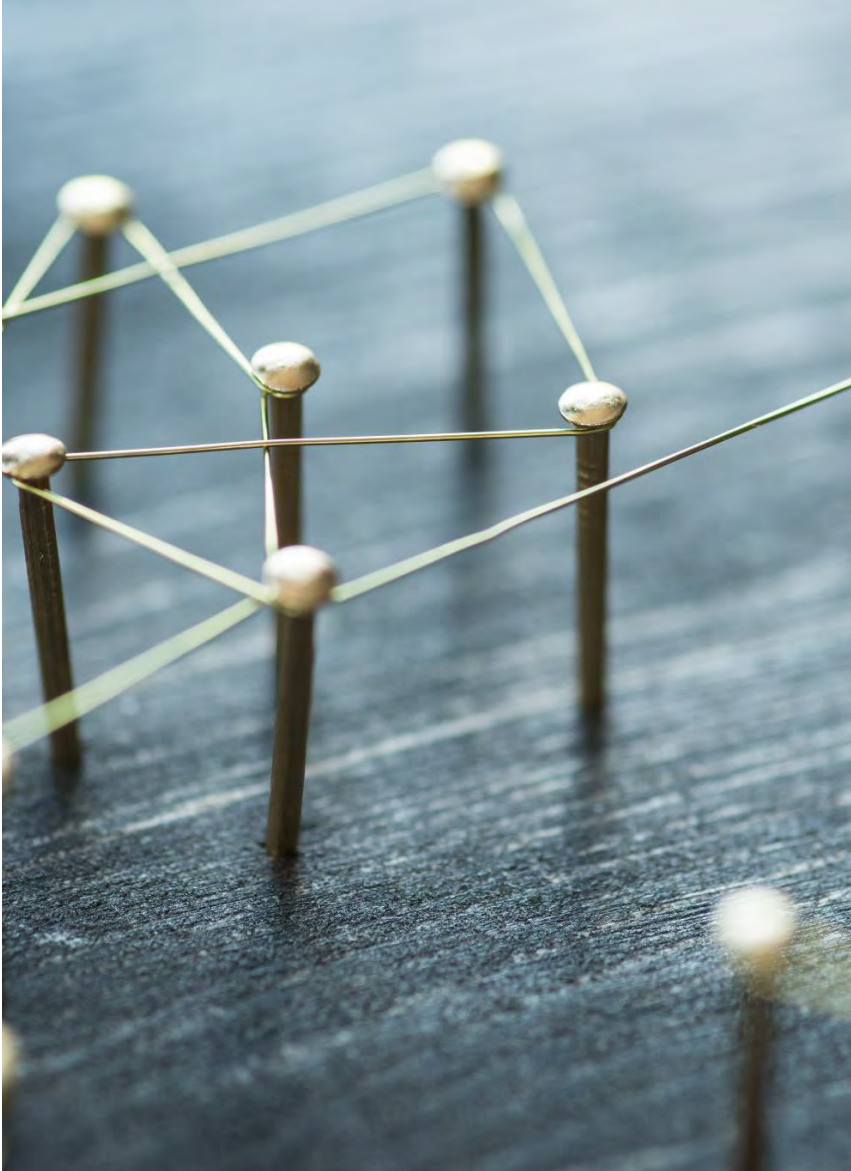


Accessible Virtual Meetings

Rebecca Martin, LSW, MSW, MDes

PhD Student, Rutgers School of Social Work



Before we begin:

An accessible PDF of this presentation is available for download at:

<https://tinyurl.com/MartinIHC>

Please download and distribute widely if you find it useful!

(The final pages include links to lots of great accessibility resources!)

Agenda



- Introductions
- Background
 - Notes on language
 - Accessibility vs. Accommodations
 - Disabilities most impacted
- Exercise: Accessible meetings
- Preparation
 - Accessibility features/considerations
 - Creating and disseminating accessible materials
 - Communications
 - Pre-meeting practice sessions
 - Trouble shooting
- Meeting best practices
- Adaptability
- Resources



Introductions



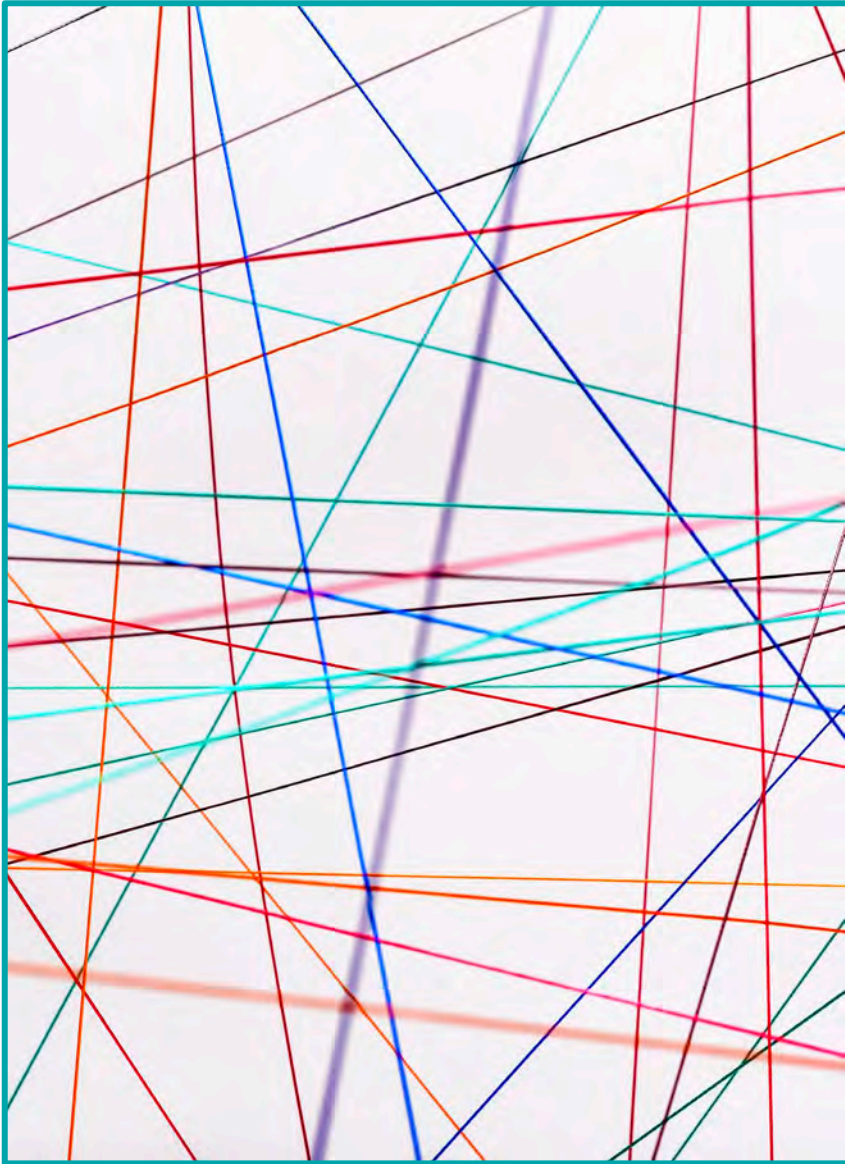
Me

You

About me

- Queer, neurodivergent, and charming
 - Any pronouns
- NJ Licensed Social Worker
- Education
 - Currently a PhD student at Rutgers School of Social Work
 - Masters of Social Work, Rutgers (2018)
 - Masters of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2013)
- Disability employment experience
 - Consultant, Trainer, and former Graduate Assistant, Inclusive Healthy Communities
 - Career Advisor and Social Worker, EDGE 2.0 program, The Family Resource Network (2018-2020)
 - Accommodations Assistant, Office of Disability Services Rutgers, Newark, (2017)





Introductions

1. Name
2. Pronouns (optional)
3. Organization
4. IHC grantee round(s)
5. Pick one. Something:
 - You are passionate about
 - Unexpected about you
 - You recently learned and want to share



Background

Language

Accessibility vs.
Accommodations

Disabilities most
impacted



Notes on language

It's difficult to know whether to use person first (e.g., people with disabilities) or identity first (e.g., disabled person) language

- Personal preference but also, some groups tend to prefer identity first, including:
 - Autistic people
 - The Deaf and Hard of Hearing community
- Some people evolve from person-first to identify-first over time as their disability becomes a more central part of how they see themselves
- When in doubt, listen for how someone describes themselves and use the same language back to them
 - Except:
 - If they are using a word that was once disparaging - such as 'crip' or 'queer' - allow them to speak their truth in their words, but don't use those words if you are not part of those communities

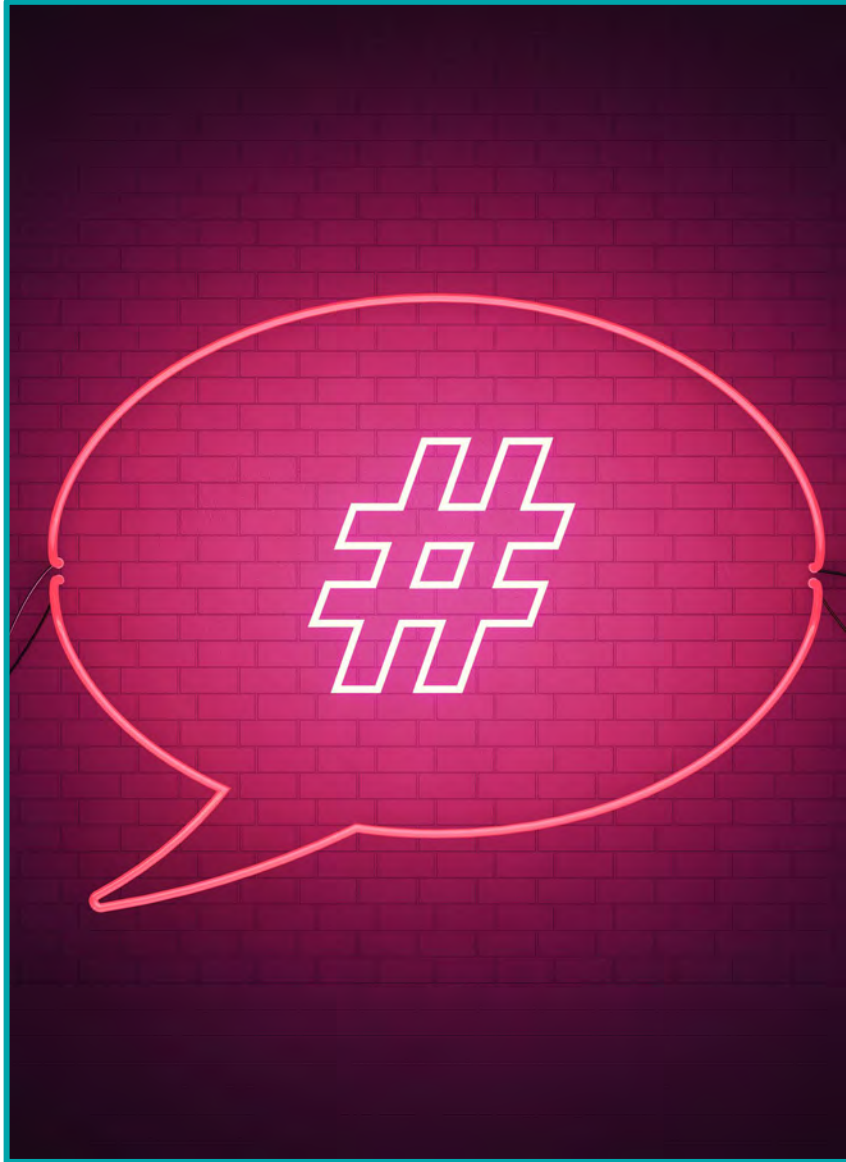
Notes on language (continued)

In general:

- People with disabilities are not offended if you use words in context (e.g., asking “Do you watch the British Baking Show?!” to a Blind person)
 - It is more awkward/stigmatizing when you stop yourself mid-sentence or say something like, “Or listen... or....?”

However:

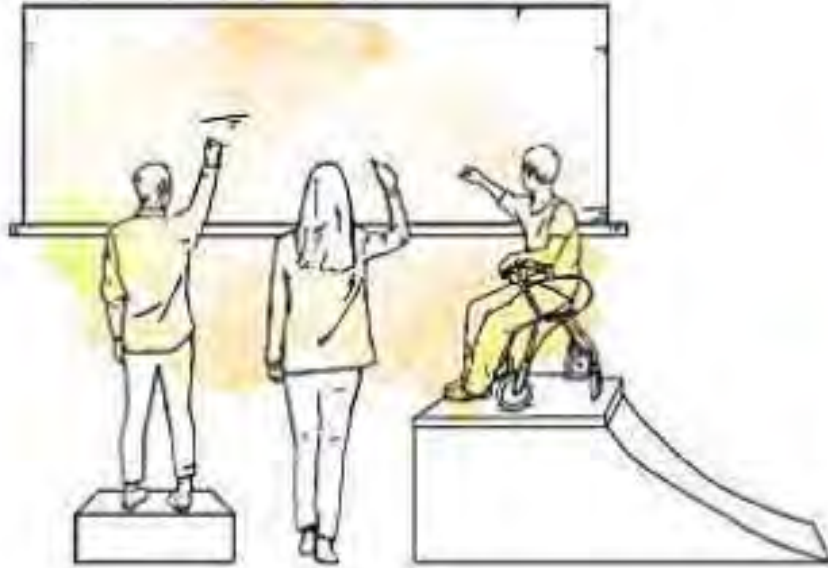
- Be thoughtful about the possibly ableist origin of metaphors (e.g., the blind leading the blind)
- If you say one and hear it, apologize sincerely, and carry on



What is the difference between Accessibility and Accommodation?

Discussion

Accommodation



Accessibility



Accessible vs. Accommodated

- Accommodation requires people to ask - which can be an unfair burden and requires disclosure
- The goal should be, to the greatest extent feasible, to make everything you do accessible

What disabilities are most impacted by inaccessible virtual meetings?

- Sensory disabilities (e.g., hearing impairments and/or visual impairments)
- Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) (e.g., neurodivergence, Autism, ADHD, Downs Syndrome)
- Speech or language disabilities (e.g., stuttering, aphasia)
- Epilepsy
- Motor disorders



Accessible Meetings

Exercise



Preparation

**“By failing to
prepare, you are
preparing to
fail.”**

- Benjamin Franklin

Running a Successful Accessible Meeting

Planning

- Who will be attending/presenting?
- How many people will host the meeting?
- Who is needed for support?
- What accessibility will you include without requests?
- What funds are available for accessibility and accommodations?
- How far in advance do plans need to be finalized to ensure accessibility?

Preparing

- Setting up your meeting
- Creating thoughtful communications
- Creating accessible materials
- Practicing

Executing

- Intentional moderating
- Providing technical support
- Adapting to in-time requests

Pick your platform

- The major platforms (Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, and Bluejeans) all offer automated captions and the ability to pin an ASL interpreter
 - Automated caption's quality varies
 - Many, but not all, hearing-impaired individuals prefer CART (real time manual captioning by a certified captioner)
 - Never attempt to have an uncertified person caption in real time, no matter how quickly they type
 - If your organization cannot afford CART, Zoom allows for third-party automated captioning from Otter.ai (which is considered far superior to the built in captioning)
- Presenters with disabilities might have a preference, which should be honored
- This presentation will show how to set up Zoom (but similar processes are available for other platforms as well, with guidance available at [Teams*](#), [Meet](#), [Bluejeans](#))



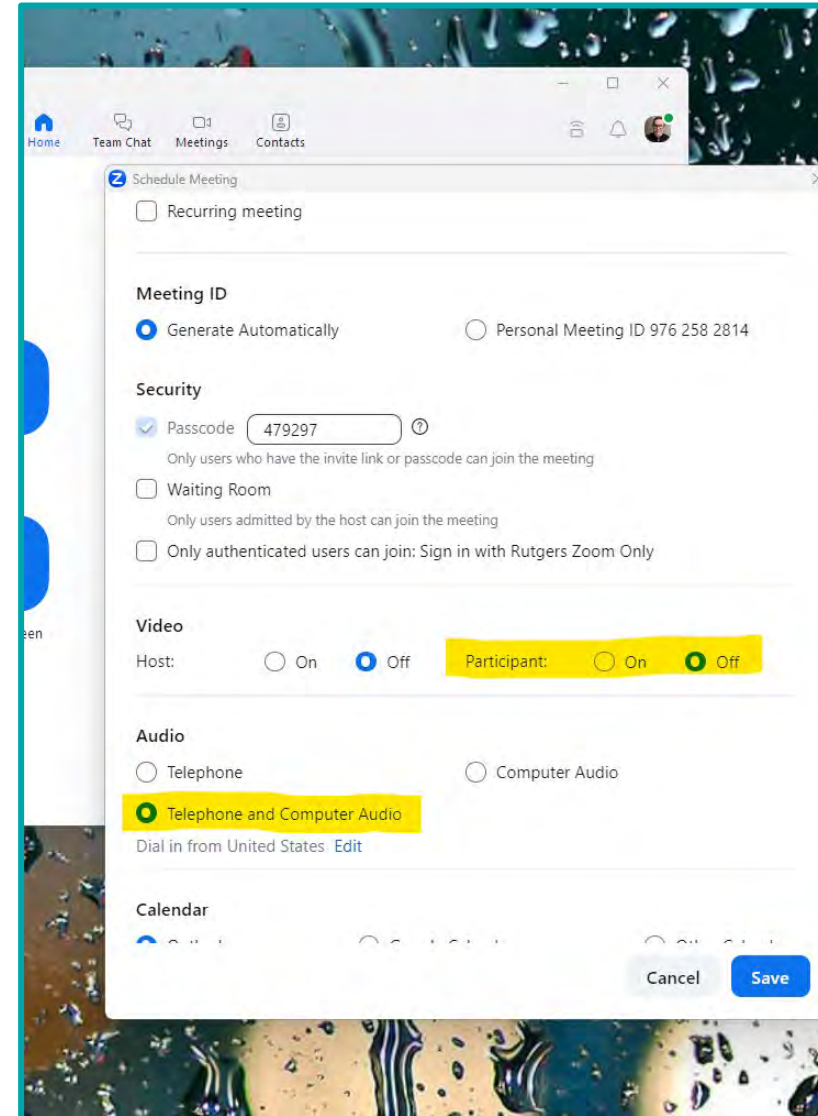
Accessibility Features and Considerations



Meeting
Settings

Audio and Video Settings

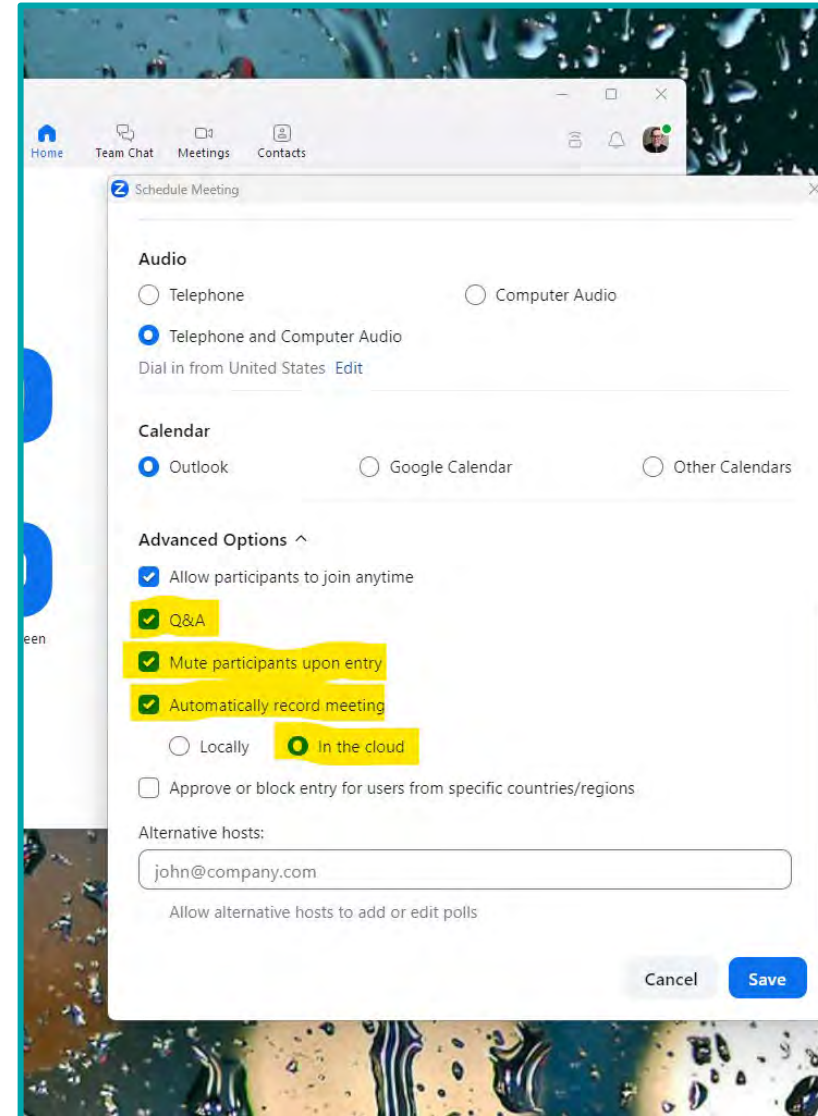
- Set participant video and audio to “off” as default
- Allow for both types of audio, as use of VRS requires phone access and one-touch dialing is useful for blind users



Communication Settings

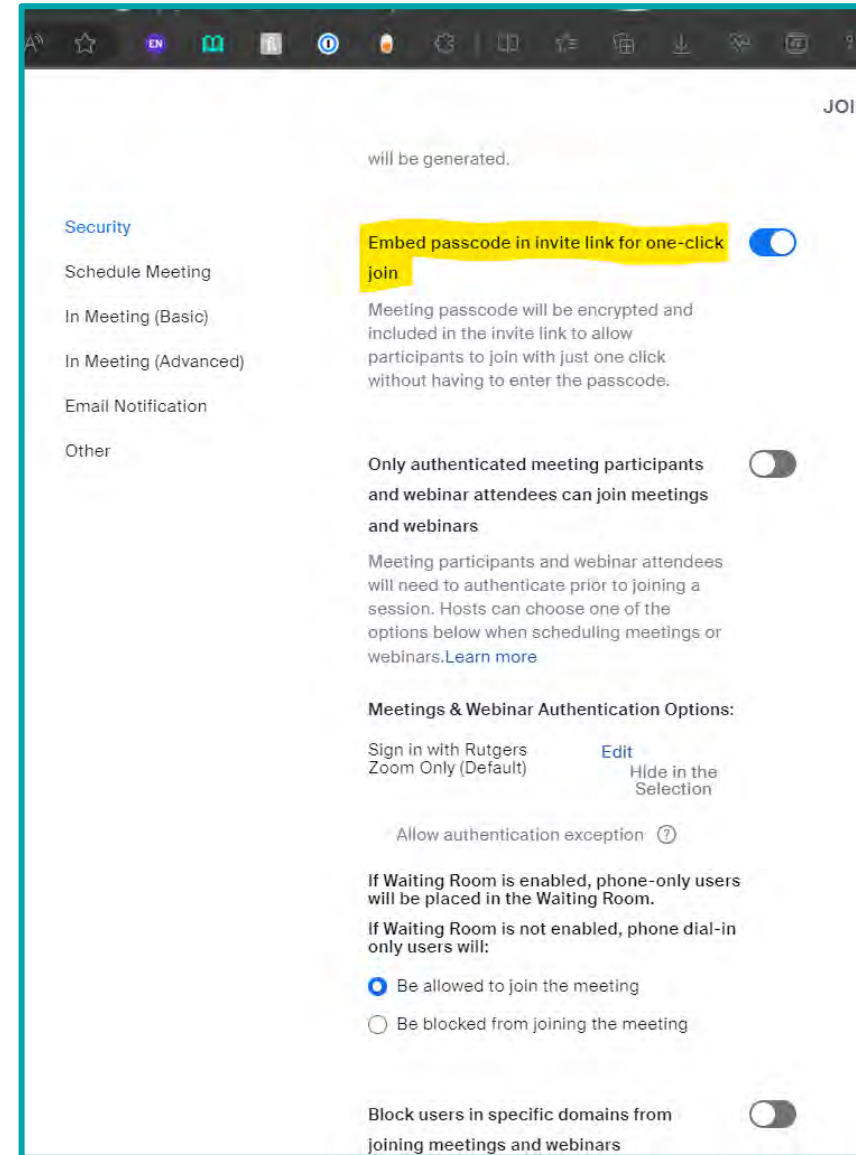
- Enable Q&A
- Mute participants on entry
- Record to the cloud*
 - Automatically capture a vtt file of your transcript that is time-stamped and can be used to add captions to your video
 - Allows you to download a better automated transcript to share with participants
 - So you can review and reflect on what to do differently next time

*Notify participants that you are recording, in case they are unable to see the indicator



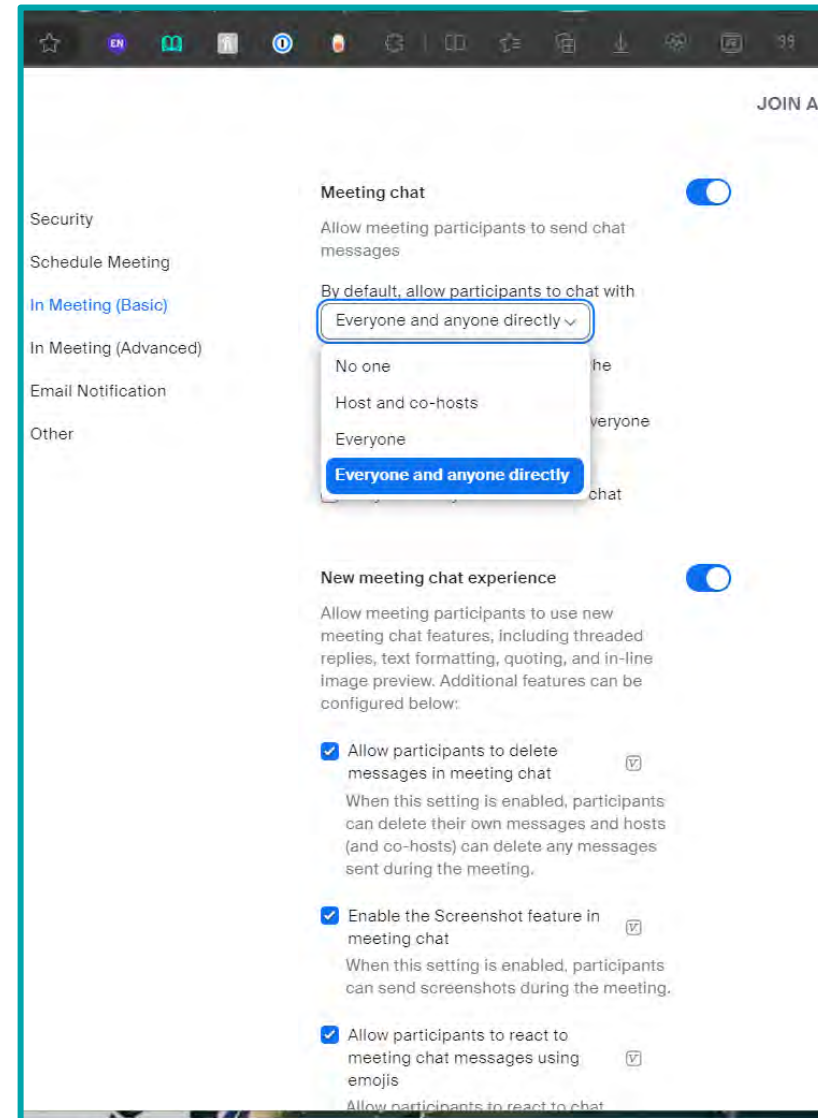
Browser-based Account Settings: Security

One-click link is essential for Blind participants and those with certain motor difficulties



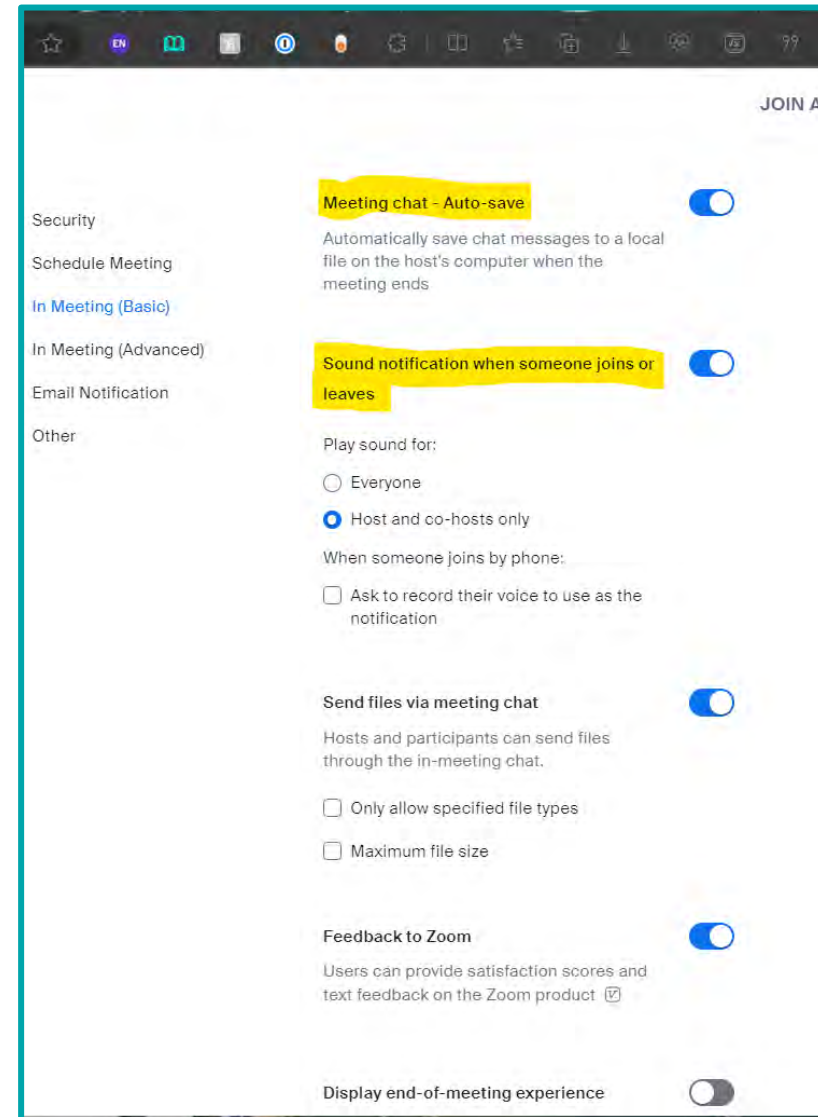
Browser-based Account Settings: In Meeting, Basic

- Plan in advance and be deliberate about use of the chat
- Consider:
 - Chat can be distracting/stressful for neurodiverse individuals
 - Chat has to be read aloud by screen readers and can distract from conversation for Blind individuals
 - If asking people to introduce themselves in the chat, put up a slide that includes what you want them to say (e.g., name, organization, etc.)



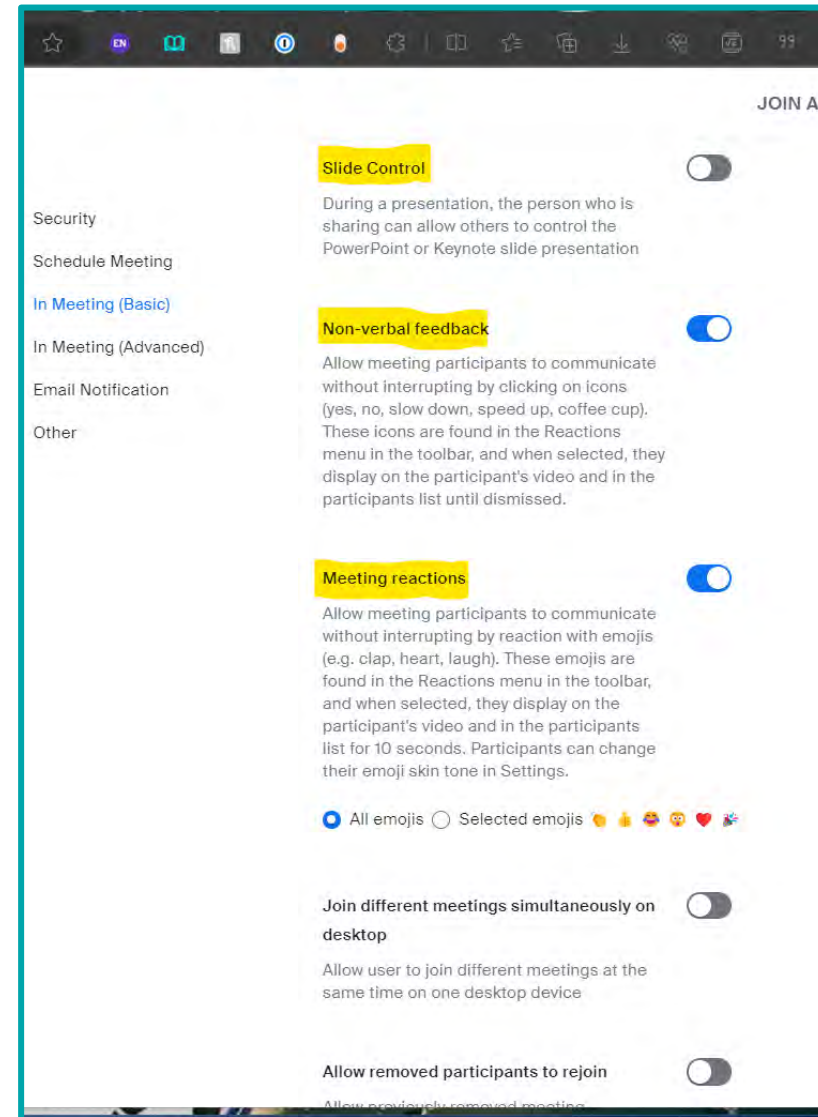
Browser-based Account Settings: In Meeting Basic (cont.)

- If you decide to use the chat, save it for distribution to document resources and contact information shared
- Change sound notifications for entering/leaving so that participants do not hear them



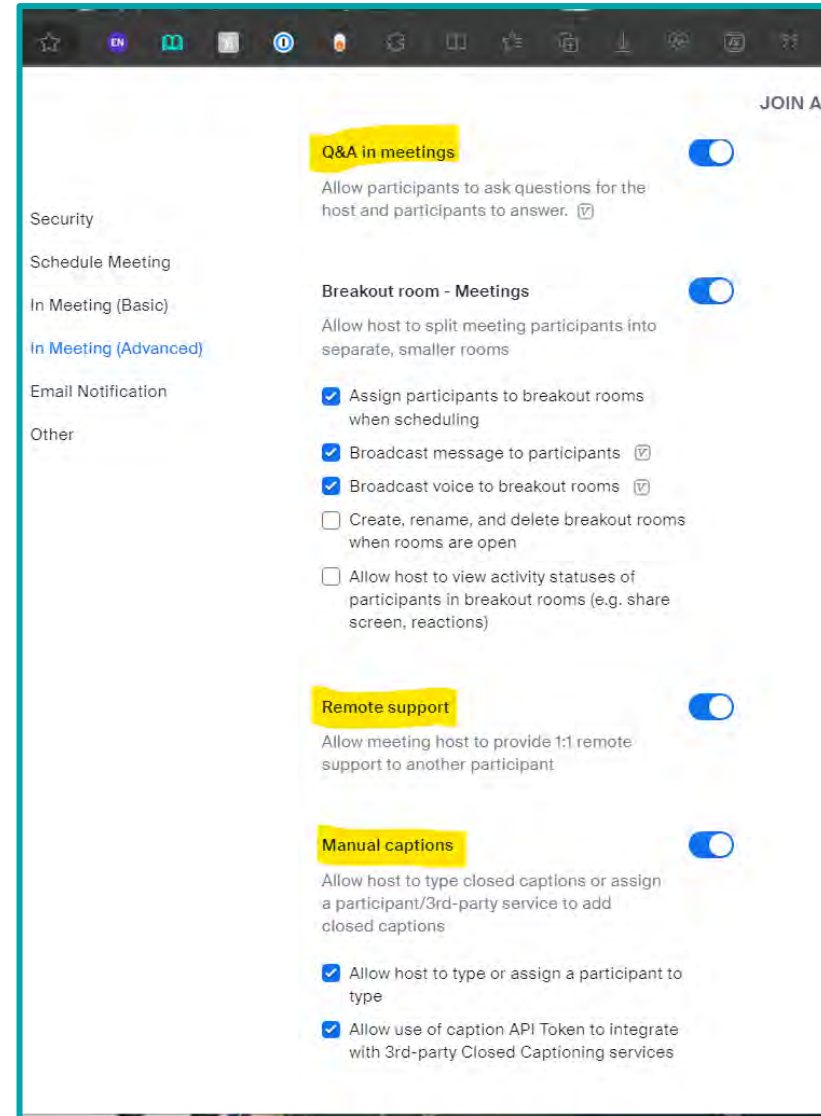
Browser-based Account Settings: In Meeting Basic (cont.)

- Slide control allows another user to control slides they are presenting
- Allow non-verbal feedback (e.g., images that ask for a presenter to slow down)
- Enable meeting reaction emojis



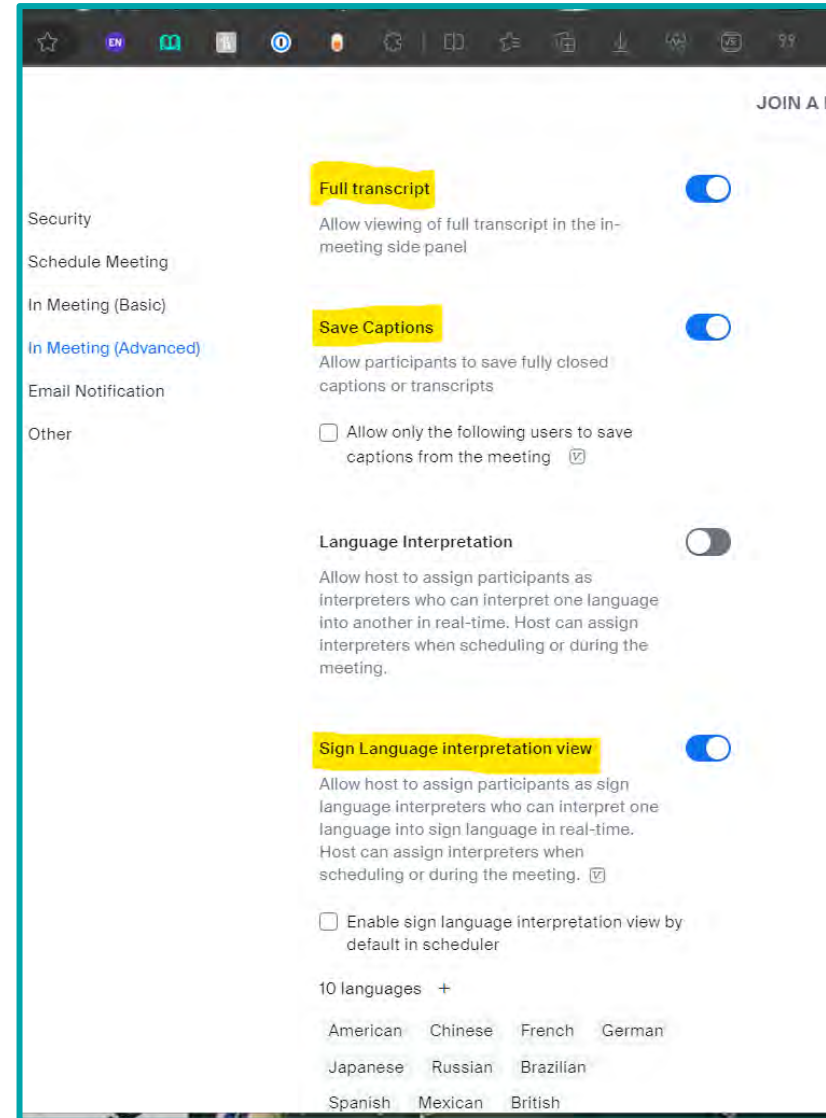
Browser-based Account Settings: In Meeting Advanced

- Use Q&A, if you are allowing unrestricted chat
 - Otherwise, chat can also be used for this function
- Remote Support can be enabled if you have IT staff who can provide assistance if needed
- Manual captions if you are using a live captioner



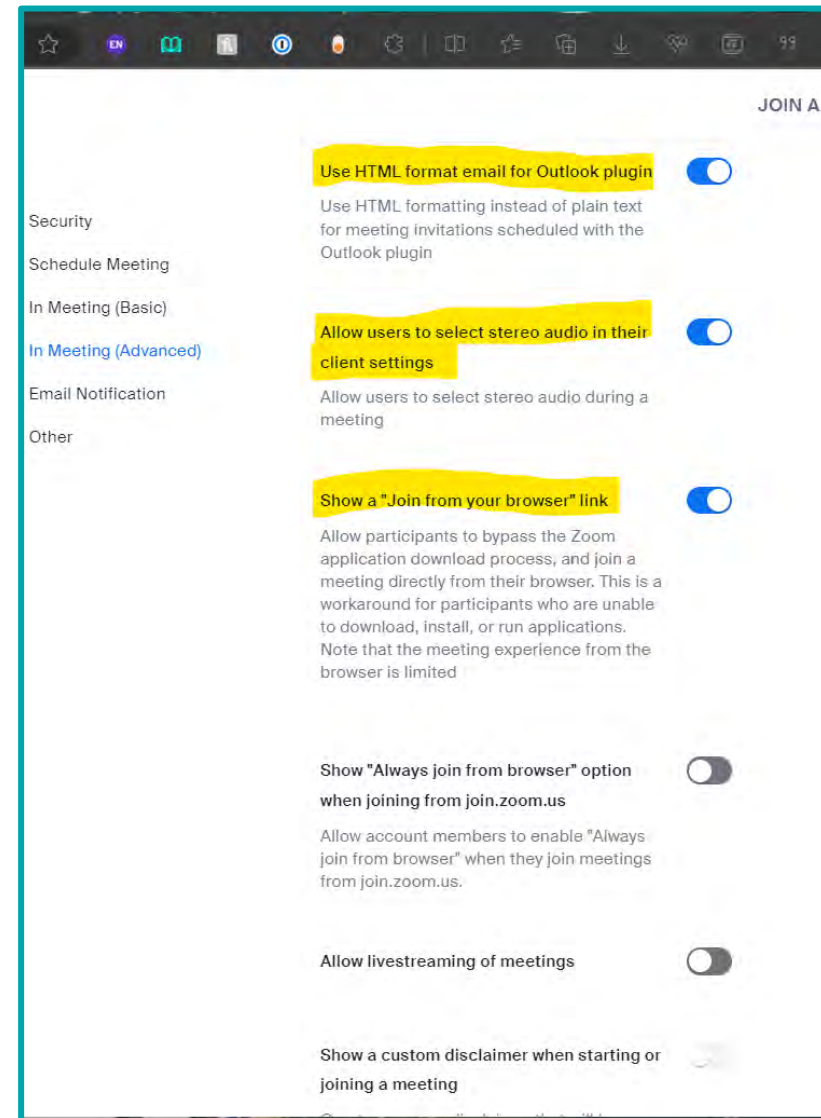
Browser-based Account Settings: In Meeting Advanced

- Enable full transcript view
- Allow all users to save captions
- May use sign language interpretation view rather than spotlight function



Browser-based Account Settings: In Meeting Advanced (cont.)

- Allow HTML in communications if possible
- Allow maximum control to users over audio settings
- Show a link to join from a browser





Creating and Disseminating Accessible Materials



Slides and
PDFs

Accessible Design: It's easier to plan ahead than try to adapt an inaccessible design

Visual Considerations


- Choose clean, simple designs with colors that are high in contrast
- Avoid bright, flashing elements
- Use large, clear fonts
 - Sans serif fonts are often easier to read
 - There are free fonts available (such as [APHont](#)) that are designed for people with reading disabilities

Content/Modalities

- Use plain language
- If you use slides that aren't "wordy," consider providing summaries or notes to participants
- Try to include a variety of ways to experience the material (e.g., discussion, activities, videos, lecture)

Accessible Materials: Screen Reader Accessibility

Screen readers cannot read materials that are being displayed with a "share screen" function



Therefore, for equitable access, screen-reader compatible materials must be made available to participants with vision impairments in advance of presentations

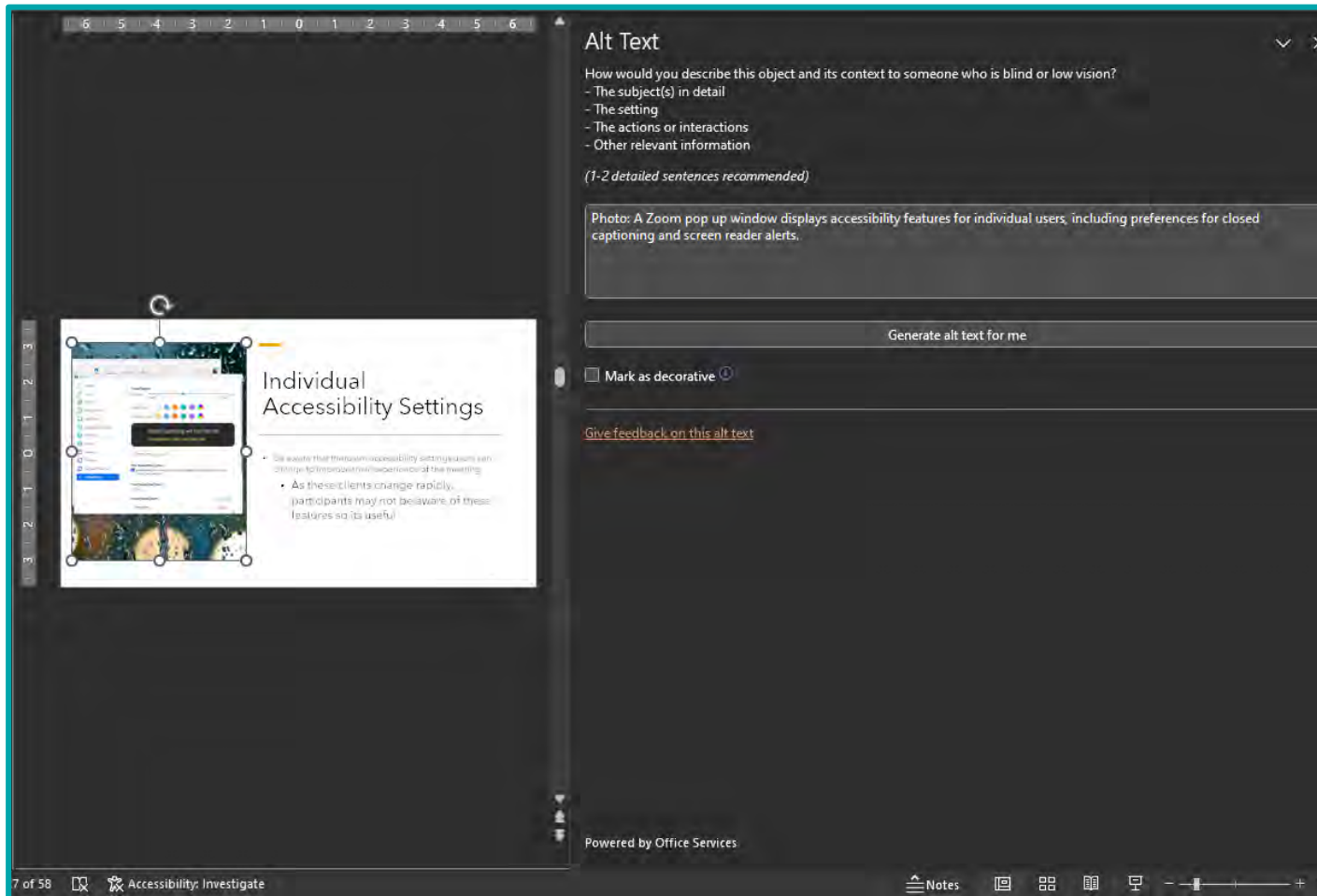
Accessible Materials: Creating Screen Reader Accessible Documents

It is challenging and time-consuming to adapt materials for screen-reader accessibility, so ask for final presentation and supplemental materials to be turned in early so you have time to work through challenges

If presenters are comfortable, providing editable document formats like PowerPoint and Word Doc files to individuals using screen readers is easiest

Otherwise, it will be necessary to use Adobe DC Pro to ensure PDFs are accessible

Accessible Materials: Essentials



- If providing an editable document format:
 - Provide alt text describing images and tables (do not use auto-generated alt text)
 - Run accessibility check (usually in review menu) and address issues
 - If you plan to distribute as a PDF, in my experience there is little use in doing the accessibility work in the primary creation software (e.g., Powerpoint, Word) because you will need to redo it in Adobe DC Pro anyway



Accessible Materials: PDF

- While I am not endorsing Adobe DC Pro, I have been unable to find a third-party free application or software that allows for creating an accessible PDF
- Essential components to consider are:
 - Image alt text
 - Labeling types of text (e.g., heading, paragraph, etc.)
 - Reading order
 - Marking decorations as background/artifact

Adobe Accessibility Video


The screenshot displays a video player interface. The main content is a PDF document titled "Submission Template for ACM Papers". The document text includes:

- 1 Submission Template for ACM Papers**
- This is Short Title of the paper, used in page headers
- This is the subtitle of the paper, this document both explains and embodies the submission format for authors using Word
- First Author's Name, Initials, and Last name***
- First author's affiliation, an Institution with a very long name, xxxxx@gmail.com
- Second Author's Name, Initials, and Last Name**
- Second author's affiliation, possibly the same institution, xxxxx@gmail.com
- Third Author's Name, Initials, and Last Name**
- Third author's affiliation, possibly the same institution, xxxxx@gmail.com
- Although there is no distinctive header, this is the abstract. This submission template allows authors to submit their papers for review to an ACM Conference or journal without any output design specifications incorporated at this point in the process. The ACM manuscript template is a single column document that allows authors to type their content into the pre-existing set of

The video player interface shows a play button, a progress bar at 0:01 / 8:17, and a title "How to make a PDF accessible" by Kelly Mack (4 subscribers). The video has 23 likes and options for Share, Download, and Clip.



Communicating about your meeting



Say it all,
everywhere

Anywhere
your event is
advertised,
you should
include
accessibility
messaging

List of included accessibility tools
(e.g., captioning, ASL, Screen-reader
accessible slides (in advance), etc.)

Name, email address, and phone
number for accessibility needs



No assumptions

- Do not presume that your participants will know unspoken meeting rules (e.g., meeting format, accessibility included)
- Be clear, direct, and err on the side of explaining too much in written communications



Pre-meeting Practice Sessions



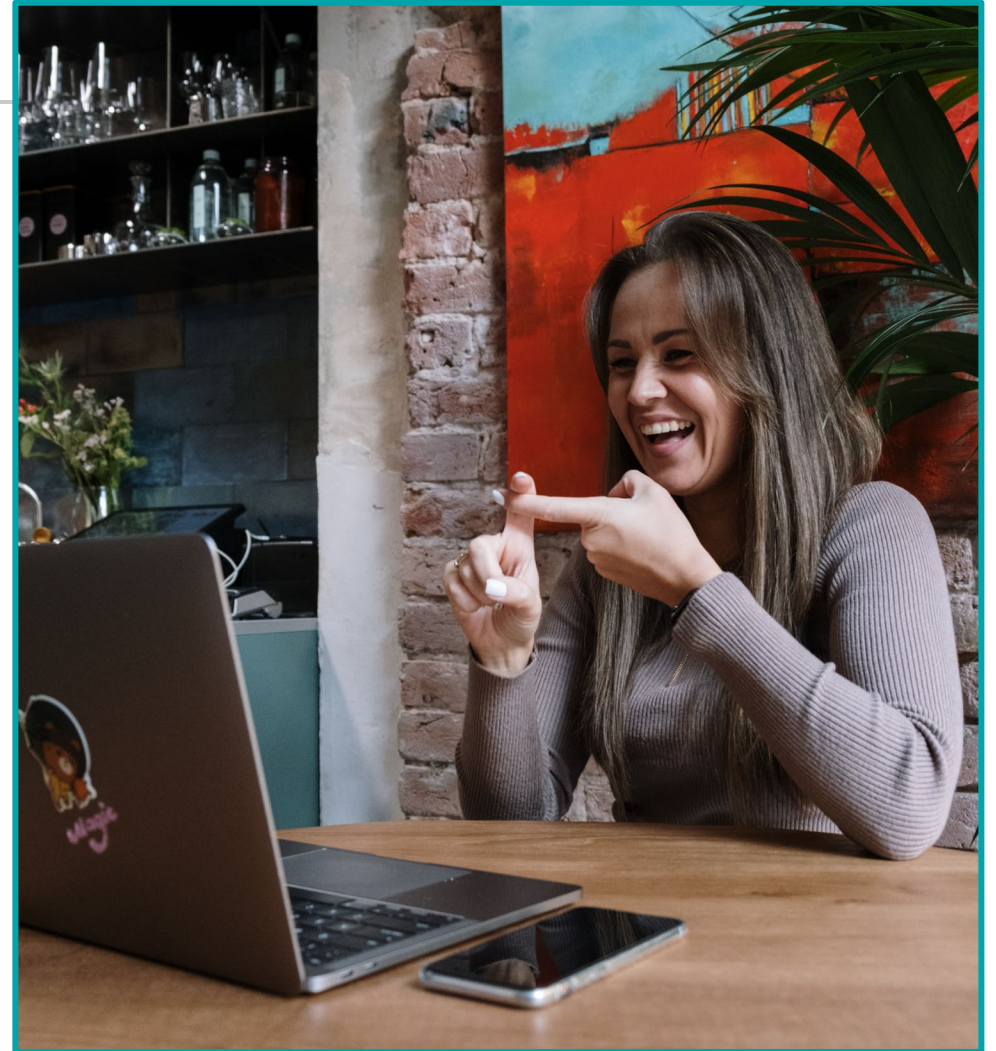
Improve
ease of
access

Practice with your team

To ensure technology is working as expected

To **define** processes:

- What guidelines/processes will be used?
- Who will be responsible for various elements of moderating?
- Who will trouble shoot challenges with tech?



Practice with presenters and support staff

Hands visible

- Make sure ASL interpreters are centered within the camera view, far enough away that hands stay in the frame

Spotlighted

- Spotlight (or designate as interpreters) so interpreters and speakers will remain in view during presentations

Bright lighting

- Ensure lighting is bright and that faces of anyone speaking can be seen, for lip readers

Tech check





Practice with participants

Offer to log on for a practice session for people with disabilities who may need to test technology or learn processes for participation

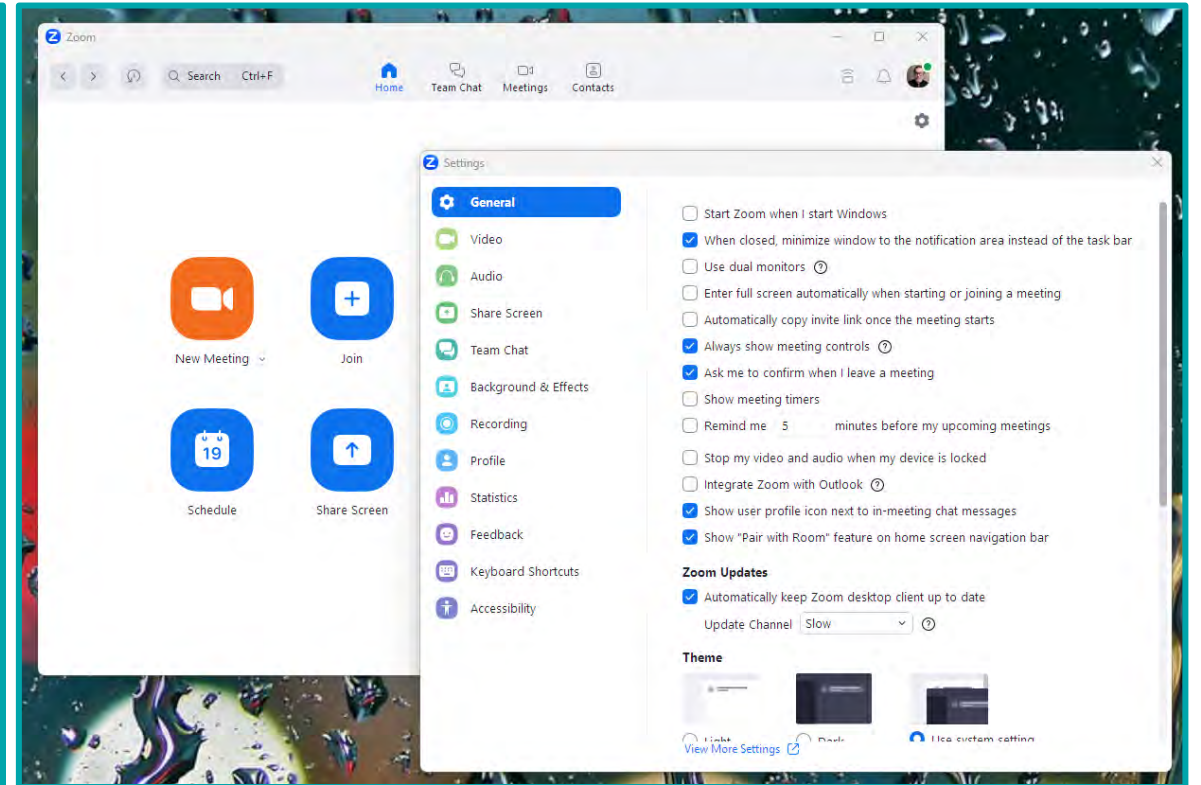
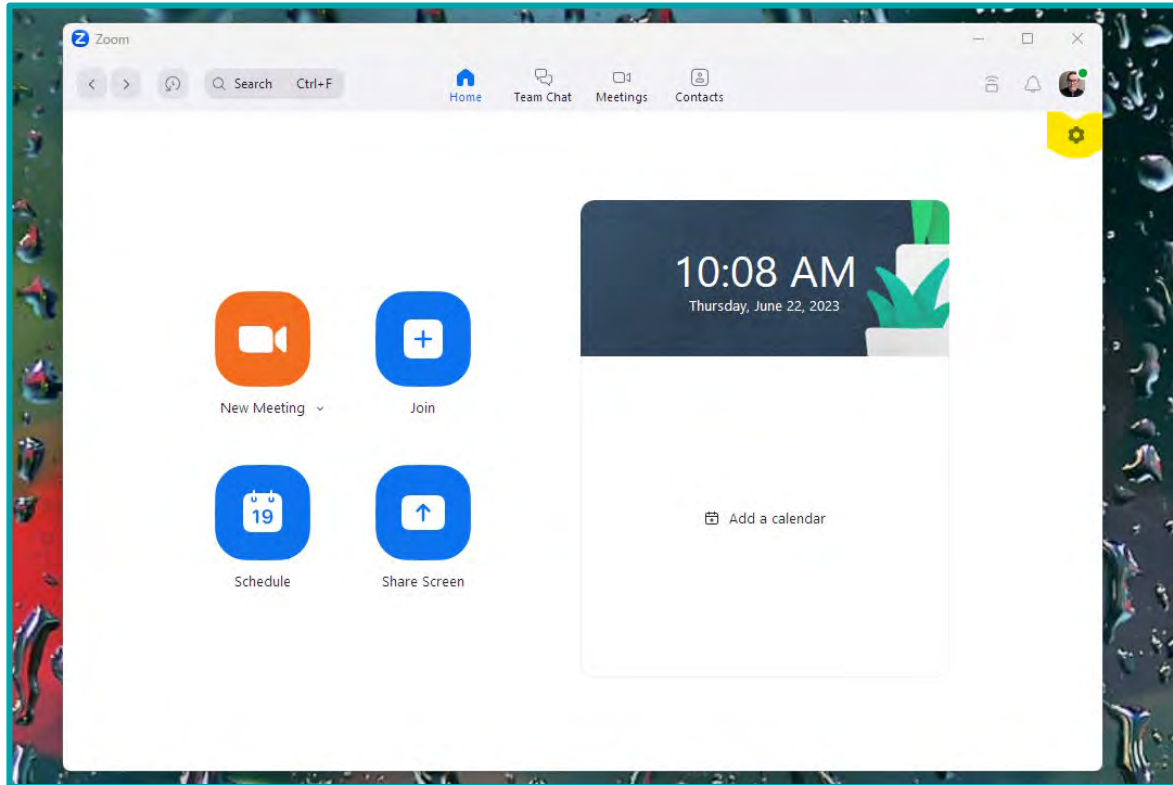
Explain guidelines as established with the team, particularly for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



Trouble Shooting with Participants

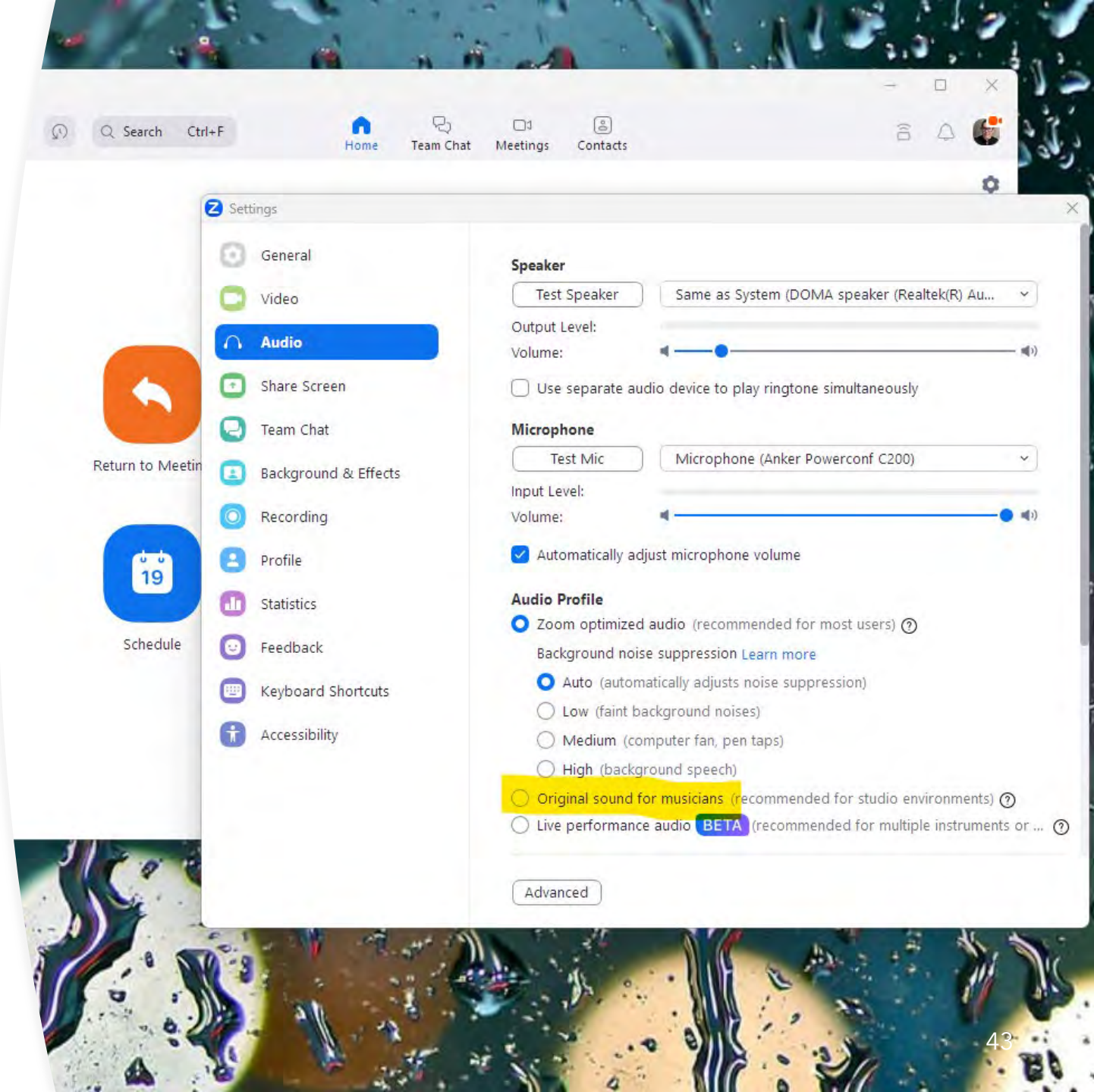
Useful
Settings to
Know
About

Settings Useful When Trouble Shooting with Individual Participants



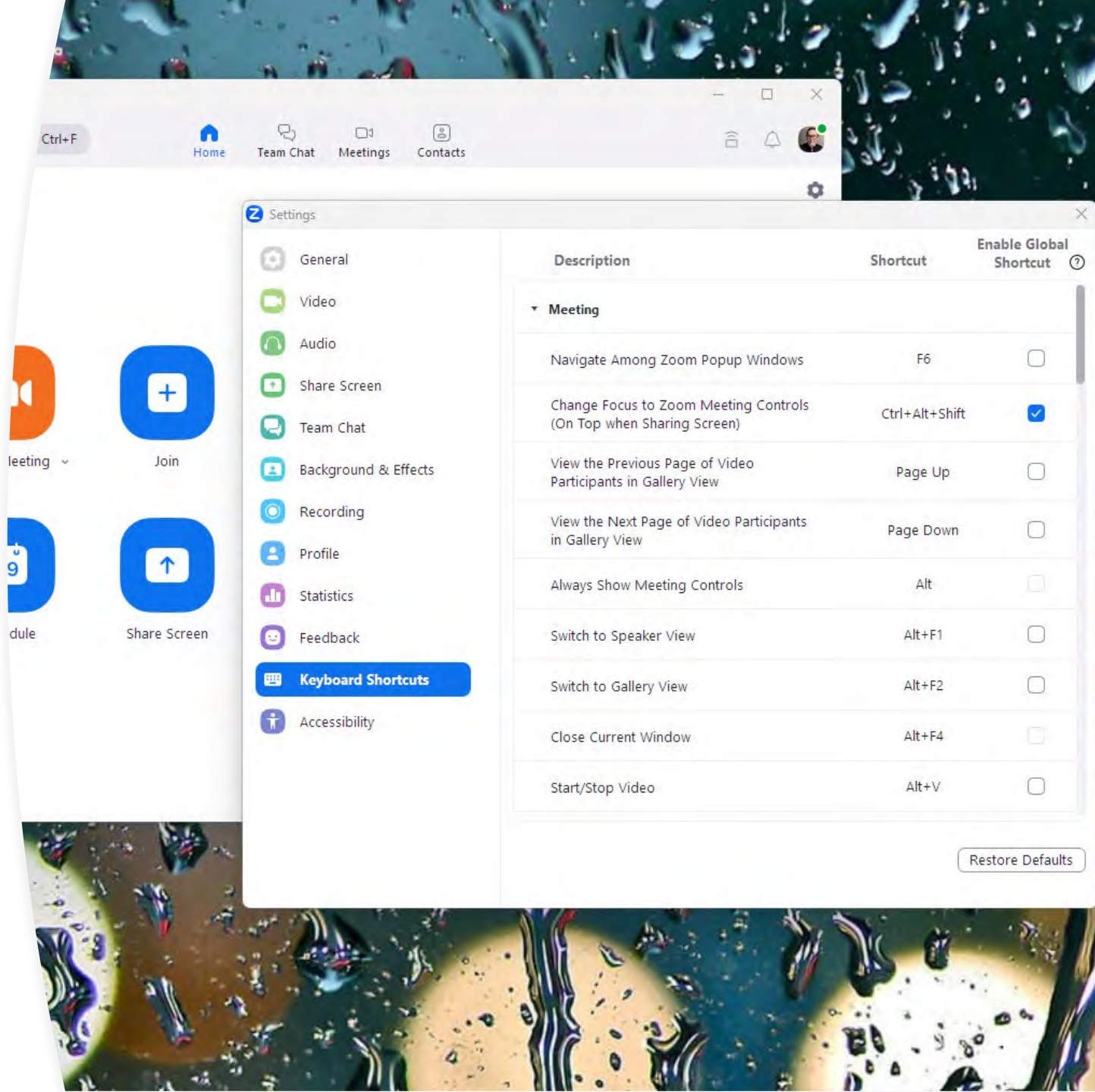
Individual Audio Settings

- For the majority of users, the audio profile should be set to Zoom optimized, with background noise suppression set to auto
 - However, for people using assistive devices to communicate with speech, or speech that is not recognized by Zoom as speech, adjusting the background suppression or using the original sound for musicians settings may help get their speech through Zoom's filters



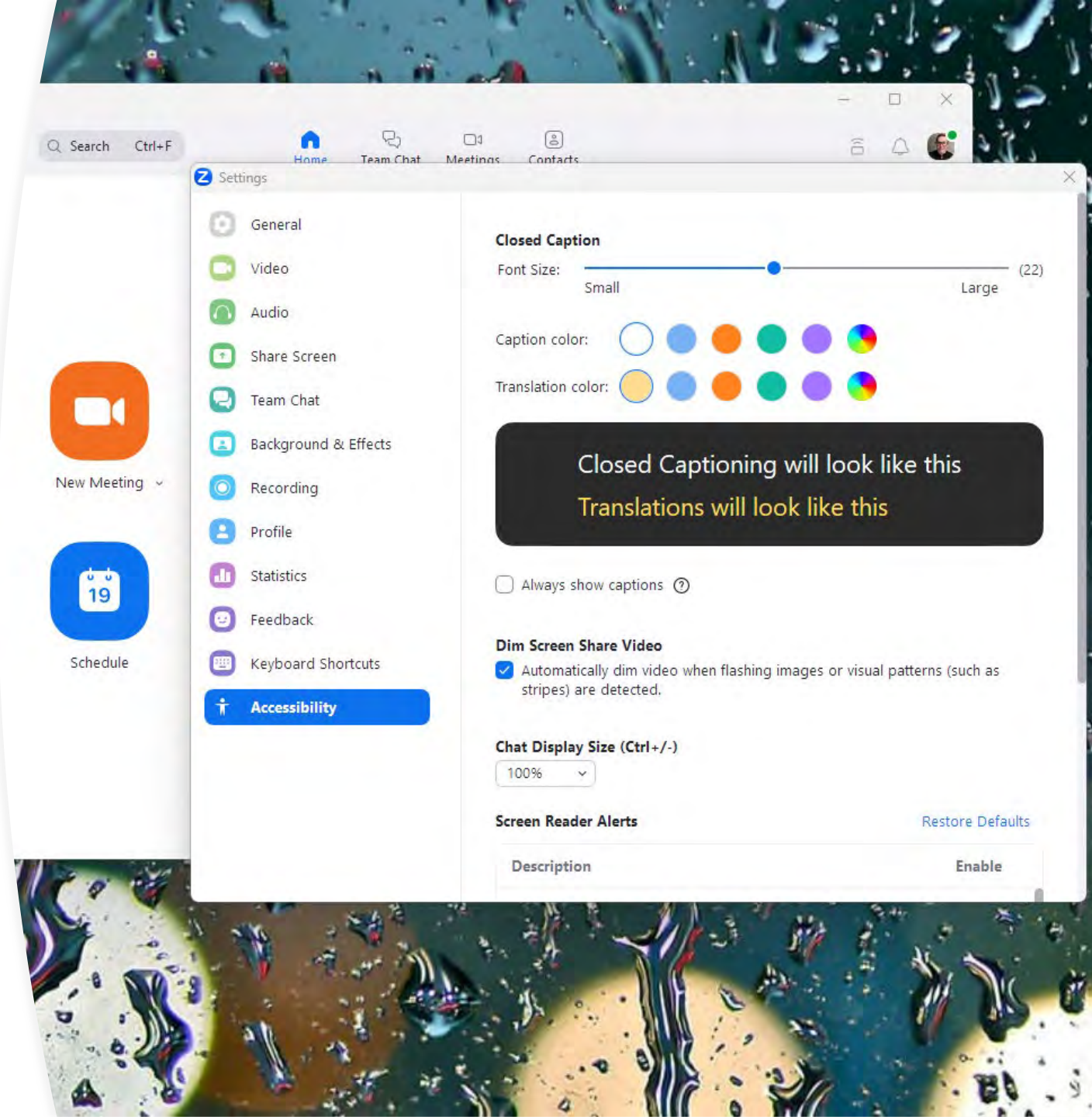
Individual Keyboard Shortcuts

- Be aware that there is a list of keyboard shortcuts that can be enabled. This may be useful for participants with mobility differences that impact their ability to use a mouse



Individual Accessibility Settings

- Be aware that there are accessibility settings users can change to improve their experience of the meeting
 - As these clients change rapidly, participants may not be aware of these features





Meeting Best Practices

Often, there is a conflict between the comfort of **moderators and participants without disabilities** and accessibility.

Accessibility should always win.



Thoughtful Use of Breakout Rooms

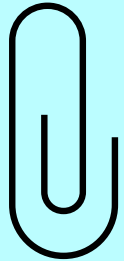
Breakout rooms can create opportunities for connection or deeper discussion/participation

But... they are probably the least accessible place in Zoom

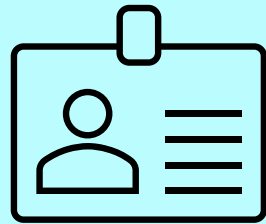
Placing a trained moderator in each room can create greater equity by:

- Ensuring established meeting guidelines are maintained in the small group
- Creating space for people who are unable to jump into the conversation due to a speech disability or neurodivergence
- Rephrasing discussion points in plain language for participants with intellectual disabilities
- Ensuring participants who are from historically marginalized groups aren't silenced (intentionally or unintentionally) in conversations

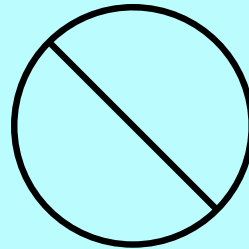
Best practices vary by scenario, but for those who are **blind or have visual impairments**:



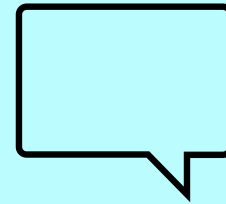
Provide accessible slides in advance



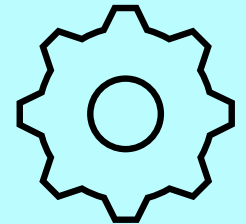
Ask participants to identify themselves before speaking



Don't insist on cameras being turned on

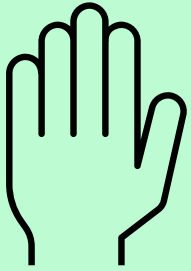


Don't refer to images without describing them

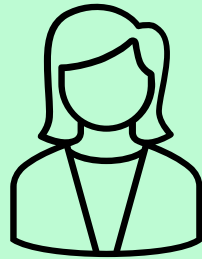


Don't ask participants to alter settings while in the meeting

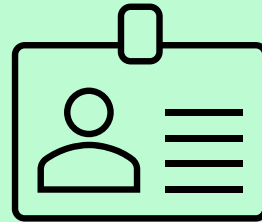
Best practices vary by scenario, but for those who are **Deaf or Hearing Impaired**:



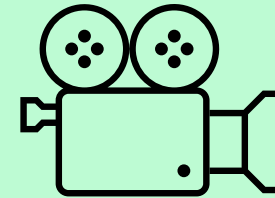
Provide ASL interpreting and/or captioning, based on their preferences



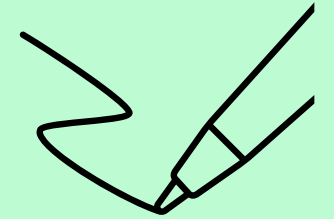
Spotlight ASL interpreter



Ask participants to say their names before speaking



Ask participants to turn video on when speaking



Provide alternative methods for asking questions and participating

Different people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing have many different ways of receiving communications:

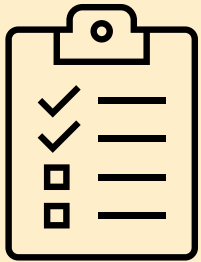
- Reading lips
- ASL - Native
- ASL - with English grammar
- Using assistive tech (e.g., hearing aids, t-coil technology)
- Using captions

It's very important to request additional information if accommodations are requested to ensure you provide the right type of support

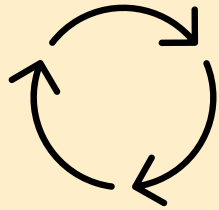
A Note about Hearing Impairment



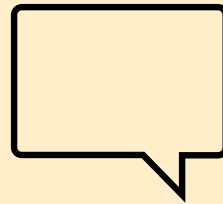
Best practices vary by scenario, but for those who are **Neurodivergent**:



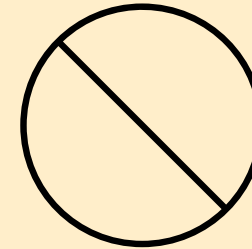
Send agenda



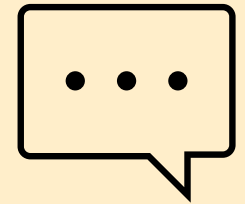
Establish guidelines and modes of engagement at start of meeting



Verbally manage speaker turns

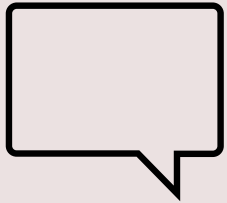


Allow cameras to be off, unless speaking (if needed)

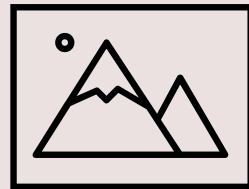


Minimize stimuli: limit chat, background noise, visual distractions

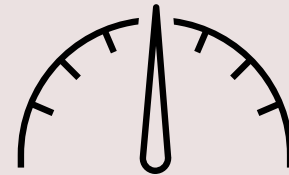
Best practices vary by scenario, but for those who have **Intellectual Disabilities**:



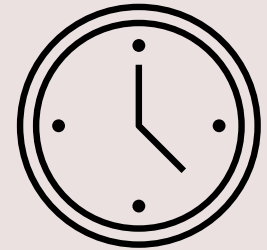
Use plain language



Use pictorial images



Do not speak too quickly



Provide breaks each hour

None of the major national population datasets includes data about people who experience multiple disabilities, so prevalence remains unknown.

Even if you are targeting a specific type of disability, you are likely to encounter participants with other co-existing types.

True inclusion means welcoming all of these parts of your participants to your event.

“Welcoming to all” means intentionally designing events to work for all potential participants

A Note about Multiple Disabilities



There may be times when the accessibility requests of participants conflict with each other.

Can you think of a scenario in which this might happen?

How would you resolve this?

Best Practice: Bring the impacted people with disabilities into the conversation so they can work together to find a solution that best meets their collective preferences.

Discussion



People with disabilities
come from every other
demographic group.

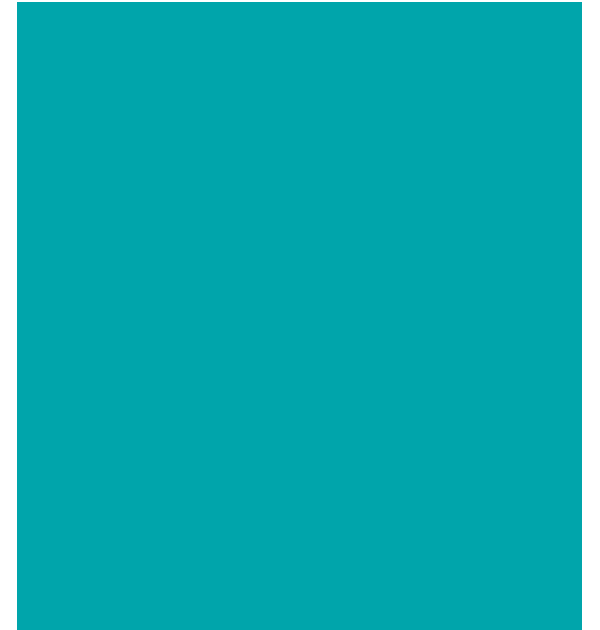
What other factors might
you need to consider to
make your meetings truly
inclusive?

Intersectional Thinking

An abstract graphic on the right side of the slide, featuring a large white circle that overlaps a colorful, wavy, liquid-like shape. The colors transition from orange and red on the left to pink, purple, and blue on the right.



Final Thoughts





Be adaptable

- In a complex system such as an accessible meeting, so much interacts that **it is very likely something will go wrong**
 - Be transparent in communicating your intentions and openness to feedback
 - Prior to the event, pause to reflect on how you can honor each participant in the ways they show up
 - (This might mean deprioritizing efficiency in favor of meaningful participation)



Resources



Design
Software
Checklists

Resources: Accessible and Universal Design

- [Web Aim Contrast Checker](#)
- [Venngage Color Blindness Simulator](#): Test a Webpage
- [Coblis Color blindness simulator](#): Test a File
- [Venngage Blog on Accessible Fonts](#)
- [Web Designer's Guide to Accessible Fonts](#)

Resources: Software Support Guidance

- [Kelly Mack's video on Adobe DC Pro for PDFs](#)
- Support pages for accessibility in:
 - [Microsoft Teams](#)
 - [Google Meet](#)
 - [Verizon Bluejeans](#)



Resources: Converting Inaccessible PDF text documents

- [SensusAccess independent website](#)
- [SensusAccess Rutgers Access link](#) (does not currently require Rutgers ID to use)

Resources: Accessible Meeting Guides

- Disability & Philanthropy Forum: Resource Library: [Planning Accessible Meetings and Events](#) (a page of links to great resources!)
- ADA National Network: [Accessible Meetings, Events & Conferences Guide](#)
- Rooted in Rights: [How to Make Your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community](#)
- UCL: [Accessible remote meeting guidelines - neurodivergent participants](#)
- HLAA: [Captioning and CART](#)
- Homeland Security: [Accessible Virtual Meetings](#) (very informative presentation)

Resources: Accessible Meeting Checklists

- World Institute of Disability: [Conference Accessibility Checklist](#)
- NIDILRR: Tip Sheet: [Hosting Accessible Virtual Meetings, Events, and Conferences](#)
- PEAT: [Checklist for an Accessible Virtual Meeting & Presentation](#)
- ABA: [Virtual Meetings: Accessibility Checklist & Best Practices](#)

Thank you!

Any Questions?

Let's keep in touch!

Rebecca Martin

rebecca.martin@rutgers.edu

rebecca.martin.lsw@gmail.com

862-621-9293



Scan to
download my
digital business
card