Accessibility & Synchronous Meetings

Synchronous virtual meetings require planning in order to provide sufficient access to all participants. If not designed well, the cognitive load of video-conference meetings can be overwhelming for both participants and presenters. These tips were developed in consideration of the wide range of disabilities that participants may or may not disclose and the wide range of technologies attendees may use.

Prior to the meeting/lecture

- **Provide accessible slides/outline.**

  - Use 24pt or larger for slide deck text. Slide titles should be larger.

  - Check slides/outlines using the built-in accessibility checker or Ally to make sure they meet accessibility standards.

  - Share slides or an outline in advance of a meeting helps people prepare, follow along, and stay engaged.

- **Test presentation environment.**

  - Setup your own physical environment.

    - Light source(s) should come from the front and not behind. Natural light often works well with web cameras. Good lighting makes it easier to see facial expressions and other nonverbal cues.

    - Record a sample piece of audio using your microphone setup. Watch for echos (add a soft surface if you hear them), muffled sound (move microphone so it is not obstructed), crackling sound (try a different microphone), and pops/breathing sounds (move microphone farther away).

    - Frame your video to crop out distracting elements and keep your head and shoulders within the frame.

  - Setup your virtual environment.

    - Practice using meeting tools with an audience (colleague) to make sure you are able to share your screen, polls, or other technologies you are planning to use.

    - Request live captioning services from your institution if needed by the presenter or attendee (it is strongly encouraged to provide notice in advance, although not necessary—try your best to provide access upon request. Consult with your campus disability service professional or educational technologists to achieve these requests in a timely manner). These services are available on a per-meeting basis and need to be set up in the meeting configuration.

- Allow attendees to adjust as many settings as possible so that they can customize their experience to meet their needs (ex. meeting layouts, pinning videos, etc.)

- Experiment with recording settings (if planning to record) so that the recording contains the slides and speakers in the way you intend (there are a lot of potential options).

- **Plan parameters for participation.**

  - Balance participant presence with respect for privacy.

    - Set meetings to start with audio and video off . Invite participants to turn their video on and use virtual backgrounds.

    - Invite participants to update their profile to:

      - Include their name

      - Share their pronouns (pronouns can be added to the last name field)

      - Include a photo of themselves (or a photo to represent themselves).

    - Remember to offer an alternative for participants who have privacy concerns.

  - Plan how participants will engage in the meeting.

    - If planning to use chat :

      - Recruit a person to monitor and voice the chat.

      - Set the chat to automatically save.

    - If planning to have people use their audio:

      - Remember to set the meeting to auto-mute participants to minimize distractions during the session.

      - Remember to provide a way to participate without audio.

    - If planning to raise hand controls, reactions or other indicators:

      - Remember to provide an alternate participation method for those who may be joining by phone or otherwise do not have access to those controls.

    - If planning to use breakout rooms:

      - Create a shared document with any directions or prompts

you will use with breakout groups in advance of the session because any shared slides you may have in the main meeting room do not transfer to breakout rooms.

- If a group of people will be joining remotely from a single audio/video feed:

  - Plan for a room facilitator that can turn the mic on and off and can voice the questions/answers from the room.

During

- **Provide audio descriptions.**

  - Have speakers state their name before speaking.

  - Describe images/visuals on screen to communicate the same information for those that might not be able to see the screen. If an image is purely decorative there is no need to describe it.

- **Assign someone to monitor the chat.**

  - Have that individual verbally summarize discussion happening in chat.

  - Have that individual answer and/or voice questions posed in the chat.

  - Regularly pause to get check-ins and updates from the chat monitor.

- **Embrace the audio and video delay.**

  - Slow down and pause regularly to accommodate the delay in order to give participants the time needed to respond and ask questions.

  - Remember that if live captioning is used there is an additional delay.

  - Check in periodically with participants about your pace and your connection.

- **Build in short breaks.**

  - Sign language interpreters will need breaks to switch and allow participants to pin the video of the new interpreter.

  - Participants need cognitive and bio breaks to stay engaged.

- **Look at the camera when you are speaking.**

  - You may need to prop your laptop or adjust where your video conferencing window is on the screen so that you are looking directly at the camera and that your head and shoulders are in the frame.

- **Manage your participants effectively and efficiently.**

- ○ Know where the controls are to:

    - ■ Mute all participants;

    - ■ Hide the video of participants;

    - ■ Move participants to the waiting room; and

    - ■ Remove from the meeting (note that if it is a recurring meeting it may prevent them from rejoining a future meeting).

After

- ● **Follow up with participants after your meeting.**

    - ○ Share relevant resources including:

        - ■ Updated slide decks, if necessary.

        - ■ Resources discussed during the meeting.

        - ■ Chat transcripts (note that if private messages were sent to you as the host they may need to be deleted before you share the version downloaded to your computer).

        - ■ Recording of the session with captions and transcript (note that If using zoom cloud recording transcripts and captions will be automatically generated but should to be reviewed for accuracy).