

As the host, it's important to make your Zoom meeting inclusive and accessible for individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. To achieve this, there are specific steps you need to take before and during the meeting.

Keep in mind that the Zoom format is different from in-person interpreting, so it requires additional considerations and configurations to ensure communication access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. By following these steps, you can create an inclusive and accessible environment in your Zoom meetings.

Note: For accessibility purposes, Zoom is the preferred platform unless the meeting is small with 3-6 people.

Zoom Meetings:

- **Enable Video Layout:** In Zoom Meetings, choose the "Gallery View" layout to see both the participants and the sign language interpreter simultaneously. This allows for effective communication and inclusion.
- **Pin the Interpreter:** Pin the video feed of the sign language interpreter by right-clicking on their video and selecting "Pin Video." This keeps the interpreter's video prominent and prevents it from being swapped with other participants.
- **Speaker and Interpreter Switch:** To focus on the speaker, use the "Speaker View" layout. When the interpreter is signing, switch to "Gallery View" to see both the speaker and interpreter simultaneously. Use the "Switch to Active Speaker" option to easily switch between views.
- **Communication Etiquette:** To ensure smooth communication, allow time for the interpreter to interpret and avoid speaking over them or interrupting.

Zoom Webinars:

- **Spotlight the Interpreter:** In Zoom Webinars, use the "Spotlight Video" feature to keep the interpreter's video as the main focus for all participants. This ensures that the interpreter's signing is visible to everyone throughout the webinar.
- **Share the Interpreter's Video:** When screen sharing during the webinar, make sure to share the interpreter's video feed alongside the content being presented. This allows participants to see both the content and the interpreter simultaneously.
- **Communicate with the Interpreter:** Use the "Q&A" or "Chat" feature to ask questions or communicate with the sign language interpreter during the webinar. They can provide real-time interpretations or answer any queries you may have.

Remember, effective communication is essential when using Zoom with a sign language interpreter. By following these general tips, you can ensure an inclusive and accessible experience for all participants in both Zoom Meetings and Zoom Webinars. For more detailed instructions, please see Steps 1-3 below.

Please note that these tips serve as general guidance. It's always recommended to communicate and coordinate with your specific interpreter to address any unique requirements or preferences they may have during Zoom sessions.

Step 1. Pre-Meeting Consultation

- **Before the meeting, meet with the interpreter(s) to discuss technical settings and procedures that will help ensure a successful meeting.** This consultation allows you to talk about the meeting format, such as using breakout rooms, and any recommendations the interpreter may have.
- **To support the interpreter's preparation, share meeting materials in advance.** They may not be familiar with the topic or the jargon used in the meeting. Providing them with materials like a presentation outline or PowerPoint slides can help them better prepare.
- **Allow the interpreters and Deaf participants into the meeting a few minutes early to test their Zoom setup.** This gives them time to make sure the appropriate

Zoom settings are in place. Use this time to also ensure that your settings are properly configured.

Step 2. Before the Meeting

To ensure a positive experience for those relying on ASL interpretation through Zoom, there are several steps you should take.

- **Allocate 10-15 minutes before** the meeting to make sure all accommodations are set up.
- **Designate your interpreters and ASL users as co-hosts.** This allows them to easily find each other and use the multi-pin feature.
- **Enable chat features for all participants** (bit.ly/3OdvRwu) so that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals can communicate with interpreters and hosts if needed. At the very least, enable private chat with the host.
- **Upon entry, mute all participants** to minimize background noise (bit.ly/3XOwsYO).

Closed Captions

If requested, **activate the Closed Captions feature** (bit.ly/3pDrNfK). Accommodation requests will determine the use of CART services for real-time captioning. Familiarize yourself with assigning a participant to type closed captions (bit.ly/3JYK3a5) in case the need arises.

If you are using a third-party CART service for captioning:

- the host must ensure that the captions are enabled prior to the event.
- Obtain the API token code from the host and provide it to the captioner for displaying the captions.

Note: To enable third-party captions: Go to settings, scroll down to "closed captioning, and toggle it on.

To obtain the API token code in Zoom, follow these steps. First, locate and select the "Closed Caption" button. Next, look for the option that says "Copy the API token" and select it. After copying the API token, go to the chat box in Zoom. Make sure you select the direct chat with the captioner. Paste the API token code into the chat box message and send it. The captioner will receive the API token code and use it to set up the captions for the meeting.

For additional instructions on using live captions in zoom, you can visit <https://2020captioning.com/live-captioning-in-zoom>.

Step 3. During the Meeting

During the meeting, it's important to follow these best practices to ensure effective communication with ASL interpreters and Deaf participants:

1. **Admit interpreters and Deaf participants into the meeting early:** This allows them to connect with each other, pin videos, adjust lighting, and make necessary preparations.
2. **Turn off unnecessary webcams:** It is recommended to have only the main speaker and interpreter with their video turned on. This helps the Deaf person focus on the interpreter and allows others to concentrate on the speaker's message. Turning off other participants' videos can also improve bandwidth issues. Alternatively, encourage the use of reactions, feedback buttons, or polls, or schedule regular video check-in breaks.
3. **Spotlight the ASL interpreter if recording the meeting:** This ensures that the interpreter remains visible in the recording. If multiple people are spotlighted, use the gallery view to see all spotlighted participants. If using a team of interpreters, make them co-hosts or ask them to manage spotlighting.
4. **Spotlight the speaker and interpreter when a screen is shared:** Zoom minimizes videos into small boxes in the top right corner of the screen, making it difficult for interpreters and Deaf individuals to understand the meeting. Spotlighting the speaker and interpreter ensures they remain visible throughout the screen sharing.
5. **Allow time for orientation before presentations:** Give everyone time to adjust their viewing settings before starting the presentation, especially when transitioning from different visual elements.

6. **Encourage participants to state their name before commenting:** Asking participants to introduce themselves before speaking helps identify who is speaking, ensuring clarity in the communication.
7. **Slow down the meeting pace:** Interpreters need time to process English into ASL, so brief pauses in the meeting allow them to catch up with the speaker. It also gives Deaf participants more time to review slides and seek clarifications from the interpreter. Also, please follow turn taking rules when speaking. It is difficult to convey accurate information when people are speaking over each other.

Schedule breaks in your meeting: Interpreting and focusing on the interpreter on a screen can be tiring. Provide rest breaks for interpreters and attendees by scheduling regular breaks throughout the meeting.

Provide instructions for asking questions or making comments: Participants can use non-verbal feedback, such as raising their hand and unmuting when called upon. Additionally, they can post questions in the chat feature. It's recommended to use both methods, and always repeat questions from the chat to improve accessibility for those who cannot access the chat feature.

By planning and configuring your Zoom meetings thoughtfully, you can effectively support the needs of ASL interpreters and Deaf participants.

Notes about breakout rooms:

- **Pin videos in breakout rooms:** When using breakout rooms, ensure all videos are pinned upon entering and returning to the larger meeting room.
- **Assign interpreters to breakout rooms:** Each deaf or hard-of-hearing participant should have at least one interpreter assigned to the same breakout room.
- **Additional participants in breakout rooms:** If breakout rooms involve participant interactions, assign an extra participant to the room with the deaf or hard-of-hearing participant. Interpreters do not participate as individuals in discussions or interactions.
- **Reinstating co-host status:** Returning to the main meeting room after breakout sessions may require reinstating co-host status.

Working with participants who are DeafBlind (DB), Blind or Visually Impaired (VI)

Apply the tips above, in addition, consider the following:

1. **Describe visual content:** Remember to provide descriptions of any images or visual content that is displayed during the meeting. Describing visuals helps individuals with vision or cognitive disabilities, as well as those who may have called in due to internet issues.
2. **Send resource links via email:** While it's okay to use the Chat feature for sharing links, keep in mind that some participants using assistive technology may have difficulty copying or activating the links. To ensure accessibility, it's recommended to send resource links via email either before or after the session.
3. **Don't require cameras to be on:** Please avoid mandating that everyone keeps their cameras on. Some participants may have privacy concerns or may not have access to a camera. Respect their preferences and provide alternatives for participation.
4. **Limit use of Zoom polling feature:** The Zoom polling tool may present significant barriers for both presenters and participants with certain disabilities. Consider alternative ways to gather input or feedback from participants that are more inclusive.
5. **Encourage participants to state their name:** Request that all participants introduce themselves before commenting by stating their name. This helps identify who is speaking, making it easier for everyone to follow along. Additionally, presenters should provide a visual description of themselves, including characteristics such as their appearance or clothing.

By applying these additional considerations, you can enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of your meetings for participants who are DeafBlind, Blind, or Visually Impaired.

Resources:

Carleton University Teaching and Learning Services. (2022, January 7). Three tips for integrating ASL interpreters into your Zoom meetings. [Blog post]. Retrieved from bit.ly/3xHFQ61

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Yale University. (n.d.). Zoom: Usability & Web Accessibility. Retrieved from bit.ly/3i4tChz

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Rochester Institute of Technology. (n.d.). Zoom Accessibility Guide. Retrieved from bit.ly/3BbOOSn