

Accessibility requests



Accessibility Basics Tutorial Series

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How to invite requests

Prominently

Make sure that the language inviting requests isn't buried at the bottom of a page or otherwise hard to find.

Early

Be realistic about how long it will take to fulfill a request, and communicate the timeline upfront. Try to maintain consistency from event to event, and note if there is a change, as people will develop expectations. Consider:

- Whether you need to book an outside service.
- Whether you need to coordinate with an outside partner.
- Whether you need to produce additional materials.

Often

It's important to provide more than one opportunity to make a request.

- People may not be able to anticipate all their needs in advance, especially if the setting or activity is unfamiliar.
- Needs can change.
- People may become more comfortable disclosing a need once they gain additional familiarity with you (assuming that familiarity has inspired trust).

Enthusiastically

The language used to invite requests should help set an inclusive tone and communicate that accessibility requests are actively welcomed because disabled people's presence and participation is genuinely valued.

Language that sounds like it's inspired only by some kind of compliance measure, on the other hand, can sow doubts in the audience and be a deterrent.

By providing a specific point of contact

Specifying a particular person helps build confidence that you will be responsive and address requests seriously.

ASL Interpretation

How many interpreters?

For an event longer than 60-90 minutes, it's recommended to work with a team of at least two interpreters. This lets the interpreters alternate in shorter intervals to preserve the quality of the interpretation. It also allows interpreters to jump in to support each other and maintain access to interpretation in the event of any technical or other issues.

Information to provide interpreters in advance

Providing information in advance can improve the quality of the interpretation and make the interpreter's very taxing job a little easier. Not all interpreters will review these sorts of materials in advance, but it is always worth offering to provide them.

- The name of the Deaf client(s).
- The names of the speakers at the event.
- Any script or notes that you'll be speaking from during the event.

- Any slides, materials or handouts.
- Glossaries of any specialized vocabulary or terminology that will be used.

In person setup

- Ensure that the interpreter is well-lit, even if the rest of the lights will be dimmed at certain points. Ensure the interpreter is not backlit.
- Ensure that the Deaf participant is seated somewhere that provides a clear line of sight to the interpreter at all times.
- When possible, position the interpreter close to the speakers so that the participant may be able to see some of the speaker's expressions and gestures in addition to watching the interpreter. Keep in mind, however, that they will mainly have to focus on the interpreter and nuances conveyed by the speaker's expressions and gestures may be missed.

Zoom setup

- Enable the multi-pin feature for each participant needing interpretation. Go to Participants>More>Allow to multi-pin.
- Make the interpreter co-host so they can help the participant with re-pinning their video feed if they have any issues.

- Make sure to assign the interpreter to the same breakout room as the participant.
- Do not continue talking while the interpreter is having a connection issue. Only resume once the issue is resolved and the interpretation is back online.

Zoom recording setup

These instructions ensure that the recording will include a video feed of the interpreter that is large enough to see their signing clearly.

- Record the Zoom meeting to your computer, not on the cloud.
- Click the little arrow by the video button in the bottom left, go to “video settings,” and check “hide non-video participants.”
- Spotlight the presenter and the ASL interpreter.
- If the event has more than one interpreter, each interpreter should turn their spotlight off during their break and turn it back on when they begin signing again. The same goes if there is more than one presenter.
- If a presenter is screen sharing, spotlight at most two people at once. If no one is screen sharing, spotlighting up to three or four people at once is okay.

- Turn off video for all other participants. (Except for when a Deaf participant needs to communicate with their interpreter.)

Interpretation etiquette

As with all interpreters, an ASL interpreter is there to enable the participant's communication.

- Look at the participant, not the interpreter.
- Direct questions to the participant in second person. Don't direct questions about the participant to the interpreter in third person.
- Don't try to involve the interpreter as a party in the conversation by, for instance, asking for their opinion or experiences with respect to the topic under discussion.
- Speak at your normal pace unless the interpreter specifically requests otherwise.
- When pausing for questions, confirm that the interpreter has finished interpreting before moving on to ensure that the participant has time to ask a question.
- Expect that some back-and-forth between the interpreter and the participant may be necessary to handle the difficulties and nuances involved in translation.

Alternative Format Materials

Alternative file formats

Alternative file formats are most commonly requested by assistive technology users. Some file formats may not be readable with the software they use.

PDFs are the most likely source of issues. If a PDF hasn't been created with assistive technology use in mind, it will probably be somewhere between partially and totally inaccessible. But it's possible that another file format may cause problems for an individual and prompt an alternative format request.

- Usually a rich text file will be a good alternative. Rich text files use the extension .rtf and you can create and edit them in Microsoft Word. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification about what formats will or won't work if necessary.
- The alternative file must contain identical content to the original. This means it must include all the text and all the meaningful or informative images or graphics.
- The alternative file need not necessarily reproduce the identical formatting of the original. For example, as an alternative format for

screen readers, a linear outline of text and images (with alt text) may work well.

Large print materials

Large print materials are most commonly requested by people with low vision. As the name suggests, large print materials have large (at least 18-20 pt) text, but there are a number of other formatting points involved. See the [American Council of the Blind guidelines](#) for details.

Cold Storage

When in person, people may need to safely store medication, food or drink. Sometimes this may need to be stored somewhere refrigerated.

There is a difference between needing access at a specific time that is known in advance, and needing access if an emergency arises at any point. It's important to be clear on which situation applies. For example, if there's a refrigerator in a locked room and the person with the key will be in and out of the office, it might not work to store medication needed on an emergency basis in that refrigerator.

There are a wide range of reasons why someone may need to have something specific on hand. The specific thing required may seem odd to

you. Avoid asking for reasons or explanations, which can feel intrusive and like you're challenging the need.

Quiet Space

People with sensory processing disorders may need a low-stimulation space to retreat to. This space can also be used for privacy in other situations, like daily prayers or breastfeeding.

To be most effective, a space like this should be:

- Insulated from external noises as much as possible.
- Lit with soft task lights, avoiding fluorescent lights (which generate a noise that many individuals with sensory processing disorders are sensitive to).
- Without windows or with effective window covers.
- Bonus features:
 - Soft objects to sit on or hold, like a bean bag or pillows.
 - Fidget toys or other manipulable items.
 - Headphones or earplugs.