

Making Zoom Accessible for People Who Are Deafblind

deafscotland is the user led, membership organisation for the deaf sector in Scotland. For more information, [visit the deafscotland website by clicking here](#).

deafscotland use the term the 'four pillars of deafness' to describe Deaf, Deafblind, Deafened and Hard of Hearing as people with different levels of deafness have different barriers to overcome and have different language and communication support needs.

There are several steps to consider and available features that may make Zoom meetings more accessible for those who are Deafblind¹.

1. Communication Support

Ensure any communication support or assistive technology requirements have been addressed.

2. Share Meeting Materials Ahead of Meeting

Share meeting materials/presentations in advance to allow participants to review before the meeting. This is especially important for those who may experience barriers to communication. Those attending the meeting to provide communication support would also benefit from receiving materials in advance to allow them to prepare for the meeting.

3. Be Respectful of other Participants

As with face to face meetings, be mindful that only one person should speak at a time. This will allow participants and those providing communication support to focus on the active speaker. Make sure facial expressions and lip patterns can also be viewed clearly.

¹ People who identify as being Deafblind are those who have sight and hearing loss

4. Screen Readers

Zoom supports common screen readers such as NVDA, JAWS, VoiceOver, and Android Talkback. Additionally, visual interfaces are designed with adequate colour contrast, size, and use of colour to ensure clarity for users with various vision needs.

Content shared through Zoom's 'Share Screen' function is shown to meeting participants as a live stream and is therefore not readable by screen readers. In order to make the contents of the screen share accessible to those who use screen readers, it is recommended that the presenter share the relevant files/information in advance to ensure that the document's full content is preserved and made accessible to screen reader users.

5. Remote Control

Zoom's remote control feature allows participants to control the screen sharer's screen reader. The host computer must first enable "Share Computer Sound" to stream the screen reader speech output to the participant computer. Within the 'Share Screen' window, at the bottom left corner click 'Share Computer Sound'. Once the participant has gained remote control, the common screen reader keystrokes will be registered on the host computer.

6. Zoom support for Larger Font Settings

The Zoom application on Mac and Windows only supports the display scaling options provided by your computer.

If using a Smartphone or tablet you can enlarge the screen by either double tapping or pinching the screen.

7. Closed Captions

The Zoom desktop application also allows participants to adjust the font size of the Closed Captions. This can be found on the Zoom application home page within Settings – Accessibility. The Closed Captions function allows the host, participant or Electronic Notetaker assigned by the host, to provide closed captions during a meeting. When enabled, these can be typed directly on to the Zoom platform or can be provided via a third party closed captioning source. Participants are alerted that closed captions are available and can choose whether they wish to 'view/hide subtitles'.

8. 'High-Contrast' and 'Dark Mode' Settings

The Zoom application supports High Contrast settings on Windows, iOS, or Android devices. The Zoom application for Mac supports Dark Mode.

9. Repeat Questions/Provide Clarification

Be aware that in larger meetings not all participants are visible on screen at the same time. It may not be easy for participants to identify who is asking a question. Participants can also choose to ask questions via the 'Chat' facility. If facilitating a meeting by stating the name of who asked the question and by repeating the question this can provide clarification for others.

10. 'Chat'

The Chat function can be used by the host and participants to communicate separately within the meeting. Messages can be sent privately or publicly using the Chat facility to the host or to other participants to ask questions, raise comments or seek clarification. Files can also be shared/uploaded within the Chat facility.

11. Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms can be set up and introduced to facilitate smaller group discussion. The host can assign participants into these groups with the addition of communication support if required.

We welcome your feedback

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased remote online working. As technology develops, our factsheets will be updated to ensure accessible and secure use of Zoom. To ensure best practice and best use of Zoom we invite users to share their experiences both positive and negative.

Contact us at admin@deafscotland.org with any further information so that we can keep our findings current.