Accessible Presentations:
What Every Presenter Should Know

These guidelines will help you create a more equitable experience for all attendees and should be considered the starting point for creating inclusive, engaging conference presentations.

Preparing Handouts and Materials

Microsoft PowerPoint

- Select a template that provides good contrast—white or light-colored text on a dark background or black or dark-colored text on a light background.
- Font size on the slide should be 28-point or greater.
- Choose a sans serif font.
- Use appropriate slide layouts (rather than selecting "blank slide" and adding text boxes).
- Make sure all of the text in your slides is visible in the "outline view."
- Provide alt text for images and charts.

Handouts

- Create your handouts in MS Word (.docx) or using Rich Text Format (.rtf) rather than simply creating handouts from your PowerPoint slides. Handouts created using the "save as handout" feature are not accessible to screen reader users and often the text is too small for sighted participants as well. If you do use the PowerPoint handouts feature, you will also need to export your slide content "outline only" in order to have an accessible version.
- Use a sans serif font and print at 12 point or larger.
- Use heading structure properly.
- Provide alt text or text descriptions for graphic elements such as images, charts, or graphs.
- Have large print and digital versions available along with an easy way to give audience members access to the digital versions.
- If possible, provide information in advance on how to download handouts so participants can bring them along in their preferred format or on their preferred device.
- If you save the document to PDF format, make sure to do so properly so that accessibility is maintained.

Videos

- If you are showing a video, make sure it is captioned and that you know how to turn on the captions in the application you will be using.
- Remember that the automatic captions provided in YouTube videos are rarely accurate and do not provide equal access.

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During Your Presentation

Setting the Stage

Spend a few minutes at the beginning of the session making sure that communication access is effective for everyone. Check that sight lines are good for anyone using CART or sign language interpreters. Ensure that you and/or the interpreters can be heard.

Videos

Use only videos that are captioned. If there are portions of the video that are visual only, make sure you are prepared to describe that content.

Amplification

Amplifications helps participants attend better and avoid fatigue. In some instances, the amplification system may be connected to an FM loop system and people with hearing aids may rely on sound coming through that system. If there is a microphone available, make sure to use it. Avoid asking the audience if you need to use it or not. This puts those who are hard of hearing in an awkward situation as the majority may say that it is not needed. Make sure that sound coming through the computer or speakers is also routed though the sound system by placing the mic near the speakers. If someone in the audience provides you with a personal assistive listening device (ALD), make sure to us it with care. Be careful not to bump it or take it on and off while the mic is turned on. If you leave the room during a break, turn the mic/transmitter off.

Questions from the Audience

Summarize audience questions and comments using the microphone. When audience members have long questions or comments, encourage them to use the microphone. People often say they don't need the mic. Be prepared to remind them that they need to use it for access purposes.

PowerPoint (or Multimedia) Presentations

Give participants time to view content on a slide before you begin speaking about it. Make sure that all of the content is accessible to attendees who are not able to see the slides. Explain the content and describe images, charts and graphs. Slides should augment your talk, not be a substitute for it. Don't assume that everyone in your audience can see or read your slides.

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Interpreter and Speech-to-Text Providers

If sign language interpreters, oral interpreters or speech-to-text services are provided, these access service providers should have access to handouts and PowerPoint presentations prior to the presentation. This will allow them to review and be better prepared to provide access to deaf and hard of hearing participants. If you are unable to provide this to them prior to your arrival for your presentation, make sure to consult with them briefly before the session begins and provide any materials that you do have available.

Resources

Explore Access – Creating Accessible Documents
(http://exploreaccess.org/creating-accessible-documents/)

Rooted in Rights – Like the Mic (Video)
(https://www.rootedinrights.org/videos/accessibility/like-the-mic/)

W3C Accessibility Initiative – Making Presentations Accessible for All
(http://www.w3.org/WAI/training/accessible**)**

This tip sheet is designed to give the reader an introduction to accessible design. For more information, visit **exploreaccess.org** or contact Melanie Thornton at **mthornt@uark.edu**.

You can **download an electronic version of this handout here**.

About This Project

The Southwest ADA Center Regional Affiliate – Arkansas is one of a five state collaboration funded through the Southwest ADA Center, a program of the Independent Living Resource Utilization (ILRU)in Houston, Texas and serves Region VI within the ADA National Network. As a regional affiliate, the project focuses on increasing the capacity of Arkansas agencies—higher education institutions, criminal justice system agencies, and others—to improve access to people with disabilities.