



Accessibility Tips for Conference Presenters and Workshop Facilitators

(Created by Angela Frederick for SWS, 12/16)

Introduction

We all benefit from more accessible spaces. There are simple, low-cost or free changes even we as presenters can make that will enable people with disabilities to participate fully in the important conversations we have at conferences. This tip sheet includes standard suggestions for making presentations and workshops more accessible. We hope it serves as a beginning list of actions we can be mindful of as we develop our workshops and presentations for the SWS winter meeting and beyond.

Assume Diversity

- We often approach accessibility with the attitude that we will know when accommodations are necessary and make changes only when required. In reality, this often puts people with disabilities in difficult positions of having to decide whether to disclose hidden disabilities, of being singled out, or of being excluded from the conversation. The following actions should be a standard part of what we do. We should assume people with disabilities are part of our audience, because most likely they are!

Handouts

- It is a good idea to make available several print copies of the script of your presentation. Some of these handouts should be in large print (18 point font). You may include a disclaimer asking participants to refrain from distributing your presentation without your permission. Providing these



print copies will benefit Deaf and hard of hearing audience members and sign language interpreters.

- If you distribute any handouts as part of your presentation or workshop, include copies in large print. In addition, have an electronic copy available on a jump drive for participants with print disabilities who use screen-reading software.
- Distribute both regular print and large print handouts together so people can select which they want. It is fine to announce you have a jump drive available if anyone needs it.

PowerPoints

- Use a high-contrast color scheme (black and white).
- Use large fonts (44 point for titles, 36 point for information).
- Keep information displayed on each slide to a minimum.
- Use standard slide transitions and avoid decorative fillers.
- All videos shown should be captioned. Free captioning software is available online.

Speaking:

- When a microphone is available, use it. Do not ask if everyone can hear you without a microphone. Doing so often excludes hard of hearing participants.
- If audience members do not have access to a microphone, repeat their questions into your mic.
- Face your audience at all times when speaking.
- Speak at a moderate pace.
- Try to be specific as you point to items on your PPT. Rather than saying, "This," refer to "this graph."
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- Briefly describe the pertinent aspects of what you are displaying on the screen. This doesn't require great detail, only to identify information relevant to the point you are making.
- Do not ask your audience to read information on your slides silently. If it's central to your presentation, read it aloud.
- If sign language interpreters are present, speak at a moderate pace. Do not slow down or pause for them to finish. Direct your attention to the participant, not to the interpreter.

Small Group Activities

- Be mindful of the assumptions you make when developing group activities.
- When you ask people to move around a crowded room, you might be othering participants for whom this is difficult.
- Be sure that all information can be received through multiple senses. Avoid activities that limit sensory input, i.e. a game in silence.
- Be flexible. If you realize that every participant will not be able to participate in your planned activity, the activity should be replaced with another.