**Towards a More Accessible and Inclusive Presentation**

*Adapted from a May 2016 AAM webinar presented in collaboration with the Museum Access Consortium (MAC) and the Diversity Committee (DivCom) and Education Committee (EdCom) Professional Networks of the American Alliance of Museums*

View the webinar recording at <https://secure.icohere.com/aampd?pnum=RQE48383>

**Why Accessible and Inclusive Presentations?**

The ability to plan and deliver effective presentations is an important skill–whether you are presenting to your staff or board, to an in-person audience of colleagues at a seminar or conference, to participants at a program at your institution, or in an online program. But if the presentation is not accessible and inclusive then the content you provide is not being effectively communicated to the broadest audience, including those with disabilities. The following tips for presentation best practice offer practical strategies and resources for planning, delivering, and evaluating accessible and inclusive presentations, including formatting choices, presentation techniques, visual media, and materials or handouts.

* Remember: We don’t always know who’s in the audience; people learn in different ways; not all disabilities are visible. It’s in our best interest to communicate our ideas in a way that will reach as many people as possible.
* Planning and creating an accessible presentation should not be considered extra work; think of it as an essential step in effective communication.
* Being an accessibility advocate means: being aware, being intentional, and being flexible/adaptable.

**Questions for Reflection and Planning**We invite you to use these questions as you plan for your inclusive presentation.

* **Awareness:** What do you already know about inclusive presentations?
* **Action:** What actions do you already take to make your presentations more accessible? What challenges might you face in making your presentations more inclusive?
* **Advocacy:** In what ways do you already advocate for accessibility and inclusion in your presentation, and when participating in presentations as a co-presenter or as audience?

**Practical Strategies for Inclusive Presentations**

*Preparation and advance organizer*

Provide your audience with a framework for the presentation. Answer the following at the beginning of your presentation:

* What will happen during the session?
* What topics will you cover?
* What do you want your audience to take away from the presentation?

*Media*

* Media can make a presentation more dynamic, but can also detract from it or create barriers to understanding. Think carefully about what media/interactive elements you need and why.
* If writing/drawing during the presentation:
  + Remember that not everyone can read what is written.
  + Always narrate out loud what is written or summarize important information/findings.
  + If possible, consider preparing a handout in advance.
  + Make sure handwriting is legible, large, and that there is high contrast between the text and background (e.g., no yellow marker on white paper).
  + If conducting a group activity, remember that not everyone can easily participate through writing. Consider alternative forms of participation or accommodations.
* If using PowerPoint:
  + Use preset slide layouts. Do not use slide transitions or animation (these play havoc with screen readers).
  + Number your slides and refer to the number for those who may be following along via print/electronic copy.
  + Limit slide to 5 lines of text, if possible. Multiple slides communicating points in larger font is generally easier to read.
  + Include a balance of words and images (words and images are 6 times as effective as words alone).
  + Read quotes and describe images aloud.
  + Avoid busy slide backgrounds or color schemes providing low contrast.
  + Use Arial (or similar San Serif font) text that is 32 point font or above for titles, 28-36 point for main text, and not less than 20 point for image labels.
* If using maps, graphs, charts, or pictures:
  + Use only images that support your main points.
  + Do not overlap graphics (harder for people with vision impairment to discern images).
  + Be careful about only relying on color to convey information. If someone is colorblind, visual cues like patterns or verbal descriptions are important.
  + Everything should be labeled clearly, with 20 point font or greater.
  + If text is placed on top of the chart, be mindful of the font size.
  + Be mindful of color contrast.
  + Include a written and verbal description of important visual information.

*Words, images, and video*

* Remember: words and images are 6 times as effective as words alone.
* Words and images should augment main message (not just slide decoration).
* Not everyone will see or understand the image, so describe it and its meaning verbally whenever possible.
* If using videos:
  + They should be captioned.
  + Consider audio description as well, if the majority of the video is visual.
  + Audio should be amplified when video is shown.

**Presentation** **Techniques**

*General preparation*

* Plan well and know your content.
* Manage your time.
* Get materials to your host or organizer in advance. If there are people who will be captioning or interpreting your presentation into sign language, this enables them to learn how to spell nontraditional words/proper nouns, understand the direction of your presentation, etc.

*Communicating your content*

* Describe relevant images.
* Use captioned and described video – or describe it yourself.
* Provide transcripts of audio or uncaptioned video.
* Spell out email addresses and hashtags.
* Avoid exclusively visual or nonverbal effects.
* Present from a location where you can be seen, if possible, to allow people to read your body language or facial descriptions, or to lip read.
* Speak clearly and use the microphone at all times.
* Use the microphone for audience questions. Repeat anything said without amplification.
* Encourage speakers to introduce themselves.
* Discourage interruption and simultaneous speaking.

*Engaging the audience*

* If you have a slide that you want the audience to read, don’t ask them to read slides independently; read the slide out loud so everyone can participate.
* Narrate body language or other nonverbal activity (e.g., if you point to something, describe what you’re doing; if you ask people to raise their hands, narrate approximate numbers for those who cannot see).
* Provide clear instructions and ample time for group activities.

**Materials and Handouts**

* Be intentional: Are they necessary?
* Have large print versions of hard copies, and offer a digital version.
* Use universal design for surveys – create everything in large print in order to protect anonymity.

**Additional Resources**

* [How to Make Presentations Accessible to All](https://www.w3.org/WAI/training/accessible) The Web Accessibility Initiative helps you make your presentations, talks, meetings, and training accessible.
* [Make Your PowerPoints Accessible to All](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Make-your-PowerPoint-presentations-accessible-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25) The Microsoft Office Accessibility Center offers key best practices for creating PowerPoint presentations that can also help you make your presentations accessible to people with disabilities.
* [Seven Steps to Creating an Accessible PowerPoint Slideshow](http://www.dor.ca.gov/disabilityaccessinfo/das-docs/7-steps-2-create-accessible-powerpoint-slideshow.pdf) The California Department of Rehabilitation offers practical tips.
* [Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes](http://www.thegoodmancenter.com/resources/) Why do so many presentations fail to engage, educate, or persuade? Free PDF book from The Goodman Center.
* [Contrast Ratio](http://leaverou.github.io/contrast-ratio/) A contrast ratio tool from Lea Verou.
* [United States Census Bureau: Disability](http://www.census.gov/people/disability/) 2010 Census statistics and research about disability.
* [Cornell University: Disability Statistics](https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/) Clearinghouse for all disability statistics with American Community Survey (ACS).