

Guidelines for Accessible Virtual Presentations

AFS strives to ensure that all meeting participants have equal opportunities to engage in and contribute to the annual meeting. Everyone benefits when we change how we think about—and act on—issues of access and equity. AFS developed the following guidelines for conference presenters to follow in order to make their work more accessible to all. AFS asks all presenters to read and follow these guidelines whenever possible and to ask for assistance if needed.

Preparing for the Session

- Offer “access copies” of your paper. If someone who wishes to read your text during the presentation contacts you in advance, we encourage you to work with them to supply the most convenient format, consistent with retaining control of your unpublished work. Access copies may take the form of a draft paper, slide show, or even an outline, and should be in 18 pt font or formatted according to specific, requested needs, and may include “Pre-publication copy; do not distribute” in your document’s headers/footers. Access copies should not be circulated or quoted without the author’s express permission.
 - Attendees may request an access copy from presenters. An Index of Presenters, including the email addresses of those who consented to share them, may be found on the conference platform.
 - You can post the text of your draft, outline, or slides as a “read only” Google Doc and share the URL on your first presentation slide (see <https://www.wikihow.com/Share-Google-Docs>) or in the Zoom chat when you begin your session. Use the free “Tiny URL”

system to produce a short URL that facilitates quick access (see <https://www.tiny.cc/>). You may wish to delete the on-line text after your presentation.

- Test your equipment to make sure that your mic and camera operate at acceptable levels. See [Help with Zoom](#) for more information.
- Identify yourself in Zoom. Consider preparing a virtual name tag to use as a virtual background or as a static image when your video is turned off.
- If you're using slides, format them to maximize readability.
 - Use a high contrast color scheme (white or light background with black text or the reverse)
 - Use a templated slide format
 - Use a san-serif font, such as Arial, and maintain a large font size (20+ point)
 - Use minimal text on each slide
 - Caption photos, videos, audio clips
 - Avoid using all caps

During the Session

- Let people know who you are. It helps everyone to have names clearly visible and audible.
 - Be sure to say your name before you begin your presentation.
 - Consider changing your display name, if necessary, to your professional name for the duration of the conference. Consult the [Help with Zoom](#) guidelines for technical assistance.
 - Be sure to identify yourself on slides at the beginning and end of a slide show presentation.
- Welcome everyone. At the start, take a moment to make people feel included and valued in your session.
- Encourage feedback. You can direct attendees to the session chat or moderator if something is not working or not accessible.

Light and Sound

- Position yourself where you are clearly lit. Attendees will better understand your message when they can see your facial expressions. For some attendees, your facial expressions and non-verbal gestures may be especially important, particularly in the context of a virtual gathering. This should also include finding a location that allows for contrast between you and your background, with lighting on your face instead of behind you.
- Pay attention to sound levels. Speak clearly and with adequate volume. Check the [Help with Zoom](#) guidelines for instructions about how to test your sound levels in the Zoom application. Test your equipment with others before the conference to make sure that it is adequate to the task.
- Use a microphone if you have one available. If you have a microphone, other than the one built into your device, use it. Even inexpensive mic/earplug combinations can make a significant difference in sound quality.
- Face forward. Just as you would in person, resist the urge to turn away from your microphone and camera (audience). Keep your face visible, as some people lip read to supplement access to the spoken word. Additionally, home microphones may have limited range, so that turning away may jeopardize the quality of your audio. If you need to look away, pause for a second or two.

Presenting

- Pace your presentation. Recognize that communicating effectively with your full audience may require a little extra time and plan the length of your presentation text accordingly. Try to avoid reading a text straight through. Pause, look up, and gauge audience reaction. Seeing your face helps people follow your presentation, and cues from the audience will help you know if you are communicating clearly.
- Describe images. While you are presenting, incorporate descriptions of images, graphs, or charts. For example, “this graph shows the increase of xyz to the level of . . .” or “this photo of hundreds of marchers reflects . . .” If you have text on a slide, read it.

- Describe objects. If you are using a physical object to enhance your presentation, try to provide a visual description of the object in addition to any other details.
- Offer audio and/or video descriptions or transcriptions. If you plan to use audio or video clips to supplement your presentation, include descriptions on corresponding slides. If it is possible to provide transcriptions, this will be even more beneficial. These practices will be made easier by pre-recording your presentation.
- Stay on schedule. Keeping to the published schedule makes it possible for audience members to find the presentations that interest them.

Follow extant AFS meeting policies regarding timing of presentations:

- Start each presentation at the time indicated in the program. Use unexpected free time for discussion, then return to the published program as soon as possible.
- Don't change the schedule of the session on the fly: don't rearrange papers or skip the Q&A that's meant to be included in each paper presentation.
- Notify AFS staff as soon as possible, preferably before October 1, about paper withdrawals, so they can be noted on the program addendum. Withdrawals received after October 1 are more difficult to bring to all attendees' attention.
- Double check the program schedule each day to make sure that you're aware of any last-minute adjustments.

These guidelines have been adapted to a virtual setting, with inspiration from the annual [AFS Guidelines for Accessible Presentations](#).