Working with Visually Impaired and   
Deaf Artists Online

**Contributors:**

**Raji Gopalakrishnan** Actor

**Samira Ahmed** Freelance Artist

**Chloe Clarke** Actor & Audio Description Consultant

**Deepa Shastri** Freelance BSL Consultant, Producer & Project Manager

Edited & Captioned by **Stephen Lloyd**

Produced by **Graeae Theatre Company**

**Contents of the video:**

**Merits of Zoom/Teams** – 01.16

**Creating an Accessible Environment:**

* Before the Meeting – 02.17
* During the Meeting – 06.05

**Working with Captioning & Notetakers** – 09.20

**Working with BSL Interpreters** – 10.30

**Working with Hands-on BSL Interpreters** – 12.29

**Working with Audio Description** – 14.08

**To sum up** – 16.47

**Additional Resources**

**Merits of Zoom / Teams**

* **Zoom is preferable** as one of the more accessible platforms. It is reliable, flexible and has the sharpest picture quality.
* Google Meets can be good for one-to-one meetings.

**Creating an Accessible Environment:** Before the Meeting

* Talk to your participants and assess what their **access requirements** are.
* Send out a document such as an **Access Audit** with questions about access requirements to every participant **before the meeting**. This will make them feel comfortable to discuss their access requirements as well we being useful for you to put access provisions in place.
* **Ask your participants** which platform they would prefer to use as **familiarity** is important.
* **Provide support for your participants** if they are not familiar with the platform you are using then you can do the following: give them a ring before the meeting to talk them through the log in process, functions and processes of the platform; you should also email the participants with screenshots and clear descriptions of the platform’s functionality.
* Zoom has a **different layout on different devises** so remember this if you are guiding participants through the platform; they could be on a computer, phone or tablet so you will need to provide examples of the different layouts.

**Creating an Accessible Environment:** During the Meeting

* Ensure you have a **clear background** with **good lighting** on your face and you are as **close to the camera** as possible.
* Periodically **check in** with your participants throughout the meeting to ensure they are comfortable. This is particularly important at the start of the meeting; visually impaired people may not be able to tell if they have the camera on or if they are in frame.
* Some visually impaired people will feel more comfortable in a meeting with their camera off. **Give people the option** to do this.
* Visually impaired people may need more **frequent breaks** from looking at a screen.

**Working with Captioning & Notetakers**

* Be aware that Deaf people and caption users may take **longer to process** what is being said during the meeting.
* Deaf participants may benefit from working with a **notetaker** so they can revisit aspects of the meeting afterwards.

**Working with BSL Interpreters**

* Remember to **allow time** for BSL users to **re-pin interpreters** when the changeover between interpreters is occurring. Consider pausing the meeting for this to happen.
* If possible, it is easier to follow discussions if observers to the meeting have their cameras off. Otherwise, you should **allow** the Deaf participants permissions to **multi-pin**.
* When using Zoom webinars, it is important for the host to **spotlight** the interpreters as participants are unable to use the pin function during the webinar setting.
* If you are planning to screenshare during a meeting then consider **sending the presentation out in advance**, and/or ensure you are not screen sharing for long periods of time.

**Working with Hands-on BSL Interpreters**

* Ensure a hands-on interpreter is booked when working with Deafblind people.
* Make sure the meeting runs at a **slow pace** so information does not get missed and the interpreter can keep up.
* During the meeting, please **speak one at a time** and take turns.
* The Deafblind participant may wave on screen if they would like to speak, ensure you give enough time for the interpreter to voiceover.
* Please **be patient** and remember that sometimes things will need to be repeated.

**Working with Audio Description**

* You can use the **interpreter channel** for other languages for audio description. Do be aware that the predominant sound channel takes precedence so it can cut over the audio description or the main sound or visa versa so make sure you have worked out where the audio description pauses are. Ideally, **integrate it into your work**.
* **Avoid ambiguous language** such as ‘over here’ or ‘what I’ve got here’ or ‘like this’ as a visually impaired person will not know what you are referencing.
* Visually impaired people can not always use the chat function. If you use it then it should be **read out loud** or it is saved and emailed to everyone following the meeting. **Check what your participants would prefer**.

**To sum up**

* **Make sure you ask**! Everyone is different. Ask your individual participants how you can make working with you easier and more accessible for them.

**Additional Resources:**

Zoom Help Desk  
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

Vocal Eyes Resources   
<https://vocaleyes.co.uk/services/resources>

Graeae Resources   
[https://graeae.org/about/resources](https://graeae.org/about/resources/)