

# Guidelines for Teaching on Zoom in an ADA-Friendly Way

*A practical handout for RS leaders, speakers, tech hosts, and Zoom helpers*

## Use this as practical accessibility guidance, not legal advice.

The goal is to make Zoom classes easier to see, hear, follow, and participate in. Formal ADA accommodations should follow Renaissance Society and Sacramento State procedures.

## The big principle

**The core accessibility goal is effective communication.** Participants should be able to receive the same information, ask questions, and participate in a usable way. The right support may vary depending on the person, the class format, the length and complexity of the session, and any accommodation request.

## Teacher-friendly version

Make the class work for people who may have hearing, vision, mobility, cognitive, speech, or technology access needs. Many of these practices also help older adults and anyone learning something new on Zoom.

## Before the Zoom class

1. **Include an accommodation line in announcements or reminders.** Use the wording approved by RS or Sac State. A simple version is: "To request disability-related accommodations, please contact [name/email] as early as possible."
2. **Turn on captions before class.** At minimum, enable Zoom automated captions. For some accommodation requests, automated captions may not be enough; a live captioner, CART provider, interpreter, or another aid may be needed.
3. **Send materials ahead of time when possible.** Advance materials help people who use screen readers, magnification, captions, note-taking support, or extra processing time.
4. **Use accessible PowerPoint habits.** Use built-in slide layouts, unique slide titles, high contrast, logical reading order, alt text for meaningful images, and large readable fonts.
5. **Use descriptive link text.** Write "Download the Fall Catalog" instead of "click here." Descriptive links are easier for screen reader users and clearer for everyone.

## During the Zoom class

6. **Start with access instructions.** Tell participants that captions are available and that they may ask questions by voice, chat, or another method you allow.

7. **Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.** This helps captions, people with hearing loss, and anyone processing new information.
8. **Describe what is on the screen.** Do not rely on "click this" or "look over here." Say exactly where something is and what it is called.
9. **Read important chat comments aloud.** If a question or link appears in chat, read or summarize it before responding.
10. **Do not rely on color alone.** Say "the green button labeled Submit" rather than only "the green button."
11. **Make participation flexible.** Allow voice, chat, reaction icons, or listening when possible. Not everyone can or wants to participate in the same way.
12. **Give people time.** Pause after questions, before changing screens, and after multi-step directions.
13. **Keep the shared screen simple.** Avoid tiny text, busy backgrounds, flashing animation, fast transitions, and cluttered slides.
14. **Protect interpreter visibility if an interpreter is present.** Make sure the interpreter remains visible and is not hidden behind shared content.
15. **Offer alternatives to mouse-only directions.** Some participants may rely on keyboard navigation or assistive technology. Avoid assuming everyone can drag, hover, or precisely click.

## Better Zoom wording: examples teachers can use

Less helpful	More accessible
Click here.	Select the blue Share Screen button at the bottom center of the Zoom window.
Look at this chart.	This chart shows registration rising from March to May, with the largest increase in May.
Use the green one.	Choose the green button labeled Submit.
As Mary said in the chat...	Mary asked in the chat whether the recording will be available. Yes, it will be shared after class.
Everybody unmute now.	You may ask your question by unmuting or by typing it in chat.

## After the Zoom class

16. **If you share a recording, provide captions or a transcript when possible.** Captions and transcripts make recordings easier to use for people with hearing, processing, or review needs.
17. **Share accessible handouts, not just screenshots.** A screenshot of text is not the same as real readable text. Share Word, accessible PDF, or PowerPoint files with real text whenever possible.
18. **Run the Accessibility Checker before posting slides.** PowerPoint can identify common issues such as missing slide titles, missing alt text, reading order problems, and contrast concerns.

## One-page teacher checklist

Before teaching, the instructor or tech host should be able to say:

- Captions are turned on.
- Slides use large readable type and high contrast.
- Every slide has a clear title.
- Images, charts, screenshots, and demonstrations will be described aloud.
- Important chat comments and questions will be read aloud or summarized.
- Links are descriptive, not just "click here."
- Participants can ask questions by voice or chat.
- The instructor will pause after multi-step directions.
- Materials and recordings will be shared in an accessible format when possible.
- Accommodation requests go to the correct RS or Sac State contact.

## Short scripts teachers can copy

### Opening script

Captions are available in Zoom. You may participate by speaking, typing in chat, using reaction icons, or simply listening. If you need something repeated or described, please let us know.

### Accommodation reminder

To request disability-related accommodations, please contact [name/email] as early as possible. Please use the official RS or Sac State wording if one is provided.

### Screen-sharing script

I am sharing a slide now. The title is [slide title]. The main idea on the slide is [main idea]. I will read the key points before we discuss them.

## Quick PowerPoint accessibility reminders for Zoom

- **Use large fonts.** For Zoom teaching, aim for 28 pt or larger for body text when possible.
- **Use high contrast.** Dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background is easier to read.

- **Keep one main idea per slide.** Avoid filling slides with dense paragraphs.
- **Avoid text over busy images.** Put text in a solid high-contrast box if it must appear with an image.
- **Use built-in layouts.** They usually create better reading order than manually scattered text boxes.
- **Add alt text to meaningful images.** Decorative images can be marked decorative when appropriate.
- **Check reading order.** This matters when slides are shared after class or used with screen readers.

## Helpful sources and references

These sources informed the checklist and are useful for leaders or tech hosts who want more detail.

**ADA.gov - Effective Communication:** <https://www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication/>

Explains the idea of effective communication and examples of auxiliary aids and services.

**Zoom Support - Captioning and transcription:** [https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm\\_kb&sysparm\\_article=KB0062000](https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm_kb&sysparm_article=KB0062000)

Explains Zoom captioning options, including automated captions, manual captions, and third-party captioning services.

**Zoom Support - Keyboard shortcuts:** [https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm\\_kb&sysparm\\_article=KB0067050](https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm_kb&sysparm_article=KB0067050)

Lists keyboard shortcuts that can help participants who do not use a mouse.

**Microsoft Support - Make PowerPoint presentations accessible:** <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25>

Covers slide titles, reading order, alt text, descriptive links, contrast, and the Accessibility Checker.

**W3C - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG):** <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

Provides the broader accessibility framework often referenced by institutions and public agencies.

### Recommended RS use

Give this handout to leaders, speakers, co-leaders, and Zoom tech hosts. Pair it with a short practice session so people can turn on captions, describe a slide, read chat aloud, and use a more accessible screen-sharing script.