Accessibility Quick Guide

Online Meetings and Events

Coordinated Accessibility Strategy
January 2026

Carleton University

How to Use this Quick Guide

Use this Quick Guide alongside the Accessible Meeting and Event Guide when planning accessible online meetings and events. Consult the Accessible Meeting and Event Guide for more detailed information.

Planning, Scheduling & Registration

1. Email invitations should include:

    - Clear & brief subject line.

    - Outline of accessible accommodation.

    - Inclusive language.

    - Descriptive hyperlinks.

        o For example, hyperlink the phrase "more details on our upcoming event."

2. Designate an Access Coordinator on your team for the event or meeting. This is particularly useful for larger online meetings. The Access Coordinator may:

    - Receive, confirm, and track all access requests from participants.

    - Manage and implement accommodations.

    - Request interpreters and captioners one month in advance.

    - Communicate accommodation arrangements with participants and staff.

    - Identify assistants who will be available to help with access-related tasks.

    - Coordinate all materials for accessible distribution several days in advance.

    - Develop and implement access training for event staff and volunteers.

3. Keep the duration manageable with 5–10-minute breaks between activities.

4. Share the schedule with participants at least 1 week in advance.

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Accommodations and Access Requests

1. Ask attendees to advise of any accessibility requirements when registering so that these adjustments are managed as part of the event.

    - Carleton suggests using this language to invite access requests: "Should you require accessibility or dietary accommodations, please contact [Event Access Coordinator] by [RSVP date]."

2. If booking interpreters or live captioning (CART), you will need to book at least 3 weeks ahead of the meeting/event.

3. It is good practice to provide accessible versions of slides or documents before the meeting. If this is not possible, then send after the event/meeting.

Platform & Technology

1. Choose a platform with built-in accessibility features and ensure a team member is familiar with those features. Consider multiple access options, for example, can someone call in by phone?

2. Enable live captioning when possible and test screen reader compatibility, ensure it will not conflict with chat or audio.

3. Check font visibility in shared slides.

4. Microsoft Teams and Zoom both have many built-in accessibility features.

    - [Access the Accessibility Tips for Zoom](#).

    - [Access the Accessibility tips for inclusive MS Teams meetings and live events](#) and [Best practices for setting up and running a Teams meeting or live event for the Deaf and hard of hearing.](#)

5. In a live event, mute all participants to avoid background noise that can make captioning and sign language interpretation difficult.

6. Inform everyone that only one person should speak at a time and that all others are muted.

7. Speakers are recommended to use a headset/earbuds and microphone to ensure clear audio and increase accuracy of captions.

8. Have a tech support person (e.g., Production Coordinator) to handle issues.

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Accessibility in Materials

1. Ensure that materials being presented or distributed are formatted for accessibility. Use built-in accessibility checkers (available in MS Word and PowerPoint) and be sure to:

   - Use sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri).

   - Use large text.

   - Use colour contrast that supports individuals with low vision.

   - Ensure images have alt text, or are marked as decorative.

   - Place captions below images. Avoid placing text over images.

   - Avoid charts, tables, or drop-down menus that can be inaccessible for assistive technology.

   - Offer materials in multiple formats (digital, large print, accessible PDFs).

Communication Practices

1. Keep in mind the following while presenting:

   - Speak clearly, at a steady pace, and identify yourself when speaking.

   - Use plain language; avoid jargon or unexplained acronyms.

   - Wear colours that contrast with skin tone; otherwise, the lighting can 'wash out' your face and make reading lips difficult.

   - Present visuals with descriptions (read key points on slides, explain charts).

   - Share instructions both verbally and in chat.

   - Use the zoom function to increase font size when screen sharing presentations.

   - Read aloud audience questions from the chat before answering.

   - Announce the conclusion of the event.

2. Identity-first language places disability first (e.g., "autistic person," or "Deaf community"). Individuals and communities may have preferences of either person-first or identity-first.

   - Which should you use?
     - Person-first is more commonly used, is often recommended by organizations, and is more common in formal writing.
     - Unless you know that the organization and individual(s) you are working with prefer identity-first, it is recommended that you use person-first language.

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Participant Engagement

1. Set ground rules (e.g., mute when not speaking, use raise-hand/chat).

2. Provide multiple ways to participate (e.g., chat, polls, breakout rooms).

3. Encourage camera-off option for those who prefer, but ask for cameras on in smaller meetings or small breakout groups, if comfortable.

Emergency & Back-up

Share contact info for tech/emergency support and provide a phone-in option for those unable to connect by video. Have a backup plan (e.g., alternate link, dial-in number).