

Accessible online meetings: guidance for facilitators

When planning your meeting, accessibility is important. This will make your meeting more inclusive for everyone.

Here are ten ways to make your meeting more inclusive:

1. Build a culture of inclusivity

Be mindful of people's needs. For example, describe visual elements orally, for those who cannot see these (they may be visually impaired, or they may be connecting via a phone with a small screen). You could also start your meeting by describing yourself for those who cannot see you.

If your meeting's topic is of a sensitive nature, where participants may be affected by the subject matter, at the start of your meeting please let them know about the Pastoral Care Helpdesk, which is available through Sched.

2. Assign an accessibility host

It is good practice to identify someone in the meeting who can respond to access needs if they arise during the meeting. Introduce them to participants at the start of your meeting. Let participants know how to contact this person (i.e. through direct message on the chat function).

3. Create a safer space

We come to Yearly Meeting with a range of life experiences. Some participants need to know who is in the group to feel safe. At a minimum, those participating are asked to rename so that the screen name includes both first/personal name and surname/family name and worshipping community. If participants are unable to do so they should be asked to leave the meeting.

4. Provide captions

Captions help many people, not just those with hearing impairment.

How to enable captions

Before your zoom meeting, you must set up captioning. To do this, log into your account. **Please note that this must be through web browser zoom not the zoom app.**

To enable automated captioning for all users in the account:

- Sign into your account at the Zoom web sign in.
- In the navigation menu, click **Settings**.
- Click the **Meeting** tab.
- Under **In Meeting (Advanced)**, click the **Automated captions** toggle to enable or disable it.
- If a verification dialog appears, click **Enable** or **Disable** to verify the change

At the start of your zoom meeting click on 'Show Captions' in the main menu, and enable auto transcription. The captions will proceed to work throughout your zoom meeting.

5. Improve clarity of speech

We recommend that facilitators use a headset with built-in microphone as it reduces background noise and improves sound quality. Ask people to stay on mute unless they are speaking. Speak clearly, without rushing, so people have time to take in what you say and the captioner can keep up.

6. Manage the chat

The chat function is important for people who may not wish to speak or may have connectivity issues. In Zoom, screen readers will read out everything in the chat. Therefore, consider limiting participants to chatting with the host only. This way the host can share relevant information with the whole group verbally, without screen reader users having to navigate the chat being read out at the same time as the host speaking.

7. Stick to the timetable

People can plan their own needs better if they know when there will be breaks and when you will finish. For a meeting of one hour or less, it is generally OK to hold the meeting without a break. For a 90-minute meeting, it is good practice to give people a short break halfway through. Set your breaks in advance and stick to them.

8. Manage cognitive overload

Video chats can be exhausting. Zoom fatigue is a genuine phenomenon. Some people find turning off their camera helps to manage stress. You might also remind people that in Zoom they can turn off the self-view if they find it distracting to see an image of themselves. Please note point 3 above.

9. Provide information in advance

If you are using slides or written documents, provide them in advance. This enables people to prepare well and thus to participate more fully.

10. Give content warnings

Please give content warnings before mentioning topics that may be triggering or difficult for some people: e.g. food, alcohol, racism, state physical violence and sexual violence. If referring to such content, also provide details before the end of the session of a relevant helpline for support.

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