

Making Online and Phone Meetings Accessible

Conferencing software such as Zoom, GotoMeeting, Google Meet, Adobe Connect, and Skype are often used for online meetings and webinars. There are several ways to make online platforms accessible for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) participants. The access tips below will also work for any online platform in which you can call into the platform through a separate number.

Hands & Voices ¹ is providing this information as a helpful guide. We recognize that technology and access products are constantly changing and updating. Hands & Voices is not responsible for technical issues that may result, reach out to the individual companies for direct support.

For the purpose of this document, we are showcasing how to provide access using [Zoom](#).

Who is Responsible for the Access?

The person/Chapter who is setting up the meeting is responsible for creating access to the online/phone meeting.

The D/HH participant is responsible for expressing their access needs timely.

Two Ways to Provide Access:

Direct access within the meeting itself by streaming in captions or providing interpreters or transliterators. This access appears directly on screen within the meeting itself.

Direct access via a third-party access provider (Video relay, text relay, external captioning).

Using Video Conferencing with a Relay Provider:

Examples of **Video Relay Service** (VRS) providers: [ZVRS](#), [Purple](#), [Convo](#), and [Sorenson](#).

Examples of **Text Relay Service** (TRS) providers: [Innocaption](#), Hamilton Relay, Clear Captions, and Sprint Relay.

Examples of **Voice to Text** apps: Otter, Live Transcribe.

¹ **Hands & Voices**, the Headquarters (HQ) of the organization will be identified in this document as Hands & Voices.

To Use a TRS/VRS Provider on a Computer:

1. Open the TRS/VRS web software.
2. Place your cursor on the bar at the top of the screen, left click and hold—then bring the software down to the right side of your screen and release. This will split your screen in half.
3. Launch Zoom.
4. Place your cursor on the bar at the top of the Zoom screen, left click and hold—then bring the software down to the left side of your screen and release. This will put Zoom on the other half of your screen.
5. Call into the Zoom room with your VRS/TRS provider using the audio phone number associated with the room. The interpreter/captioner will now be able to hear into the room.

If you are using ASL or signing, the webcam will be used by the VRS provider. Your participants in the Zoom meeting will **not** be able to see you—they will hear you via the interpreter’s voice during the call.

If you are using **Voice Carry Over** (speaking with your own voice), mute your audio on the Zoom room (click on the microphone icon on the bottom left and it will turn red with a slash through it) and speak directly into a headset connected to the computer or via the audio input through the VRS/TRS software.

Alternatively, you can mute the connection you have to the VRS/TRS and speak directly into the Zoom room by selecting “Connect via computer audio.”



Using Zoom with Separate TRS/VRS Equipment:

Use a laptop to connect to Zoom. Use a videophone or captioned phone (or an app like Innocaption on your phone) to call into the Zoom meeting. Put them side by side. This allows you to be seen in the Zoom meeting room.

Using an Interpreter Directly in the Zoom Meeting Room:

When you hire a certified interpreter, the interpreter will call into the Zoom room using their own webcam and will appear in the meeting as a participant.

You can choose to pin the interpreter to the screen as the main speaker or allow the participant to pin the interpreter on their own side of the Zoom meeting. Learn more here: [How to “pin” or “spotlight” the interpreter or speaker.](#)



Interpreter Preparation for Zoom Meetings:

Interpreter preparation *before* a meeting goes a long way in making the meeting even more accessible. Provide the interpreter with the following information:

- Zoom meeting information (include the call-in number).
- Participant names and communication information (if known.) This allows the interpreters to navigate the Zoom screen and quickly find the participants—especially for voicing.
- Meeting agenda and any acronyms that will be used.

Streaming the Captioning Directly in the Zoom Meeting Room:

Closed captioning allows you or another meeting attendees, assigned by the host, to add closed captioning in a meeting. In a webinar, closed captioning can be typed by the host, co-host, or a panelist assigned by the host. You can type the closed captions directly via Zoom or you can integrate a third-party service. Learn more here:

- [Using Captioning with Zoom](#): You can add [Otter.ai](#) to your Zoom meetings to live transcribe (and also save as notes).
- [Skype](#) and [Google Meet](#) have an auto-caption feature that you can turn on.

Teleconference Meetings:

Teleconference or phone meetings can be accessed using Video Relay Service (VRS) and Text Relay Services (TRS). The D/HH participant can call into the meeting and access interpreters and captioning at no cost via VRS/TRS services.

Zoom Tips:

Make sure your video is turned on so that others can see you. Go to the bottom of the Zoom screen and click on the video symbol.

If you are using your voice in the meeting, enable your microphone. Go to the bottom of the Zoom screen and click on the microphone symbol. When you are NOT speaking into the meeting, MUTE your microphone. This blocks out any background noise that may be happening.

- **Gallery View:** Gallery view allows the view of the participants. Zoom can display up to 49 participants—but this depends on your computer and phone capabilities.
- **Speaker View:** Speaker view highlights the current speaker by following the voice of whoever is speaking at the time. This means it will highlight the interpreter who is voicing instead of the

Accessibility of Online/Phone Meetings

deaf/hard of hearing person who is signing. The host and/or viewer can choose to “pin” the video of whoever is signing.

- **Screen Sharing:** Zoom functionality allows you to share your screen (documents, PowerPoints, websites, etc.) while in a meeting or webinar. However, the pictures of the participants will be minimized, and you won’t be able to see everyone unless you scroll. Zoom has a feature called [Side by Side](#) that enables you to see the shared screen alongside either the Speaker View or Gallery View, depending on which view is chosen.

Apps for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Adults:

Tina Childress, a deaf audiologist, has put together a list of apps for communication access:

<https://tinachildress.wordpress.com/2011/12/21/apps-for-kids-with-hearing-loss/>