

How to Improve Hearing Access During Virtual Meetings

- Always state names and make clear introductions at the beginning of a meeting. Names are less likely to appear correctly via transcriptions. Typing them in the chat at the beginning of a meeting is very helpful.
- If there is a problem with communication, stop the meeting immediately and repair the communication problem/barrier before proceeding.
- Provide transcripts and/or notes promptly to the participant after the meeting. Do not expect the participant who is attending very visually to also write down notes.
- Make sure that whoever is the speaker at any given time, ensures their face and upper body is clearly visible so that people may benefit from speech reading, facial cues, body language, and gestures.
- Speakers should avoid covering their mouths.
- Make sure only one person speaks at a time.
- Use the hand raising option so that turn taking and change of speakers is clear, organized, and apparent.
- The leader or facilitator of the meeting should occasionally provide recaps and summaries.
- Speak at normal pace and volume.
- Establish a feedback process with participants to ensure accommodations are adequate and barriers are addressed.
- Reduce background noise on all ends. Be sure to ask those that are contributing background noise to mute their mics when they are not speaking.
- Keep the meeting on topic and limit the length of a meeting. Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants are working double-time to visually attend to information and can experience “listening fatigue”.
- Provide all handouts prior to the meeting. Often the ASL-English interpreter and the main presenter/speaker are pinned, for speech reading purposes. It is difficult to also display a PowerPoint or handout. Advance handouts also assist people in following topic changes.
- Send meeting links and relative prep materials to ASL-English interpreters or transcriptionists, well in advance of the meeting.
- Choose a video platform that has built in captioning/transcription services and familiarize yourself with how to use it.