

Accessible Video Conferencing – Advice by Enhance The UK.

When setting up remote working for your staff and clients it is essential to consider accessible video conferencing in a communication plan. 1 in 5 working adults have a disability and 1 in 7 have a hearing impairment so inclusive and accessible software is crucial.

Even if you currently do not have team members who are disabled, accessibility features can be useful for everyone.

Features to look out for when choosing accessible video conferencing are:

Keyboard Shortcuts

Keyboard shortcuts allow users to use the software without a mouse or other input devices. They make software quicker and easier to use for all. Shortcuts are especially helpful for individuals who have physical impairments which impacts on their dexterity.

Tab Navigation

Tab navigation lets users move through features on and in the software from the keyboard alone using the Tab key. This helps staff who are unable to or find it difficult to use a mouse.

High-contrast settings

Some people who are visually impaired find it easier to read information if there is a higher contrast between the background and the text. And this feature can reduce eye strain for anyone spending a lot of time in front of a computer screen.

Font Size, type & colour

Being able to change the font size, type and colour improves the accessibility of the software not only for people who are visually impaired but also for some people with Dyslexia.

A Magnifier

By enlarging part (or all) of a screen, some people with visual impairments can better see words and images.

Compatible with Screen Readers

For accessible video conferencing ensure your choice is compatible with screen reader software. This converts text and images to audio or braille outputs. Not only do people who are blind or visually impaired use screen readers but so do many people who have learning disabilities.

Subtitles or Closed Captions

Some video conferencing software has the option for automatic software or captions. There are always pros and cons to this depending on how good the voice recognition is. It's always worth testing this out during a trial period to check. Others offer the ability to add captions yourself, where one meeting attendee types what is being said. Or through a third-party provider who provides the service.

This useful for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. And for anyone who has the background noise distraction of kids playing or partners who are home working too.

Transcripts

There are a number of people who struggle to listen to/watch a skype call and make notes. It's always worth looking at whether the software has the option to download transcripts of the video afterwards as these can be sent out to those on the call (or people who were unable to attend).

It's unlikely that any piece of software will be perfect, but the more of the above features the better!

As far as we are aware the most accessible Video conferencing software are:

	Keyboard Shortcuts	Tab Navigation	High Contrast	Changeable font size, type & Colour	Magnifier	Compatible with Screen readers	Automatic subtitles or captions	Manual subtitles or caption	Automatic transcripts
Zoom	✓	✓	✓	*1		✓		✓	✓
Microsoft teams	✓	✓	✓	*2	*2	*3	*4		✓
Skype	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

The graph above shows that overall Zoom is the most accessible software however captions must be manually added. If any of your team have a hearing impairment, then Microsoft Teams then Skype offer automatic captioning. If you need any further information, please contact us.

*1 - The Zoom Application on macOS and Windows only support the inheritance of the display scaling options defined in the operating system settings.

*2 – Using the Immersive reader. You can open a Teams conversation to separate reader that reads aloud the text and zooms in the text for better reading. You can also set background colour, font & size

*3 - There are ongoing issues and inconsistencies across the software fully documented on the website.

*4 – only available in US English.

If you know of any other accessible video conference software, please do let us know.

For tips on video conferencing watch this [Accessibility Tips video](#) from our CEO Jennie Williams.

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