



Presenter Guidelines for an Accessible Presentation

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Introduction

To create an accessible and inclusive space for all meeting attendees, all presenters at American Anthropological Association are expected to follow common accessibility guidelines. The “AAA Guidelines for an Accessible Presentation” were developed in conversation with the Society of Medical Anthropology’s (SMA’s) Disability Research Interest Group (DRIG). AAA is grateful to DRIG for the initial creation and dissemination of these guidelines.

Individual capacities for vision, hearing, and sustained interaction in large crowds vary between people, and change for each of us from hour to hour and over the course of our lives. Accessible spaces ensure that Disabled, Deaf, Autistic, Neurodivergent, Chronically Ill, Mentally Ill, and other disability-adjacent community members can attend the Annual Meeting without necessitating disclosure. Additionally, maximizing the accessibility of our presentations further develops and exposes our professional work. It helps our work reach a wider academic audience, which furthers the core goals of scholarly exchange.

These guidelines provide AAA presenters...

- 1) terms necessary to discuss accessibility,
- 2) instructions for how to create accessible presentations,
- 3) why accessible presentations are important, and
- 4) additional resources for readers interested in learning more about accessible practices.

Common Terms Used

These presentation guidelines use many terms related to accessibility, accommodations, and the associated communities. This section provides definitions of terms most often used when discussing accessibility and accommodations and the associated communities. If you have suggestions for any edits or additions, please reach out to the Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator at accessibility@americananthro.org.

Access Copies

individually printed and/or digital copies of presentation documents (i.e. PowerPoint slides without notes, prepared papers, outlines of presentation, etc.) available to audience members prior to a presentation for people to directly follow during the presentation

Accessibility

the commitment to the environment being initially designed in such a way that the greatest amount of people can participate without additionally changing the space to meet individual needs

Access Needs

an individual's environmental, behavioral, physical, attitudinal, and other needs as related to accessibility and accommodations

Accommodations

individualized changes made to the environment after the initial design of a space to ensure full participation based on a person's needs

Alt text

a brief textual explanation of an image, used in the coding of digital graphics online and in digital files

ASL

acronym for American Sign Language

Audio description

a vocal narration describing the visuals in videos and other multimedia products

Captioner

a person who provides CART

CART

Communication Access Realtime Translation, a system which converts spoken language into text in real time by using a specialized keyboard; can occur remotely or in person; often presented as captions in the moment

D/deaf

read as “big-D Deaf and little-d deaf”, which indicates the difference between big-d Deaf people who identify as culturally deaf and as a linguistic minority through the use of ASL and little-d deaf people who identify as having an audiological or medical condition that leads to not hearing

Hard-of-hearing

individuals who have mild-to-moderate hearing loss, often occurring later in life, and may not associate with the culturally Deaf community

Image description

a detailed explanation of an image that provides textual access to visual content; most often used for digital graphics online and in digital files; can be used as alt text in coding to provide access to more complete information

Interpreter

a person who translates English to ASL and vice versa in the moment

Large Print

print formatting that provides greater visibility for blind, low-vision and poor vision readers, which typically includes the body of text at a minimum of 18 pt font

Screen reader

a device or program that reads aloud the visible and embedded text on a computer screen to blind or low vision users

Standard Print

print formatting most frequently used on documents, which typically includes the body of text at 10, 12, or 14 pt font

Visual description

a description of the visual context of a location, person, or space; may be provided in real time; also an umbrella term for image and audio descriptions

Creating Accessible Presentation Spaces

All AAA session rooms have been setup to ensure the physical accessibility of the space and to provide reserved seating for people with different access needs.

If you want to change the setup of your room, you are expected to return the room to its original setup. To do so, please take a picture and note the room setup before you change the location of chairs and tables. Please also be aware of the time necessary to both setup and return the room to its original condition.

Why is this important?

1. Returning a room's setup to its original condition will ensure that all presenters following your session will have the opportunity to get situated in the space and also have access to its original and accessible setup.

What do I do if I am presenting in any session?

How do I do an accessible introduction?

1. When beginning a session, please share the following information aloud with audience members:
 - a. The title of your session
 - b. A visual description of the room
 - Example: "We are in a conference room with five people sitting behind tables up front. There are rows of chairs with people sitting in them facing the panel."
 - For more information about visual descriptions, please review the [Guidelines for Creating Image Descriptions](#).
 - c. That audience members are welcome to stand, sit, lay down, and move as necessary based on their access needs
 - d. That a microphone will be used at all times by all speakers during the session, including audience members
 - e. Whether a break will be provided during the session
 - Note: This may be as brief as two minutes!
 - f. Whether an ASL interpreter is present
 - g. Whether a CART captioner is present
 - h. That during applause audience members should use Deaf applause or hand flapping (raise their hands in the air and twist them back and forth) instead of clapping

2. When introducing yourself for your presentation, please share the following aloud with audience members:
 - a. Your name
 - b. Your pronouns (as comfortable)
 - c. Your visual description
 - d. The title of your presentation
 - e. Content warnings for sensitive material, including images and discussion
 - Examples: Violence (individual, institutional, systemic), sexual content, human remains (including teeth), drug and alcohol content, oppressive language, bodily trauma, self-harm, food and eating habits, blood and other bodily fluids, environmental disasters
 - f. Whether access copies are available, and how many are available of large print and standard print

Why is this important?

1. Thorough introductions ensure your audience members know who is present, what topics are being discussed, and if they are in the right location.
2. Visual descriptions ensure that people who may not physically be able to see the presenters have a chance to get a sense of who is present.

What do I do if an ASL interpreter is present?

AAA will notify you ahead of time if your session will be interpreted into ASL. You will receive an email from the AAA Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator connecting you with the contact person from the ASL interpreting company. An ASL interpreter may be automatically provided by AAA or be requested by an audience member as an accommodation.

1. Prepare your presentation documents (PowerPoints, script, handouts, etc.) **by November 1, 2019.**
2. Create a list of key technical words, acronyms, proper nouns, and names, as well as key words or phrases in spoken languages other than English. If you plan to speak to the audience in another language in addition to English, list the language you will use and the translation of what you will say.
3. When the Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator contacts you, share your presentation documents following the directions provided in the email.
4. Share the list of terminology you created when requested and also print a few copies to provide to the ASL interpreter(s) on the day of your presentation.

5. If you make any changes between the creation of your documents and the presentation, share those changes with the interpreter prior to your presentation.
6. During your presentation, pause and allow the interpreter to catch up after names, place names, or jargon terms.

Why is this important?

1. ASL has its own grammatical structure and nuances, which differ from spoken English. It may take more or less time to express an idea in ASL.
2. When interpreting academic English, interpreters often spell out proper nouns or jargon terms letter-by-letter, which takes longer than speaking. The list you provide will help them spell names, technical language, and words from other languages.
3. Providing your presentation documents and a list of important terminology ensures that the interpreter can easily prepare to smoothly interpret your presentation.
4. The presence of ASL interpreters ensures that Deaf people and other ASL users have equitable access to the same knowledge as hearing people.

What do I do if a CART captioner is present?

AAA will notify you ahead of time if your session will be captioned by CART. You will receive an email from the AAA Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator connecting you with the contact person from the CART captioning company. CART may be automatically provided by AAA or be requested by an audience member as an accommodation.

1. Prepare your presentation documents (PowerPoints, script, handouts, etc.) **by November 1, 2019.**
2. Create a list of key technical words, acronyms, proper nouns, and names, as well as key words or phrases in spoken languages other than English. If you plan to speak to the audience in another language in addition to English, list the language you will use and the translation of what you will say.
3. When the Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator contacts you, share your presentation documents following the directions provided in the email.
 - a. If you know you plan to read directly from a prepared script entirely, you can provide the full text of your talk, and they will scroll that text.
4. Share the list of terminology you created when requested and also print a few copies to provide to the captioner on the day of your presentation.

5. If you make any changes between the creation of your documents and the presentation, share those changes with the interpreter prior to your presentation.
6. During your presentation, pause periodically to check that the captioning is keeping up with your pace.
 - a. It is better to say, "I'm just going to pause to allow the captioner to catch up," and wait for 10 seconds than to forge ahead, leaving the captioner to decide on the fly if they should skip sections of your talk.
 - b. For the most part, captioning keeps up with the pace of normal speech (but not speed reading!).

Why is this important?

1. Captioners pre-program words that are not in the standard dictionary embedded in their software.
2. Providing your presentation documents and a list of important terminology ensures that the captioner can easily prepare to smoothly caption your presentation.
3. CART ensures that audience members who may be D/deaf, hard-of-hearing, or do not process auditory information have equitable access to the same knowledge as hearing people.
 - a. The text from CART may be projected on a separate screen or on the primary screen at the top or bottom. It may also be delivered directly to a handheld device of someone who requested it.

What do I do if I am reading directly from a paper?

1. Create a list of key technical words, acronyms, proper nouns, and names, as well as key words or phrases in spoken languages other than English. If you plan to speak to the audience in another language in addition to English, list the language you will use and the translation of what you will say.
2. Read slowly to make sure people can easily follow along.
3. Pause after each section or after introducing new concepts and/or terms.
4. Create access copies of the list you created and of your paper for audience members.

Why is this important?

1. Reading slowly will help ASL interpreters, captioners, and audience members keep up with your presentation without struggling to connect the information.
2. Pausing will ensure that audience members have the opportunity to process the information you have shared so that they may better understand and, where possible, more effectively respond to your presentation during the Q&A.

What do I do if I am using PowerPoint?

1. Use high contrast text against solid backgrounds.
 - a. Example 1: White text on a dark background.
 - b. Example 2: Black text on a light background.
2. Use a sans-serif font, such as Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Helvetica, etc.
3. Use 18+ point fonts at a minimum.
4. Use five bullet points at most per slide.
5. Keep each bullet point to one line.
6. Read all text directly as presented on the slides before explaining more information about the slide.
7. Describe all visual representations, such as:
 - a. Images
 - b. Graphs
 - c. Maps
 - d. Charts
 - e. Videos
 - f. When describing visual material, consider including:
 - i. Content
 - ii. Aesthetics and style
 - iii. Connection to talk
 - g. Compose visual descriptions ahead of time.
 - i. If you read from a written script, incorporate visual descriptions into the text to avoid getting distracted or losing your place, and to accurately estimate the time it takes to describe the visual information as part of your presentation.
 - ii. For more information about visual descriptions, please review the [Guidelines for Creating Image Descriptions](#).
8. Complete a “Check Accessibility” run on your PowerPoint. Checking accessibility will review...
 - a. Contrast levels
 - b. Slide reading order
 - c. Alt text
 - d. Table readability.

Why is this important?

1. Creating accessible slides will ensure that more audience members can connect with the material you are presenting.
2. High contrast presentations will make sure that information will not be lost due to illegible designs.
3. Large font presentations will make sure text is viewable from different parts of a conference room.
4. Less text will make sure that the content available will be understandable as the audience members skim the presentation.
5. Reading your slides directly and providing visual descriptions will make that people who may not physically be able to see the slides have a chance to engage with the visuals you share.

What do I do if I am using another presentation program?

1. Make sure that the presentation can be downloaded in a .ppt version.
Presentation programs that do not provide this option may be inaccessible to people using screen readers.
 - a. Example: While engaging, Prezi is inaccessible.
2. Use high contrast text against solid backgrounds.
 - a. Example 1: White text on a dark background.
 - b. Example 2: Black text on a light background.
3. Use a sans-serif font, such as Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Helvetica, etc.
4. Use 18+ point fonts at a minimum.
5. Use five bullet points at most per slide.
6. Keep each bullet point to one line.
7. Read all text directly as presented on the slides before explaining more information about the slide.

8. Describe all visual representations, such as:
 - a. Images
 - b. Graphs
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 - e. Videos
 - f. When describing visual material, consider including:
 - i. Content
 - ii. Aesthetics and style
 - iii. Connection to talk
 - g. Compose visual descriptions ahead of time.
 - i. If you read from a written script, incorporate visual descriptions into the text to avoid getting distracted or losing your place, and to accurately estimate the time it takes to describe the visual information as part of your presentation.
 - ii. For more information about visual descriptions, please review the [Guidelines for Creating Image Descriptions](#).

Why is this important?

1. When using presentation programs other than PowerPoint, audience members using screen readers will not be able to engage with digital access copies provided of your presentation.
2. Inaccessible presentations mean that audience members who need another way to engage with your material will be unable to do so.

What do I do if I am presenting a video?

1. Make sure that open or closed captions are automatically included in the video.
2. Take the time to review the captions for accuracy.
 - a. Note: YouTube captions are notoriously inaccurate and can be distracting because of the errors.
3. If there are no captions, find and provide a transcript of the video.
4. If there is no transcript, create one.
5. If this is not an option, find a video with captions.
6. Use a video that provides Audio Description.
7. If there is no Audio Description, take the time to review major changes between scenes and practice describing those scenes as the video plays.
 - a. Example: A person is sitting at a desk. [Pause.] The person is now walking outside on a pathway in a park. [Pause.] Another person is sitting at a desk.

Why is this important?

1. Using videos with captions ensure that all audience members can engage with the content shared through the video.
2. It is not the job of CART captioners and ASL interpreters to provide captioning or interpreting for videos.

What do I do to create printed access copies?

1. Prepare your presentation documents (PowerPoints, script, handouts, etc.) **by November 1, 2019.**
2. Create a list of key technical words, acronyms, proper nouns, and names, as well as key words or phrases in spoken languages other than English. If you plan to speak to the audience in another language in addition to English, list the language you will use and the translation of what you will say.
3. Print 4-5 standard print access copies and 1-2 large print access copies of your presentation documents and your list of important terminology. Do this **before you arrive to the Annual Meeting location.**
 - a. Please review the [Best Practices and Guidelines for Large Print Documents](#) for further instructions to create large print access copies.
4. Identify someone who can hand out the access copies.
5. At the beginning of your presentation, announce that both standard and large print access copies are available.
6. Hand out the access copies to people who request it without asking why they are requesting a copy.
7. Feel free to add a disclaimer: "Please do not distribute without the expressed permission of the author" with your name and contact information.
8. You can ask people to return your print copies at the end of your talk.
9. Note that these do not have to be perfectly polished texts!

Why is this important?

1. Providing printed access copies helps people follow your talk more easily, including D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people, people who have difficulty processing auditory information, or people who may lose focus for a number of reasons.
2. Providing an alternative presentation model is appreciated by people for many reasons, including language fluency, learning style, and personal preference.

What do I do to create digital access copies?

1. Prepare your presentation documents (PowerPoints, script, handouts, etc.) **by November 1, 2019.**
2. Create a list of key technical words, acronyms, proper nouns, and names, as well as key words or phrases in spoken languages other than English. If you plan to speak to the audience in another language in addition to English, list the language you will use and the translation of what you will say.
3. Upload your presentation document to a website that uses a unique and private link for people to access from their devices.
 - One option for a temporary link is <https://www.temporary-url.com/>. You can set the date when you want the link to expire to prevent further access to your documents directly from digital access copies.
4. At the beginning of your presentation, announce that a digital access copy is available for the audience.
5. Feel free to add a disclaimer: “Please do not distribute without the expressed permission of the author” with your name and contact information.

Why is this important?

1. Providing a digital access copy helps people who must access visual information through a screen reader.
2. Providing a digital access copy helps people follow your talk more easily, including D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people, people who have difficulty processing auditory information, or people who may lose focus for a number of reasons.
3. A digital access copy has the added benefit that readers can choose their own text size.
4. Providing an alternative presentation model is appreciated by people for many reasons, including language fluency, learning style, and personal preference.

What do I do if someone asks a question during my session?

1. Repeat the question into the microphone before answering.
2. If a new technical word, acronym, proper noun, name, or key word or phrase in languages other than English is introduced, spell the word and briefly define it if the audience member did not. If you are unsure of how to spell or define it, request the audience member to do so.
3. If there is an ASL interpreter and/or CART captioner present, make sure to pause to ensure that they keep up with the question.

Why is this important?

1. Repeating the audience member's question, regardless of if they used a microphone or not, will ensure that you understood the question correctly and that other people can hear the question again in a different way.
2. In the case that no microphone was used to ask the question, it will ensure that D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people or people more distant from the speakers can access all information shared verbally.
3. Spelling new words will make sure everyone can fully access the new context introduced and also ensure that if an ASL interpreter and/or CART captioner is present that they use the correct language in their interpreting/captioning.

What do I do if I am speaking at a roundtable or during a Q&A?

1. **Always use a microphone.**
 - a. Speaking loudly or projecting one's voice is not a substitute for using amplification.
2. Remind all audience members who speak during the roundtable or Q&A to use a microphone.
3. When someone speaks without the use of a microphone, repeat every question and/or comment shared.
 - a. Do this before answering any questions or responding to any comments.
4. If an ASL interpreter or CART captioner is present, it is best practice to check if the interpreter and/or captioner has finished interpreting/captioning before proceeding.

Why is this important?

1. Using a microphone or repeating when another person is unable to use a microphone ensures that D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people or people more distant from the speakers can access all information shared verbally.

What do I do if I am presenting a poster in a gallery session?

Because poster sessions require a different form of preparation, AAA has created a specific set of [guidelines for creating successful & accessible posters](#). Please keep in mind that the accessible presentation guidelines on this page are still important to review to ensure access while verbally presenting your poster.

Additional Resources and Accessible Guidelines

Where do I check the color contrast on visual materials I create?

[WebAIM Color Contrast Checker \(https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/\)](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/)

Where do I learn about PowerPoint Accessibility?

[WebAim PowerPoint Accessibility Page \(https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/\)](https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/)

How do I create a large print document?

[Best Practices and Guidelines for Large Print Documents used by the Low Vision Community authored by the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International An Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind Arlington, VA \(https://www.acb.org/large-print-guidelines\)](https://www.acb.org/large-print-guidelines)

What do accessible presentation guidelines look like at other associations and conferences?

- American Sociological Association (ASA): <http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/footnotes/julyaugust08/presentation.html>
- Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD): <https://www.aucd.org/conference/template/page.cfm?id=50214>
- Modern Language Association (MLA): <https://www.mla.org/Convention/Planning-a-Convention-Session/Access-Guidelines-for-MLA-Convention-Session-Organizers-and-Presenters>
- Pacific Rim Conference: <http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu/presenters/accessibility>

Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator Contact Information

If you have any questions or comments related to accessibility, accommodations, or your experiences with accessibility at AAA, please reach out! The Accessibility & Meetings Coordinator is always happy to discuss these ideas with more people.

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