

Ways to Improve Communication Access During Virtual Meetings

1. Always use a video conference platform if possible to take advantage of visual cues
2. Use a headset or earbuds, and an external microphone if possible; computer microphones may not pick up your voice clearly
3. Plan ahead: ask if participants or caregivers have access to the above equipment, and if they have any specific access needs
4. Use good communication skills for everyone; hearing loss is invisible and difficult to recognize
 - Speak slowly and clearly
 - Make sure that only one person talks at a time during the meeting
 - Provide occasional recaps to assist those who have lost the thread of the conversation
 - Ensure your face is visible at all times to allow for speech reading if using video platform
5. Ensure volume is adequate and adjust at your end if possible:
 - Use Audio features in video platform, e.g. Zoom: Settings -> Audio -> Volume adjustments
6. Reduce all background noise and distractions:
 - Have your phone and any messaging apps muted to reduce distractions and unwanted noise
 - Mute microphone when not speaking so background noises aren't picked up
 - Use audio features in video platform, e.g. Zoom: Settings -> Audio -> Background and filters
7. Ensure good lighting, if using video platform:
 - Make sure your face is well lit and visible to aid lip reading
 - Avoid sitting in front of a bright window to avoid appearing back lit
 - Use lighting features in video platform, e.g. in Zoom: Settings -> Video -> Adjust for low light
8. Ensure participants are wearing glasses (if video) and any Assistive Listening Devices they may have: some may be able to connect their hearing aids directly to their computer, tablet or smart phone during the meeting via Bluetooth
9. Use Captions, an excellent way to improve communication access during virtual meetings:
 - If possible, choose a video platform that has embedded captioning/transcript capability, e.g. Google Meet. Zoom can add in captioning typed by the host, or someone assigned by the host, directly via Zoom <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207279736-Managing-and-viewing-closed-captioning> or you can integrate a third party caption or relay service
 - Consider using speech-to-text apps, e.g. Google Live Transcribe, Google Live Caption, Ava <https://www.ava.me/> or Otter
 - Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is a word-for-word speech-to-text interpreting service that can be purchased and arranged ahead of time