

Guidelines for giving accessible presentations

These guidelines are intended to help you ensure your presentation, whether in person or virtual, is as accessible as possible to people with disabilities. Even small changes can go a long way to ensuring that a presentation, and indeed a whole conference, is inclusive of everyone who wants to take part.

Preparing your presentation, whether in person or online

- Although it's good practice to keep text to a minimum on slides, for deaf or hearing impaired people the text can provide valuable information if spoken words are missed. Try to strike a balance, with enough wording to convey the important information: don't go full minimalist with a title and evocative image.
- Font should be clear and easy to read. Recommended fonts for accessibility include Verdana, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica and Calibri (all sans serif, which improves readability). Font size should be at least 18 pt.
- Ensure there is enough colour contrast between text and background. To get technical, the contrast ratio should be no less than 4.5:1. There are online tools to help you check, but the easiest thing is stick to favourite, if boring, colour schemes with strong contrast. You can't go wrong with black text on white background!
- Make sure any images are large enough to be clearly visible.
- Ensure that any video or audio you use is captioned (or provide a transcript at the start of your talk, as a handout if in person or via a link in the chat if online).
- Note: many presentation preparation programs today have the option of checking accessibility, e.g. Microsoft PowerPoint has a "Check Accessibility" function that flags up issues such as missing captions or low contrast.
- If creating handouts to go with a presentation, note that standard pdfs may not be readable by the screen readers used by people with visual impairment. You can add tags that make a pdf screen-readable automatically in Office for Windows, Office for Mac, and Office for the web. This can also be checked using the Check Accessibility function.

During your presentation (in person or online)

- Check ahead of time whether the conference organisers are using a videoconferencing platform that supports automatic closed captioning. Many platforms do, but organisers are not always aware that the functionality often needs to be enabled beforehand (e.g. in Zoom, automatic captioning has to be switched on in Advanced Settings).

- At the start of the session, presenter or chair should check that both presenter and presentation are visible and audible to all (i.e. *don't* ask "Is anyone having particular difficulty hearing/seeing this?").
- Ensure you are visible. If presenting online, this means checking that your face is well-lit, that you are not silhouetted against a window or other light source, and that the camera is positioned to capture your whole face (not just the top of your head or your profile).
- Speak clearly and use a microphone (even in a small room, some people will need amplification) or a headset with microphone if online.
- Summarise any text and describe any images, including tables, graphs or charts, for people with visual impairments.
- Describe verbally any other essential visual information, e.g. hand voting, electronic polling.
- Either presenter or chair should repeat any questions from the audience, especially if questioners do not have microphones.
- Allow enough time for audience responses, especially from online audiences. Speech or mobility impairments can mean that a participant is slower to ask a question or un-mute a microphone.

Recorded presentations

- Conferences and symposia increasingly require presenters to provide a pre-recorded version of their talk (as video, or a spoken commentary added to PowerPoint or pdf).
- The general points about accessibility covered above apply here too.
- When pre-recorded voiceover or video is used remember to include captioning as well – most programmes now enable this.