delivered can have a major impact for better or for worse.

- Have an Agenda, lesson plan and rules of engagement
- No risk practice session 1st
- Focus on the audio quality in/out
- Try to set up with your face well lit
- Hide clutter and blur background
- Use the notes in Power Point.
- Use accessible documents: Some of the most appropriate fonts in this regard are Arial, Helvetica, Lucida Sans, Tahoma, and Verdana. Size font 14.
- Keep slides simple
- Buddy up
- Have a back-up plan
- Ask participants for input
- Ask participants to speak clearly and slowly
- Record the session

The single most important thing you can do is to proactively invite people with disabilities to contact you in advance.



Somewhere on the joining instructions ensure you have a clear statement along the lines of:

**“We want to make this a positive experience for all participants. If you have particular access needs (for example visual impairment, dyslexia, deafness etc) please contact us at the following email so we can work together to get you as good an experience as we can.”**

You do not have to be an expert in accessibility to make a difference. You just need to understand the issues and work out how, within the opportunities available to you, to improve the experience.

## **Culture: What do we need to think about?**

- Don't be afraid to make mistakes
- Create a culture of (polite) correction
- Ask your audience what they need
- Manage expectations
- Provide content in advance

## **Kit: What do we need to think about?**

- Use captions - built into Teams, PowerPoint, Hangouts.

### Instructions For Zoom.

- Log in to your Zoom account in the Zoom app.
- Click on the Settings icon.
- Select Meeting.
- Toggle the Option for Closed Captioning to on.
- When you are in a meeting where Closed Captions are available, they will automatically appear on your screen



- Use video cameras – Key element of connecting especially now! Also facial expression give cues to engagement levels.
- Invite BSL interpreter if needed. (British Sign Language)
- Can download transcripts and send to participants
- Speak to Think and Think to Speak – This is to make sure that you are giving enough time to participants to take part. Introvert/Extrovert.
- Use a headset (use mute too!). For clear audio.
- Chat box is great but can be distracting – so use it minimally if possible.
- Consider tools to enable participation and engagement in different formats e.g.
  - Chat
  - Polls
  - Question and Answer.

## Planning principles

- Make sure you know what you can offer. It's better to be proactive about a standard offer that you **can** fulfil (for example an accessible PowerPoint in advance) than create false expectations that you **can't** (for example "Tell us what you'd like. A BSL video embedded in the presentation? Oh; we can't do *that*.").
- Be accessible from the beginning. Ensure the source presentation slides have explanatory notes in the notes field. This will make it much quicker to create a transcript or alternative format for different access needs.
- Make sure that adding value to one participant doesn't make the experience worse for everybody else. For example, getting *everyone* to use the microphone instead of the text chat option might make life easier for your blind participant but may make it harder for everyone else since only one can contribute at a time and lag / latency could crash out slow connections. Instead, consider building in reflection points where the moderator can summarise the threads in the text chat.
- Clarify expectations and conventions at the beginning. If you don't want people to worry about their poor spelling in the text chat pane then be explicit that the act of contributing is valued more highly than the art of spelling,
- If 'non-standard' accommodations are used check with the disabled participant how open or otherwise they want to be. A blind participant may



need discussion text from the chat pane re-voiced if the webinar platform is not accessible. Other participants may be annoyed by you reading out the text pane if they don't realise why you need to. How do you explain this? "This is necessary for accessibility"? Or "Fred is blind and this will really help him"? Different people have different preferences but the clearer the explanation the better the buy-in from other delegates.

## Presentation

The actual delivery of the session may have different issues for people with different disabilities. Here is a list of some of the more common issues that disabled delegates may experience.

## Visual impairment

- Are they referring to something on the screen that I can't see?
- Should I be listening to the presenter or listening to screen reader speaking the text on the screen? Which is most important?
- The text size in the chat pane is far too small for me to read so I cannot respond.
- My screenreader cannot access the chat pane.
- My screenreader found the chat pane but every time somebody adds a comment the screen reader refocuses at the top of the page and I have to read all the way down again.

## Hearing impairment

- We are still on the same slide. Is the presenter talking about the bullet points or has she given us a task that I missed?
- People seem to be doing an activity (Whiteboard? Voting) but nothing on the screen or in the text chat is explaining what I must do.
- It's hard to keep up with the multiple threads in the text chat when I'm working in a second language (British Sign Language is my first language)

## Literacy difficulties



- I'm ashamed of my spelling. I don't want to write a comment.
- It made sense in my head but by the time it was in the text chat pane it was garbled.
- I read too slowly to keep up with the multiple threads in the text chat.

## **Dexterity difficulties**

- How can I access all the features without a mouse?
- I write too slowly to keep up with the text chat threads.

## **Presentation 'good practices'**

- Make sure there is a spare facilitator who can focus on the accessibility issues.
- Accessible copy of the presentation sent in advance – so I delegate with a disability can focus on the added value of the live presentation having already familiarised themselves with the content.
- Make sure system features you plan to use have been discussed/tested with disabled delegates in advance.
- Describe the key content of all slides. For some webinars you may prepare a transcript. The appropriate paragraphs can be pasted into the text chat pane or another communication channel (for example, Skype, a wiki page etc). Deviations from the script can be flagged in the chat pane by the facilitator
- Build in staging points for the facilitator to summarise key threads both aurally and in the text chat pane. It is also a chance to invite people to comment.
- If appropriate, a disabled delegate could be given permanent "open mike" to request clarification at any time.
- The facilitator can use periodic private communication (instant message or phone) to check all is OK.
- Ensure activity instructions are both visible on an instruction slide and audibly explained.
- Use relevant images to support slide text.



- If a sign language interpreter is supporting a deaf participant make sure the presentation is provided in advance so that technical or abstract terms can be clarified. Don't speak too quickly. Build in pauses.
- If you are using a WebCam to present ensure your faces lit from the front to aid lip reading.

## Post presentation follow-up

Where delegates have been interacting through a text chat pane, it is generally good practice to make a copy of the text chat (or at least a summary of some key points) available to delegates afterwards. This gives people who are slower readers or writers a chance to benefit from the discussions even if they couldn't keep up with them during the session.

## Resources

On Inclusive Remote Working: <https://blogs.microsoft.com/accessibility/inclusive-remote-working/>

Be sure to check out the next coming days, the Microsoft Accessibility Blog: <https://blogs.microsoft.com/accessibility/>

Accessibility Features across our products: <http://aka.ms/AccessibilityFeatures>

Our main Accessibility Site: <http://aka.ms/MicrosoftAccessibility>

Series of mini-videos on accessibility: <http://aka.ms/AccessibilityAtAGlance>