



Tips for Presenting Online to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

Introduction

WebEx & Assistive Technology

WebEx does not yet support screen readers but is currently working to provide this support. In the interim, this document, *Tips for Presenting Online to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*, provides you with recommendations for planning, preparing, and presenting information in an online meeting, event, or session to participants who are blind or visually impaired. These recommendations can help you to adapt and deliver online content that engages all participants—including those who are blind or visually impaired—and to ensure that these participants receive all information and respond according to the host's or presenter's stated objectives.

Before Your Online Session

Selecting voice conferencing options

All online sessions require a voice conference to allow the host, presenters, and attendees to communicate. Depending on your WebEx service, you can choose one of the following voice conferencing options when planning your WebEx online meeting, event, or session:

- ❑ **WebEx teleconferencing service**—Recommended for sessions with fewer than 50 participants. Integrated teleconferencing that provides two options for connecting participants to the teleconference: 1) Attendees call in; or, 2) Attendees receive a call back.
- ❑ **Other teleconferencing services**—Recommended for sessions with more than 50 participants. Let WebEx or a third-party provider arrange the teleconferencing services for your online meeting, event, or session.
- ❑ **Internet phone (voice over IP)**—An alternative to traditional teleconferencing. A voice conference that allows participants to communicate over the Internet using a computer with a soundcard, speakers, and a microphone.

If you know that your audience may include individuals who are blind or visually impaired, WebEx recommends that you select the **Other teleconferencing service** option when scheduling your meeting, event, or session. WebEx offers two options for third-party teleconferencing: **Full Assisted (Operator Assisted)** and **Basic Assisted**.



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WebEx Recommended Option

Utilize WebEx's **Full Assisted (Operator Assisted) teleconferencing** when hosting an event that may have blind or visually impaired individuals participating. When this option is used, participants' lines are muted during the main portion of the online meeting, event or session with the Question & Answer (Q & A) portion held at the end of the online session. When the speakers are ready for questions, the operator will provide verbal instructions to participants explaining how to ask their questions. Generally, participants are instructed to press *1 (Star One) or *14 (Star One Four) on their telephones. Once participants have followed the instructions, they are placed in a queue and the operator will unmute their phone, introduce them, and allow them to ask their question. After a participant has asked a question, the phone line is muted and the operator moves on to the next participant's question. At any time, participants can press *0 (Star Zero) on their phone keypads to reach an operator for assistance. To learn more about or to schedule **Full Assisted teleconferencing**, contact our Reservations Coordinator at the following number and identify yourself as a WebEx OnStage customer.

Reservation Numbers : 866-389-3239 (Toll-free)
916-851-8501 (Sacramento area local call)

Our Reservation Coordinator is available to assist you Monday through Friday from 7am – 4pm (Pacific Standard Time). Depending on the complexity and volume of requests, turn around times for reservation confirmations may vary (from 30 minutes up to 24 hours). Please be sure to review your confirmation details carefully. If you require changes, please notify the WebEx Reservation Coordinator immediately.

TIP#1 Select the appropriate telephony options. Utilize WebEx's **Full Assisted (Operator Assisted) teleconferencing** when hosting an online meeting, event or session that may have blind or visually impaired individuals participating or choose another third party provider who can provide comparable services.



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Planning for technical support

Inform your participants beforehand of the steps they must take to obtain technical support before, during and after an online meeting, event, or session. Then, reiterate with verbal instructions the steps that participants must take to obtain technical support before starting the meeting, event, or session.

TIP#2 Provide instructions for obtaining technical support. As host of an online meeting, event, or session, you will want to ensure that visually impaired participants understand how to obtain technical support before, during, and after the meeting, event, or session.

Providing documentation in alternate formats

Because WebEx does not currently support screen readers, it is recommended that the presentation materials be provided to visually impaired participants beforehand. When providing product support documentation or other types of content to an audience that may include persons who are blind or visually impaired, you may want to ensure that your documentation is provided before the actual event to all visually impaired participants in an alternate format, at no additional charge. The format you choose may vary. For example, you may provide the documentation in electronic format to allow for the reprinting of the documentation in Braille. Or, you may record the information or provide large print text documentation. If possible, find out the preferred format of the participant who is visually impaired. Since it takes longer to review material in alternate formats, provide the materials in advance to allow the participant to be informed, prepared, and better able to participate fully in the online meeting, event, or session.

TIP #3 Provide presentations and any other documentation to visually impaired participants early and at no extra charge. If possible, find out the preferred format of the participant who is visually impaired. Since it takes longer to review material in alternate formats, provide the materials in advance to allow the participant to be informed, prepared, and better able to participate fully in the online meeting, event, or session.



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Choosing WebEx's Service Assist

WebEx Meeting Center customers who know that they will be hosting blind or visually impaired participants will want to consider obtaining assistance by utilizing WebEx's Service Assist Program. A WebEx consultant can help your attendees gain access or join your online meetings. Additionally, consultants are available during your online meetings to provide real-time support. If you are interested in learning more about this Program or would like to schedule a WebEx Service Assist, send an email to: Training@webex.com or call +408 435-7088.

Preparing Your Content

Guidelines for designing legible content

When you are presenting content online to an audience that includes visually impaired participants, consider the following recommendations:

Contrast: Text should be selected based upon maximizing contrast. Light (white or yellow) letters on a dark (black or dark blue) background are more readable than dark letters on a light background.

Font Style: Use an ordinary typeface. Avoid complicated or decorative fonts. *Standard Roman* or *Sans Serif* fonts are best.

Letter Spacing: Where possible, spacing should be wide. Use mono-spaced fonts instead of proportional-spaced fonts, whenever possible to increase legibility.

Line Spacing: Spacing between lines of text should be at least 25 to 30 percent of the text point size. By following this guideline, you will help your visually impaired participants to locate the beginning of the next line of text while they read.

Numbers: When including numbers in your materials, use a typeface that clearly depicts each numeral. When feasible, type the word that represents the numeral. Visually impaired persons often misread the numbers 3, 5, 8 and 0.

Point Size: Choose a large type size—at least 16 to 22 point.

Special Text Formatting: Use a combination of upper and lower case letters. Limit your use of italics, slanted, small caps or all caps.



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Type Color: Printed materials are generally more readable when prepared in black and white. While you may be tempted to add color for aesthetic reasons, it is better to limit the use of color to highlighted text, headlines or titles. Remember—the goal is to maintain a high contrast of light to dark to maximize legibility.

Type Weight: Use bold or semi-bold weights whenever possible. Avoid using light type weights.

During Your Online Session

To ensure a successful online meeting, event, or session when some participants are blind or visually impaired, it is important to conduct your session in a manner that respects all participants. Take time before and during the online session to evaluate the needs of all your participants and always think before you speak to ensure that persons who are blind or visually impaired feel comfortable and at ease. In general, when writing or speaking about or with people with disabilities such as blindness or partial sightedness, use positive and inclusive language. Use the tips below when conducting your online meeting, event or session.

TIP #4 Treat blind and visually impaired participants as people first, not as people who are blind. Remember, it is okay to use words such as “see,” “look,” or “read.”



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Tips for presenting to blind or visually impaired participants

Checking in beforehand: Whenever possible, contact blind or visually impaired individuals prior to your online meeting to obtain information about their needs, preferences, etc. Treat each person with respect and dignity and do not focus on the fact that the individual is blind or visually impaired. Instead, focus on the individual. In other words, find out what that person needs in order to have a successful experience during the online meeting, event, or session. Some information you may want to cover beforehand:

- ❑ What are their individual preferences for providing content in alternate formats?
- ❑ How much time do they need before the online meeting, event, or session to read the content that will be provided?
- ❑ How will they communicate during the event (In other words, what measures need to be taken to ensure that that individuals can “check in” with the host or presenter(s) during the event?)
- ❑ Is there any information that the host or presenter(s) needs from participants? How will participants provide feedback?
- ❑ How will participants obtain technical assistance before, during, and after the event?

Making introductions: Always start off by introducing yourself. When feasible, ask participants to introduce themselves.

Providing technical assistance: Before starting the session, provide concise, verbal instructions that participants must take to obtain technical support during the online session.

Setting ground rules: Ask participants to state his or her name each time before speaking, throughout the meeting. Request that participants refrain from engaging in verbal side conversations during presentations.

Speaking during the meeting: Speak using your regular tone and volume—there is no need to raise your voice.

Limiting noise: Keep noise to a minimum. Use the **mute** feature, if necessary to decrease outside noise. Since people who are blind or visually impaired rely upon hearing to obtain information, extraneous noise is distracting and interferes with comprehension.



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Answering questions: If you have set up your meeting to allow for all participants to speak during the meeting, event, or session, provide instructions as to how and when you would like your participants to ask questions. Then, when providing your answers, be sure that you are specific and descriptive in your responses. After responding to a question, ask participants for confirmation that you have adequately answered the question asked.

If you have scheduled an event that includes a moderated **Question and Answer (Q & A)** session, participants' lines will remain muted during the main portion of the online meeting, event or session. The Q & A portion is typically held at the end of the online session. When speakers are ready to answer questions, the operator will provide verbal instructions to participants explaining how to use the telephone to ask their questions. Generally, participants are instructed to press *1 (Star One) or *14 (Star One Four) on their telephones. Once participants have followed the instructions, they are placed in a queue and the operator will unmute their phone, introduce them, and allow them to ask their question. After a participant has asked a question, the phone line is again muted and the operator moves on to the next participant's question. At any time, participants can press *0 (Star Zero) on their phone keypads to reach an operator for assistance.

Explaining your actions: Always use instructive language when explaining your actions during an online meeting, event or session. What does this mean? Use words that factually explain the topic you are discussing, the results being illustrated, the steps you are explaining, or the idea you are conveying, etc. Limit your use of symbolic or colorful language; unless, your description includes words that pertain to "smell," "sound," or "tactile" sensations.

Providing navigation clues: When sharing a document or presentation, state the page or slide number that you are currently discussing. When moving from one document or presentation to another, provide verbal instructions stating the name and page of the document or presentation to orient all participants as to the content that you are currently covering.



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Using multimedia: When you plan to include multimedia segments (such as video or audio snippets) into your online meeting, event or session, understand the potential impact to participants who may be blind or visually impaired. Will they be able to follow the instructions to access the multimedia files? If not, then you will want to provide the content in an alternate format beforehand. Alternate formats might include providing an electronic version of the script, an audio recording, or a large print hard copy to participants prior to the meeting, event, or session. During the online meeting, event, or session, explain to participants why you are including the multimedia content. Then, afterwards, check in with participants to make sure that every person understands the meaning of the multimedia content.

Checking understanding: Throughout the entirety of your online meeting, event, or session, take time to “check in” with participants to ensure that they understand the information being shared.

Using WebEx’s interactive features: Understand that using the **Polling, Raise Hand, Annotation** or other interactive features will most likely exclude any blind or visually impaired participants. Therefore, be sure to provide verbal cues throughout any interactive activity to let all participants follow along with what is being shown, demonstrated, or drawn.

TIP #5 Use the tips for presenting to blind or visually impaired participants to ensure that all participants have a successful experience during your online meeting, event or session.



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Appendix

Common Terms Defined

Accessibility: With regard to Section 508, access to and use of electronic and information technology by individuals with disabilities.

Adaptation: An adjustment of form, structure or function to aide a visually impaired person to use technology, communicate more effectively or to perform effectively in the newly adapted environment.

Alternate format: Electronic format that provides for the reprinting in Braille and/or large print, recording to audio cassette, posting to a text only Web page or site, tactile representations of diagrams or interpretation via an assistive device (like a screen reader, speech synthesizer, descriptive video, etc.).

Assistive device or assistive technology: Adaptive equipment that people with disabilities commonly use for information and communication access, such as: Magnification programs for computer screens, screen readers (also known as Voice Output Technology), optical character recognition (OCR), Braille printers, note takers, or haptic interface devices.

Basic assisted teleconferencing: This option requires participants to submit their questions online or to have all phone lines active during the entire presentation. This option is not recommended and should only be used as a last resort. Historically, online meetings, events and sessions which utilize this type of teleconferencing service often experience audio issues such as participant's hold music, excessive background noise, static, etc.

Braille: A system of printing and writing for the blind, in which characters are formed by patterns of raised dots that are felt by the fingers.

Colorful speech: Use of metaphor, picturesque, or vivid words to communicate an idea or message. An example of colorful speech: " For all her chic thinness, she had an almost breakfast cereal air of health, a soap and lemon cleanness, a rough pink darkening of the cheeks...." Excerpt from Truman Capote's "*Breakfast a Tiffany's*"

Discrimination: The act of distinguishing between, showing partiality or prejudice in treatment.



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Equivalent facilitation: Technology designed specifically to afford a certain degree of accessibility to persons with disabilities.

Instructive speech: Precise, literal language that can be easily understood and acted upon by any person—even a person who may be visually impaired.

Legible text: Text that has been optimally developed to ensure that persons with partial sight can successfully ascertain the meaning and context of the text message.

Partially sighted: According to the National Eye Institute, one in every 20 people has partial sight. This condition is described as a serious vision problem that cannot be corrected by ordinary contact lenses, eyeglasses or surgery. (Source: Vision World Wide <http://www.visionwww.org/news.htm>)

Section 508: Section 508 is a statutory segment in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Refer to: 29 U.S.C. 794d). Its primary purpose is to provide access to and use of electronic and information technology by individuals with disabilities.

Visually impaired: The term visually impaired includes those persons who have been diagnosed as having one of the following visual conditions: partial sightedness, low vision, legally blind (less than 20/200 vision) and totally blind (learns via Braille or other non-visual media). Visual impairment for these persons ranges from partial sightedness to having a complete loss of vision.

Voice conferencing: The use of audio in an online meeting, event, or session that allows the host, presenters, and attendees to communicate. Depending on your WebEx service, you can choose an integrated teleconference, a third-party teleconference, or an Internet phone (VOIP) conference.

WebEx Service Assist: A fee-based WebEx service that provides customers with a dedicated staff of experts who are trained and ready to provide help with meeting planning, rehearsals, and technical support before, during, and after WebEx meeting.



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