

A collection of yellow line-art icons on a teal background. The icons include a smartphone, a document with checkmarks, a person at a computer, a speech bubble with three dots, a play button, and a laptop. A dashed yellow line forms a large circle around the central icons.

13 Ways To Make Your Online Meetings Accessible for People with Disabilities

One in four American adults has a disability that impacts major life activities. Often these disabilities include communication challenges, like hearing and vision loss, sensory processing disorders, and difficulty speaking clearly. It can be challenging to make online meetings an inclusive space for people with disabilities, and the COVID pandemic has only complicated this issue. Here are 13 best practices to help ensure your nonprofit is conducting online meetings inclusively.

What to Do in Advance of a Meeting

1 Ask people in advance what works best for them

This is a fundamental rule. Not every disability is visible – don't assume someone's needs.

2 Distribute all materials ahead of time

Share materials in accessible formats ahead of time so participants have a chance to review all materials.

3 Use large, clear fonts

Use a plain, sans serif font in a large size. Avoid ALL CAPS, underline, and *italics*.

4 Keep it simple, not flashy

Stay away from animated transitions, auto-scrolling text, and blinking images.

5 Use your layout tools

Format your documents to emphasize clarity and legibility. Add bullet points and subheadings to break up long sections of text.

6 Use strong color contrast

A color contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for text to background and 3:1 for headings to background is recommended. Your computer's accessibility tools can help you achieve this.

7 Caption all images

Include only images that convey important information, along with a concise description that doesn't overlap the image.

What to Do During a Meeting

1 Use the free technologies provided by telephone companies

Remind participants of TTY and revoicer options provided by telephone companies when choosing the call-in feature for virtual meetings.

2 Use headphones and a mic

A headset with a built-in microphone will prevent feedback loops and enable greater clarity.

3 Follow etiquette and speak clearly

Speak slowly and clearly, never interrupt, and pause between sentences to allow translators and captions to catch up.

4 Use sign language, interpreters, and captions

When possible, use these translators. Let participants know beforehand which accommodations are available.

5 Keep chat to a minimum

Avoid written side conversations in the chat, it will interfere with screen readers.

6 Record and share meetings

Remember to hit that record button, and distribute the meeting along with a full transcript.

To get more resources on accessibility needs and tools, including a full article to help you make every online meeting more accessible, go to

AboutUs.AbilityCentral.org/Rules-Of-Engagement