

Ten ways to make online meetings more inclusive

Don't wait to be asked. The following will make meetings more inclusive for everyone.

1. Describe visual elements orally

This will help those who cannot see these (they may be visually impaired, or connecting via a phone with a small screen). Consider describing yourself for those who cannot see you.

2. Assign an accessibility contact

Nominate someone to handle access needs and explain how to reach them.

3. Enable captions

Auto-captions are free in Zoom and Teams. Turn them on at the start of the meeting. These help many people, not just those with hearing impairment. For greater accuracy hire a human transcriber who types what is said in real-time.

4. Improve speech clarity

Use a headset with built-in microphone. This reduces background noise, improves sound quality, and helps with creating good captions. Ask people to mute when not speaking. Speak clearly, without rushing. This also helps the captioner to keep up.

5. Manage the chat

The chat function is important for people who find it difficult to speak or who have connectivity issues. However, some blind people use a screen reader to navigate their computer, and this reads out everything posted in the chat; you can't mute selectively. Consider limiting chat to host only and share relevant information verbally.

6. Stick to the timetable

Share timings and breaks upfront so people can plan their own needs. For meetings longer than an hour, give people a short break half way through.

7. Reduce cognitive load

Video chats can be exhausting. Remind participants they can turn off their camera or turn off self-view.

8. Provide information in advance

Send slides and documents in advance so people can prepare.

9. Give content warnings

Flag sensitive topics in advance (alcohol, racism, violence). Provide details of relevant support.

10. Create a safer space

Ask participants to use their correct screen names so everyone knows who is present.

Live transcription (subtitles) in Zoom meetings

Zoom provides free, automated transcription of meetings. It is not perfect, but is getting better all the time.

We recommend that you turn this on in all meetings to provide a basic level of accessibility. Participants can easily show or hide the captions themselves.

First [set up auto live transcription on the Zoom account](#). This is a one-off task.

Enabling live transcription in a meeting

This needs doing at the start of every meeting. It only works in the main meeting room; i.e. not in breakout rooms. If someone needs it then use the main room as one of your breakout rooms.

Instructions for the host in the meeting:

1. After opening the Zoom meeting, click on “CC Live Transcript”
2. Select Enable Auto-Transcription (participants will now need to enable captions)

Instructions for participants:

1. Select “CC Live Transcript” (you may need to select ‘More’ first)
2. Select “show subtitles”
3. Captions can also be turned off by selecting “hide subtitles” in step 2
4. To change size of subtitles, select “CC Live Transcript”, then “Subtitle Settings”, then adjust font size.

Best practices for using auto live transcription

The following is good practice for Zoom meetings but also improves transcription.

- A headset with built-in microphone will clear improve audio and caption quality.
- Listen to the room you are in; consider turning down/off anything that makes a considerable amount of background noise.
- Speak slowly, it will help the system capture the words you are saying.
- If there are loud disruptions (e.g. fire engine) pause until the noise passes.
- Auto transcription does not work in breakout rooms. Provide an option for a group to meet in the main room. But don’t leave one person by themselves!