

Making Zoom Accessible for People Who Are Hard of Hearing

deafscotland is the user led, membership organisation for the deaf sector in Scotland. For more information, visit the deafscotland website by clicking here: <https://deafscotland.org/>

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 who 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 Hard of Hearing¹.

1. Communication Support

Ensure any communication support 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 Hard of Hearing is the term used to describe those with mild to moderate hearing loss who may have lost their hearing gradually over time.

4. Electronic Notetaker

An Electronic Notetaker can attend the meeting and type a record of what is said in real time allowing participants to follow the conversation. By using the 'Share Screen' function, the Electronic Notetaker can share their notetaking screen and display the electronic notes taken during the meeting for participants to view. Only one participant can share their screen at a time on Zoom.

5. Closed Captions

Adding closed captions to a Zoom meeting can make the meeting more accessible to attendees, especially those who are deafened or hard of hearing. The use of closed captions also assists with comprehension for those for whom English is not their first language.

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'. The font size of the subtitles can also be adjusted to individual preference. Participants can also choose to 'view full transcript' where a pop up box will appear which contains the full transcript.

Closed captions can also provide a more flexible user experience and can be used in environments where ambient noise may be an issue.

6. Repeat Questions/Provide Clarification

Be mindful that in larger meetings all participants are not 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.

7. 'Raise Hand'

As well as manually raising your hand to visually attract attention during a meeting, participants can be made aware of the Raise Hand function which can be used to alert the Host if they wish to ask a question or comment. This can be found within 'Participants' at the bottom of the screen.

8. '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.

9. Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms can be set up within the meeting to facilitate smaller group discussion if needed. 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 that we can include to keep our findings current.