April 2025

A guide to more accessible webinars

At Tilting the Lens we have been presenting and publishing webinars for a few years, and are always looking to improve the accessibility of our events. We started on Instagram Live in 2021, but due to the platform's accessibility limits, we have moved to Zoom Webinar tools for our most recent events.

These are some of our own checks that we have put in place.

1. **Organise a sign language interpreter to appear on the day:** Our approach is to hire an interpreter that represents the local sign language for the guest speakers. For example when we have an American guest we will try to have an ASL interpreter. You can support the interpreter by providing a clear brief in advance of the session, including any names or terms that might come up that would be helpful for the interpreter to know.

   Best practice is to hire both a local Deaf interpreter and a hearing interpreter to ensure that Deaf communities are economically valued, and to communicate the nuances within signs and vocabularies.

2. **Live captions or auto captions:** Decide on an approach for captioning your webinar. For the most accurate live captions you can hire a live captioner. Make sure your captioner is briefed in a similar way to the interpreter; including correct spelling and any corporate language or acronyms that might come up. Most webinar software will have a built-in auto caption service. It can be a bit unreliable, but if you don't have a live captioner, this feature is better than having none.

3. **Make it clear what accessibility features will be in place on the registration form:** For example – "A British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter will be on-screen. Live captioning will be available, and a transcript will be shared after the session. If you have any further accessibility accommodations, please email us at [email address].

4. **Brief your speakers in advance:**

   - Give them an idea of the kind of questions you will be asking.

- Remind them that they will need to speak slowly and clearly for the audience to understand but also to allow the captioner and interpreters to keep up.
- Make sure their environment is quiet, well lit, and preferably with a neutral background. This is also good advice for interpreters.

5. **Test your settings before the event day:** These are specific to the Zoom software we use but check the software you are using for the following options.
   - Invite the interpreter to the event as a panelist and not as interpreter, so that they are present on screen for every webinar participant.
   - Enable manual captions so that your captioner can add the live transcriptions.
   - Adjust the Speaker and Participant views. Turn on Gallery View to ensure that the audience can see everyone including the interpreter and not just the person speaking. Hide non-video participants. This will allow your team to work in the background without being on camera.
6. **Start off the webinar with introductions and visual descriptions of the speakers:** For example – “Hello everyone! My name is Kate, I'm a black woman, wearing a cream dress with a floral pattern, and I have short dark hair and glasses. I’m standing in front of a beige backdrop, and you might notice I’m wearing a silver necklace that has a small pendant shaped like a leaf”.
7. **Make post-webinar content accessible:**
   - Prepare an accessible transcript document for attendees and those who might have missed the session
   - If you are sharing a video make sure it has accurate captions
8. **After the webinar, ask attendees for accessibility feedback:** This will ensure you keep improving the experience for everyone who attends your events.

If you have any questions or feedback on this webinar guide please contact us at accessibility@tiltingthelens.com

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