

A Guide to Inclusive and Accessible Hybrid Meetings

Why is accessibility important?

The chances of having someone with a disability in a meeting are high. Fifteen percent of the world's population has a disability; that's over 1 billion people worldwide. In addition to this, even more people experience temporary, non-disclosed, or/and age-related disabilities.

Disabilities include (but are not limited to):

- Auditory: partial or complete inability to perceive sounds
- Cognitive: difficulty with attention or memory, sensitivities to light, and more
- Motor: various forms of paralysis, reduced fine motor control, and so on
- Vision: blind, low-vision, color blindness, low-contrast vision, and more

Inclusive, accessible hybrid meetings ensure that all participants, regardless of abilities or disabilities, can fully participate and access the information being shared. Accessible events ensure a more effective experience for everyone.

Checklists

Inclusive slide design

- Keep slide elements simple. Ornate or distracting animations and transitions can be disorienting.
- Ensure that colors have a [sufficient color contrast](#) of 4.5:1 or greater.
- Do not use flashing elements. If unavoidable, forewarn the audience as flashing elements may trigger seizures in some people.
- Consider the environment. If presenting in large amphitheaters or banquet rooms, aim for text no smaller than 20 point in size.
- Use on-screen, written prompts to help participants keep track of what is happening.
- If sharing slides, ensure that they are compatible with screen readers:
 - a. Include alt text for all images and other non-text components.
 - b. Use distinct slide titles for each slide.
 - c. Check the reading order so that elements are read in the correct order.
 - d. Use clear wording for linked text (hyperlinks) so that the link still has meaning outside of the immediate context of the sentence.

Before the meeting

- Know your audience. Consider using registration or sign-up forms to ask attendees what accommodations, such as sign language interpreters, are needed.
- Enable features such as automated captions. Note that accuracy decreases with technical jargon or for some speakers with heavily accented speech. Consider hiring a Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) transcriber instead.
- Share an agenda (if not the full slides) before the event. Some people (even for introductions) benefit from knowing what to expect in advance.
- If you're hosting a conference, install the latest version of the conferencing app in advance and confirm accessibility settings by testing them before the event.

During the meeting

- Consider using self-descriptions during introductions for people who are blind or have low-vision. Note that not everyone feels comfortable using them.
- Announce your name before speaking (e.g., "This is [Name] speaking...").
- Wait for questions. Some participants may need extra time to unmute, raise their hand, or finish a thought.
- Consistently use microphones to ensure everyone can hear. This point is especially important for hybrid meetings.
- In a hybrid meeting, accommodate multiple communication styles. If chat functions are allowed, pause periodically to verbally share what has been contributed to the chat. Note that not everyone keeps track of the chat during meetings.
- Allow sufficient time for participants to process and engage with the material.

Additional resources

- [ACS Inclusivity Style Guide](#): Learn to communicate inclusively with language, formatting, and accessibility.
- Download the [guide to inclusive in-person meetings \(PDF\)](#). Some of the tips apply to hybrid meetings as well.
- [Accessible Virtual Conferences](#) (Sigaccess.org)
- [Self-Descriptions for Inclusive Meetings](#) (VocalEyes)
- For more information on diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect, visit [the ACS Office of DEIR website](#) or email diversity@acs.org.