

Making your video calls accessible to people with sight and/or hearing loss

As remote communications are fast replacing face to face meetings, more and more of us rely on video calls to interact with our team members. For people with sight and/or hearing impairments, video calls can be difficult. Here is some simple advice to help make things as easy as possible for colleagues with sensory impairments to understand you.

Getting ready

- Find a quiet environment where there are no background noises that can be picked up by your microphone
- Make sure you are in a place with good lighting, so that your face is clear and easy to see
- Try not to have bright light behind you (for example from a window) or have your face in shadow
- Try to limit the number of people in the call so that it's easier to track who is taking part and speaking (we recommend a maximum of 10 people)
- For larger groups, consider using 'breakout rooms' for smaller sub group sizes

Starting the call

- Turn on your camera so that you can be seen by everyone, especially those who need to lip read
- Remember to introduce everyone who is in the call. Don't assume that everyone can hear/see each other well enough to know who is there
- Agree how often you will take a break in the meeting (we suggest around every 30 - 40 minutes)
- Be clear about who is going to take the minutes or notes
- If you are using the chat box to encourage questions etc. then make sure that everyone is aware of this and can access it. You might want to have a dedicated person to manage this who is separate from the presenter.
- Check that the technology and any communication support being used is working well for everyone before you start the meeting

Contact us to find out more:



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During the call

- Remember to speak clearly and one person at a time
- Say your name before you start speaking, in the first instance at least
- Be prepared to repeat things if asked
- Turn your microphone off when you're not speaking, to prevent any background noise from disturbing others
- Remember to take turns at speaking, don't jump in whilst others are speaking and give everyone the opportunity to participate
- For more speaker orientated sessions, you could use features like Zoom's 'Pin Video' which allows a specific speaker to be viewed on the entire screen
- Remember to ask for feedback at the end of the session to find out how accessible your colleagues found it

Top tips

- Remember that everyone's sight and hearing loss will be different, so ask people if there's anything you can do to make their experience better
- All video conferencing programs work differently. Sometimes, if the program struggles to determine who is and is not talking then it might be useful to turn your camera off when you're not talking

And finally... remember the 20 20 20 rule

Looking at a screen for a long time can be harmful to your eyes.

Aim to take a 20 second break from your screen every 20 minutes and look at something approximately 20 meters away (that's about the length of five cars, a cricket pitch or a ten pin bowling lane!)

We would like to thank the AVOW Covid19 team for their input into this document.

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