



# Accessible Meetings Guide

How to host inclusive sessions for everyone

Inclusion starts with how we communicate.



# Why Accessible Meetings Matter



Meetings are the heartbeat of collaboration—where ideas are shared, decisions are made, and teams align on what matters most.

When meetings aren't accessible, we inadvertently exclude team members from critical conversations and decision-making processes. Colleagues with hearing, vision, or cognitive disabilities may struggle to participate fully.

**The good news?** Small, thoughtful adjustments can make a massive difference in creating an inclusive environment where every voice can be heard.

# The 3 Phases of Meeting Inclusion

Creating accessible meetings requires attention at every stage. Follow this framework to ensure no one gets left behind.



## Before

Prepare participants for success by sharing materials 24 hours in advance

- Send agenda and slides early
- Give screen reader users time to review
- Set clear expectations



## During

Create real-time accessibility through thoughtful facilitation

- Describe visuals aloud
- Enable live captions
- Speak clearly and pace yourself



## After

Ensure everyone can review and recall key information

- Send meeting recap promptly
- Share recording and transcript
- Highlight action items clearly

# Before the Meeting: Set Everyone Up for Success

Preparation is the foundation of accessibility. When you share materials in advance, you give all participants the opportunity to engage meaningfully.

## Share the Agenda Early

Distribute the meeting agenda and any presentation slides at least 24 hours before the session begins.

## Support Screen Reader Users

Early access allows colleagues using assistive technology to review materials at their own pace and prepare questions.

## Build Anticipation

Pre-meeting materials help everyone—not just those with disabilities—come prepared and engaged.

# During the Meeting: Create Real-Time Accessibility

Active facilitation makes the difference between an accessible meeting and one that excludes participants. Your role as host is crucial.



## Describe Visuals Aloud

Never assume everyone can see what's on screen. Say "This chart shows a 25% increase in sales" rather than "As you can see here..."



## Always Enable Live Captions

Turn on live captioning for every meeting—it helps deaf and hard-of-hearing colleagues, plus anyone in noisy environments.



## Speak Clearly and Deliberately

Pace your speech, enunciate clearly, and avoid filler words. This improves caption accuracy and comprehension for everyone.



## Schedule Regular Breaks

Plan a 5-minute break for any meeting exceeding one hour. Cognitive fatigue affects everyone, especially those using assistive technology.

# Host Checklist: Technical Setup

Before you start any meeting, run through this quick technical checklist to ensure optimal accessibility for all participants.

1

## Live Captioning Enabled?

Turn on automatic captions in your video platform settings. This is non-negotiable for accessible meetings.

2

## Face Well-Lit for Lip Readers?

Position yourself facing a light source. Your face should be clearly visible to support colleagues who read lips.

3

## Using a Quality Headset?

Invest in a good headset with a microphone. Clear audio is essential for both human participants and caption accuracy.

4

## Stable Internet Connection?

Test your connection before important meetings. Choppy audio and video make accessibility features less effective.

# Host Checklist: Meeting Etiquette

Technical setup is only half the equation. How you facilitate the conversation determines whether everyone can truly participate.



## **One Speaker at a Time**

Crosstalk confuses live captions and makes conversations impossible to follow. Politely manage turn-taking and discourage interruptions.



## **Always Identify Yourself**

Begin each comment with "This is [Name] speaking..." This helps participants who can't see the video or use screen readers navigate who's talking.



## **Schedule Regular Breaks**

Plan a 5-minute break for any meeting exceeding one hour. Cognitive fatigue affects everyone, especially those using assistive technology.



## **Pause for Questions**

Build in dedicated time for questions. Don't rush—processing information takes longer when using accessibility tools.



## **Summarize Key Points**

Regularly recap decisions and action items verbally. This reinforces understanding and creates natural breaks in the conversation.

# The Power of Inclusive Design

"When we design meetings for the margins, **everyone benefits.**"

Accessible meetings aren't just about compliance—they're about unlocking the full potential of your team. Captions help people in noisy environments. Agendas keep everyone focused. Clear speaking improves understanding across the board.

**Start today.** Pick one practice from this guide and implement it in your next meeting. Small changes create ripple effects that transform your team's culture of inclusion.