

Creating Accessible Presentations at CCCC

An informal tip sheet from members of the Disability Studies SIG and members of the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition

As members of CCCC, we are all committed to the idea that communication can become more effective for diverse audiences when we consider principles such as awareness of context, design, style, and usability. Creating a presentation that is accessible for members with disabilities reinforces this commitment, and adheres to our shared belief in inclusivity and social justice. This handout is intended to provide a quick overview of some of the most important principles in creating accessible conference presentations at CCCC. More extensive resources are listed at the bottom of the handout.

1. **Provide alternative formats of your presentation.** Bring several full-text copies of your talk, and make sure a few of them are in large print (16 point or larger). If you do not have full-text copies of your presentation, provide a handout that outlines your main points and gives your contact information. Offer the copies at the beginning of your talk.
2. **Pay attention to the room setup.** The session chair should make sure there is space in the room for at least one person using a wheelchair. Please keep the aisles clear for persons who may be using wheelchairs, canes, crutches, or motorized vehicles, and make sure the doorway area is unobstructed. If there will be American Sign Language interpreters for the session, please help assure that the interpreters (usually two of them in a team) have reserved seating in the front row and direct visual and auditory access to the speaker's area.
3. **Describe all visuals, use captioning, and read slides aloud.** If you are using PowerPoint, video, or other audio/visual materials, consider how to make this material accessible for audience members who do not see the images, hear the audio, or who have difficulty processing multiple channels of information simultaneously. Ideally, videos should be captioned; if not, provide oral descriptions of what appears on the screen. PowerPoint slides should be read aloud, and any images should be described. Keep PowerPoint slides uncrowded, large-type, and high-contrast.
4. **Be prepared to work with a Sign Language interpreter.** Meet with interpreters right before the beginning of your session, if necessary. It is helpful to give them a page that lists all the names and

technical terms you will be using in your paper. An interpreter she may not know “Foucault” or “episteme,” for example, and clarifying terminology ahead of time will help the interpreter do a better job. Providing your interpreter with a copy of your talk before the presentation is extremely helpful.

5. **Speak slowly enough that your audience can follow what you say.** It is tempting to try to cram 10 pages of material into 15 minutes of presentation time, but the resulting rushed speech is hard for everyone to follow, regardless of disability status.
6. **Attend to accessibility during Q&A sessions.** During Q&A sessions, make sure that questioners have the opportunity to speak into a microphone. If this is not possible, restate questions for the full audience. Ask questioners to provide their names at the beginning of their contributions. After the session, keep aisles and the space around the presentation table clear so that persons with mobility impairments can move around easily. If at all possible, turn off equipment when you are not using it. This reduces background noise and distractions.
7. **Don't be shy about asking what people need.** We're all accustomed to the standard “Can everyone hear me?” question at the beginning of a presentation. Consider incorporating this sort of check-in more often, asking questions such as “Is this slide readable?” or “Do I need to slow down?” You can also ask interpreters to let you know if your speed is appropriate.

Resources

- “A Policy on Disability in CCCC.” <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/disabilitypolicy>
- “Disability Rhetoric.” Website of the CCCC Disability Studies SIG. <http://www.disabilityrhetoric.com>
- Dolmage, Jay. “Mapping Composition: Inviting Disability in the Front Door.” *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Brenda Jo Brueggemann, with Jay Dolmage. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. 14-27. *Note: This sourcebook is available for free.*
- University of Hawaii / Manoa Center on Disability Studies. “A Model for Accessibility.” <http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/main/publications/modelforaccess>
- Vitullo, Margaret Weigers. “Universal Design: Creating Presentations That Speak to All.” American Sociological Association. <http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/julyaugust08/presentation.html>