

# Tips for making Zoom classes accessible for students with hearing loss

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# Zoom vs a regular classroom

- Technology glitches are always a possibility
- Everything is smaller
- May be more difficult to see classmates (especially if video is turned off)
- Everyone is dependent on other participants' internet connection



# Zoom vs a regular classroom

- Zoom brings everyone's learning environment into the classroom
- More difficult for instructor to read body language and facial expression to identify desire to communicate



# Zoom vs a regular classroom

- Participating is harder
  - Harder to get the instructor's attention
  - More intimidating
  - Students may be less likely to participate verbally
  - Students may be less likely to expand
  - If a student has a hearing loss, they are often already hesitant to put up a hand or ask a question, particularly if it is related to not having heard something



# We need to maximize...

- Audio quality
- Video quality
- Access to materials



# We need to maximize...

- Audio quality
  - Individuals with hearing loss already don't hear 100% clearly
  - Noise makes hearing exponentially more difficult
- Video quality
  - Being able to see people's faces is extremely important
- Access to materials using shared screen
  - Visual support is always helpful



# We need to maximize...

## Audio quality

- Noise
- Microphone quality
  - External microphones
- Multiple speakers
  - Mute microphones whenever possible



# We need to maximize...

## Video quality

- Lighting
- Distractions
  - Visual distractions in the background
  - Virtual backgrounds
    - Often “busy” so that the speaker blends into the visual background
    - Video is often “glitchy” around the edges when virtual backgrounds are used





# We need to maximize...

Access to materials using shared screen

- Using “shared screen” is helpful so that there is visual support (text, pictures, charts, etc.)
- However, usually this means the video box for each participant becomes much smaller, and difficult to see facial expression and body language, and to lipread





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Access to materials using shared screen

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- However, usually this means the video box for each participant becomes much smaller, and difficult to see facial expression and body language, and to lipread
- Using the “annotate” feature is extremely helpful for all students to follow along while you talk

**ANNOTATE!**

# Demonstrations on Zoom



# Automated captioning

- See the video on automated captioning for more detail
- New feature on Zoom as of January 2020
- Other options such as Otter, Translator add-in on Powerpoint
- Test it out first

# 5 top tips for accessible Zoom classes

1. Only one person speaking at a time – identify them
2. Good audio and lighting is crucial – don't sit with your back to a window, use a microphone if possible
3. Avoid virtual backgrounds
4. Provide visual support, materials, references, visual organization
5. Encourage everyone to use the chat room/icons for questions, clarification