

# Accessibility Guidelines for SOWA Workshops

## Universal Considerations

### Purpose of this Accessibility Guide

The purpose of this document is to support SOWA staff, external facilitators, and partners in creating thoughtful and inclusive learning spaces so that participants, regardless of ability, can fully participate and learn.

### Slide Deck Recommendations

**Slide decks** (such as PowerPoint) are meant to support and enhance what the facilitator is presenting. Information on the slides support visual learners and those who struggle with auditory information exclusively. This can be through bullet points, images, videos, or any other supportive media.

- **Fonts:** Sans serif fonts such as “Source Sans Pro” (SOWA branded font used in this document), Arial Nova or Arial Rounded MT Bold are often easier to read. Avoid serif fonts, which are more decorative fonts that are harder to read.
- **Font size:** Size 20-24 is recommended.
- A clutter-free slide helps the audience focus on the key message without being distracted by unnecessary elements or designs.
- Use bullet points to convey key ideas instead of large paragraphs of text. Aim for no more than six lines of text per slide.
- Put instructions for activities and debrief questions on slides for people who struggle with verbal instructions.
- Limit jargon and spell out acronyms at least once within your presentation. Don’t assume people are familiar with the acronym.
- Leave some blank space on the slides and around the edges/margins.
- Use image descriptions for screen readers (especially important in 360Learning).
- Verbally describe any pertinent image such as tables or graphs. (This is unnecessary for visuals that are “slide dressing.”)
- Avoid only using color to convey meaning.

- You can use icons or other visual cues instead of, or in addition to, color.
- Use high contrast colors if you use more than one color.
- Use the Accessibility checker in PowerPoint: To run the accessibility checker in Windows, select File > Info. Select the Check for Issues button and choose Check Accessibility. For Mac, select the Review tab and choose Check Accessibility.
- If you're using an embedded video, make sure it has captions. (Exception: If you're in Zoom and using Zoom captions, turn video captions off so you don't have two captions overlapping each other.)

### Handout Recommendations

**Handouts** are supporting materials that you distribute before, during, or after your workshop. Not every workshop has a handout and creating them is not in and of itself an accessibility feature. They may enhance what people see on the slides through additional information, references, activity prompts and/or a space to take participant notes. They are not the same as slides as they are meant to enhance or come alongside presented materials – including slide decks.

- Min 11 pt font – 12 is better.
- Line spacing should be 1.15 – 1.5.
- Avoid underlining or italics for readability (opt for bold if you need to highlight something)
- Margins and blank space are important. Margins should not be smaller than .75
- Use “Page break” rather than “enter” to start a new page. This is easier for screen readers.
- Using images can break up large bodies of text. Make sure the image is properly sized and readable.
- If the document is multiple pages, create a table of contents and/or use a navigation pane and Heading styles.
- Avoid only using color to convey meaning.
- You can use icons or other visual cues instead of or in addition to color.
- Use high contrast colors if you use more than one color.
- Consider the reading level of your participants – aim for 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level unless you will define words used.
  - You can check the reading level in Word. Click the “Editor” button under the Home tab. Under the “Insights” section, choose “Document stats.” The Flesch-Kincaid score will tell you about your document’s readability.
- Use the Accessibility checker in Word: select the Review tab and then Check Accessibility.
- Use descriptive hypertext. Links such as “learn more” are difficult for users with screen readers because links blend together. People using screen readers will often see many links in the same place

that say, “learn more,” without knowing where those links lead. Examples of meaningful call to action phrases that can be used include, but are not limited to:

- Download the (agenda, handout)
- Watch the video (fill in video title or subject)
- Read more about (fill in subject matter)
- Have “large print” versions of handouts available.

### Virtual Considerations

- Ensure that the training accommodates and supports various processing types.
  - Breakout rooms, self-reflection moments, and share outs are all ways to vary engagement and support different people’s engagement and processing needs.
- Zoom settings – turn on closed caption.
  - If you use videos, make sure the video caption is off when the Zoom caption is on. Otherwise, they’ll be illegible and on top of each other.
- Include brain breaks and short breaks away from the computer so participants can rest their eyes and absorb what you’ve shared.
  - These can take place at or around the hourly mark or can be placed after a particularly demanding activity.
- As questions or comments come up in the chat – read them aloud before responding to them.
- When participants are going to be working alone, encourage them to play music if it would help them focus. Doing this rather than playing music for everyone allows them to choose music they like, select the volume or not have music if it would be distracting.
- Invite participants to share their accessibility needs with us in their registration. We will do our best to meet those needs but can’t guarantee we’re able to meet every request.

### In-Person Considerations

- Prior to the workshop, communicate clearly where the workshop is located, where there is parking, what bus/metro line they can use to get there, and describe the entrance (especially if there are multiple entrances).
- At the beginning of the workshop, share where the restrooms are – neutral, women’s and men’s.

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- Post signage directing people toward restrooms if they're not visible from the training room.
- Share where people can find water.
- Is there wheelchair accessibility (or not, be clear)? Convey this information in the registration description.
- Room set up: Can everyone see the slides, does everyone have enough room to be comfortable and navigate any movement activities require?
- Provide fidgets to normalize the need for sensory input while learning.
- Include brain breaks and short breaks so participants can absorb what you've shared.
  - These can take place at or around the hourly mark or can be placed after a particularly demanding activity.
- We'll do our best to maintain a low/no fragrance space (avoiding the use of room sprays, perfumes etc.) but can't guarantee a fragrance-free space unless an accommodation request is submitted by a participant in which case we will notify participants, facilitators and room hosts and put up signs to meet that request.
- Consider the lighting of the space (fluorescent? strong direct sun?) Communicate what lighting is present in the registration description.
- Invite participants to share their accessibility needs with us in their registration. We will do our best to meet those needs but can't guarantee we're able to meet every request.
- If there will be snacks, communicate that and give a general idea of what type.
- Make sure to check if participants have allergies and make accommodations for those allergies. This may include putting a sign up, for example "Peanut Allergy, please do not bring in any outside food."

## Resources for Learning

[Simplifying your writing and lowering your readability score](#) (webpage/article)

[Writing content that is supportive of screen readers](#) (webpage/article)

[Brain Break activities and slides](#) (PowerPoint slide deck)

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network Guide to Accessible Event Planning](#) with scenarios and checklist (PDF)

[A Guide to Fragrance and Chemical Sensitivities](#) (webpage/article)

[Fragrance Free Toolkit](#) (PDF)

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