

# Guidance for inclusive and accessible synchronous presentations using Zoom and/or Microsoft Teams

## Introduction

This DigiGuide presents a range of considerations to support presenters in developing an accessible and inclusive presentation experience for all participants in a synchronous online environment. It is advisable to familiarise yourself with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) and why these matter to everyone](#).

## Overview of Accessibility & Inclusion

We all have a legal and moral responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that documents, leaflets and electronic resources are provided in a format which is accessible for disabled people to read and use including, for example, those with a [visual impairment, hearing impairment and dyslexia](#). The Government provides [Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility](#); however, there are several considerations, tools and techniques that you can follow and adopt to ensure that you are enabling an accessible pre, post and synchronous learning experience.

## Pre-Session Considerations

Planning, presentation and post-event follow-up form the 3 P's of accessible webinars. Following these principles can improve the synchronous experience for all participants and not just those with disabilities.

## Presentation & Slide Design

As a presenter, your slide design can [make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities](#). In general, [JISCs accessible material audit checklist](#) is a good resource to have in your thoughts when designing learning content.

- Include an introductory slide which informs how you will facilitate the session, including;
  - how you expect participants to interact and respond
  - how the chat function will be used
  - availability of closed captions (CC)
  - explain your intention to share your screen and/or files
  - confirm if the session is being recorded
  - summary of accessibility measures you have taken
- [Use simple sans serif fonts](#) with adequate spacing between letters. Use at least an 18-point font size.
- Use [alternative \(ALT\) text](#) for all visual components.
- Avoid using animations, slide transitions or excessive motion in your slides.
- Use a [strong contrast between text and background](#); this makes it easier for people with low vision or colour-blindness to see content. However, avoid using black-white combinations as these can create glare and visual stress for those with dyslexia.
- Avoid using [colour as the only means of conveying information](#); people who are blind, have low vision or are colour-blind may miss out on the meaning portrayed by different colours.
- Give every slide a unique title and avoid using tables to support those using screen-readers.

When using any Microsoft Office application you can use the integrated [accessibility checker](#) to see how you can enhance the accessibility of your work, and read [NDAPs suggestions on creating accessible presentations](#).

## Participant Guidance & Instructions

It is a good idea to communicate with participants before your synchronous session presentation. Depending on the platform you choose to use, a reliable way to do this is through an email. This email could include the following elements:

- An overview of the presentation and key themes and/or aims and outcomes of the session.
- Reiterate the start time, duration, and platform.
- Include any relevant joining instructions, such as [joining link](#), [access code](#) and a link to your chosen platforms technical troubleshooting pages where possible.
- Try to include the slides you intend to use as this will allow participants that need to use assistive technology or screen readers to prepare appropriately.
- Make it clear that should participants require alternative formats or support that you will cooperate with them to facilitate their needs and that they should contact you in advance.
- Make it clear that you intend to use live transcription and closed captions in your session – helping those who may need this assistance to feel included.
- Encourage participants to check for updates in your chosen platform before the synchronous session begins.

## Check for Updates

Before joining a synchronous live session, it is worth checking for available software updates that may need to be installed before you begin. This will ensure that you have the latest features and reliability available in either [Microsoft Teams](#) or [Zoom](#) platforms.

## Consider your environment

Are you planning to facilitate your synchronous session in an environment that reduces the noise echo in the room, is a quiet environment with no movement, windows or distractions behind where you intend to sit? Consider where you plan to locate for your session to enable the best audio-visual quality possible, and if using a 'virtual' background, choose one with neutral colours and no movement/animation.

## During your Synchronous Session

Before the scheduled start time of your synchronous session it is important to check your audio device and camera. Consider making a test call in either [Microsoft Teams](#) or [Zoom](#) so that you arrive confident in your technology.

As your participants arrive ensure everybody feels welcome and encourage them to introduce themselves in a way that is comfortable to them. In addition to your introductory slide mentioned above, you may consider using this opportunity to ask participants to mute their audio when they are not speaking – this helps to [reduce background noise](#) and increases audio quality.

## Inclusive Practice & Techniques

There are several things for you to consider that can increase inclusivity and increase the experience for your participants.

- Consider the language that you use; asking “can everyone see my screen” is not sensitive to those participants who may have visual impairments.
- Be culturally aware; consider where your participants are joining your session from, or indeed their background. Do not include material or make comments which may be triggering for students.
- Turn on closed captions (CC) and [live captions](#) so that those who may be deaf or hard of hearing can follow real-time captions. Announce that you are doing this so that participants are aware.
- Share your intent to record the session before starting the recording – explain why this is important. i.e. for playback, to add closed captions (CC), for those who use assistive technologies etc.
- Encourage participants to interact via audio and chat.
- Spotlight videos; use the [spotlight video](#) option for those who are speaking.
- Reduce distractions; blur your background and mute your mic when you are not speaking (and encourage others to do so).

You can test accessibility in Microsoft Teams with [Immersive Reader](#), and if required participants can activate live captions using [Google Chrome](#) or [WebCaptioner](#).

Be aware that screen readers are unable to read slides presented in Zoom or Microsoft Teams. If you have visually impaired participants you will need to read-aloud anything of importance from a slide, not leave it for participants to read themselves. Alternatively, you may provide a Word document version, so that participants can use the ‘Read Aloud’ function.

Review the accessibility features on [Microsoft Teams](#), [PowerPoint](#) and [Zoom](#).

## Sharing & Interaction

It is important to consider your interactions within your session and prepare an interaction plan, including what and when you intend to share files or ask participants to engage in an activity. Typically, you can:

- Upload and share files; this allows participants to open the file in a separate window and use assistive technologies if required.
- Share your screen; consider if this is essential – excessive movement (i.e. movement of your mouse and navigation) may disorientate some people and be hard to follow.
- Use chat, emojis and emotional responses; encourage participants to use chat to reinforce points in addition to via microphones and use emojis, use of ‘raise hand’ and emotional responses to gauge the tone and understanding of the participants.
- Use polling tools such as [Poll Everywhere](#) to develop engaging activities ranging from simple Multiple Choice Questions to more complex forms of interaction and reporting.
- Use [breakout rooms](#); Depending on your planned activities, breakout rooms present an opportunity for participants to work collaboratively on a separate activity.

Additionally, City University of New York have developed [tips for accessible interaction](#) and the Center for Teaching and Learning at Baruch College offers a comprehensive resource on [teaching with Zoom](#).

## Post-Session Actions

It is important to send a summary email to your registered participants (including those who did not attend). Not only is this an opportunity to thank your participants for their involvement and engagement, but it also provides a chance to:

- Summarise the key points covered and/or raised by participants during your session.
- Link to any asynchronous activities that you would like participants to engage with and include signposts and links to any further resources participants would value.
- Provide a copy of the session presentation/slides and documents in an [accessible format](#).
- Upload a recording of the session in an accessible location, complete with [subtitles, closed captions \(CC\) and accompanying transcript](#).

## Assistive Technology for Participant Support

University of Liverpool has a range of [accessibility software](#) available for staff and students to download, with [accessibility hardware](#) available upon request. Software to be aware of includes:

- [ClaroRead](#) assists with reading and speaks back text via your computer. It includes many easy ways to make text clearer and more visible, as well as text checking tools to aid in creating accurate documents.
- [Jaws](#) is a screen reading software that allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen either with a text-to-speech output or by an easily refreshed Braille display.
- [ZoomText](#) is a screen magnification application tailored for low-vision users that enlarges and enhances everything on the computer screen, making it easier to see and use.
- [ColorVeil](#) adds a customisable colour and opacity filter over your desktop screen which can help people with Dyslexia and Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome and reduce eye strain.
- With [Dyslexie Font](#) every letter is uniquely shaped, eliminating the common reading errors of dyslexia.

## Considerations for a Hyflex Approach

If adopting a [hyflex approach](#) with participants synchronously online and in-person it is crucial to consider all of the points raised above, particularly as you will need to make provisions for participants in both an online and physical space. This can be a challenging experience for both yourself and the participants, so pre-planning and testing is an important component to ensure your hyflex approach runs smoothly and is accessible for all. This [checklist for a successful hyflex approach](#) can guide you in these considerations.

## Additional Resources

- [A Comparison of Web Conference Tools for Active Online Teaching](#)
- [Accessibility overview of Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Assistive Technology at University of Liverpool](#)
- [Creating accessible learning materials](#)
- [Consider the range of people accessing your material](#)
- [Communication without barriers with Zoom](#)
- [Creating accessible documents and using accessibility IT features for Disabled people](#)
- [Support for disabled students at University of Liverpool](#)
- [Making polling tools a safe environment](#)
- [Video captioning and accessibility regulations](#)



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