

Inclusive conferences / events

[Alex Haagaard](#), Director of Communications for [The Disabled List](#), recently kicked off a Twitter thread inviting suggestions for how conferences and other events could be made more inclusive. The following ideas – many of which were shared multiple times apiece – were submitted by an international audience based on their own experiences.

Food and drink

1. Lids and straws for coffee and cold beverage cups
2. Trays to make it easier to transport food
3. Full ingredients list for all foods
4. Serving styles that prevent cross-contamination (no buffet, no easily moved utensils, no crudités and dips mixed, etc.)
5. Food containers that don't require too much gripping or lots of pressure to use; more lightweight dishes and serving items
6. Provide assistance with food serving / delivering
7. Filtered water rather than regular tap water
8. Consider events that are alcohol-free; provide decaf options
9. Access to free water

Physical space

1. Accessibility maps with info about flooring type; include info on distances, toilets, elevators; info on accessible doors and ramps; online photos if possible
2. Locations with toilets in easily accessible places (and providing info ahead of time)
3. Ability for some folks to enter or leave early; spaces that prevent too much crowding and jostling
4. Railings on stairs
5. Step-free access for both audience and speakers
6. Keep smokers away from the front door
7. Good signage at the event – not just words and maps but also arrows
8. Facilities with medical waste bins, space for laying out equipment, platform for changing continence aids, etc.
9. Floors on which canes / crutches won't slip; no unnecessary floor decorations that could be in the way
10. Doors that aren't too heavy to open – or, if they are, propped open doors
11. Single-stall, gender neutral bathrooms
12. Rooms that have windows and aren't too small
13. Hand dryers / towels near sinks
14. Facilities for nursing mothers; childcare; gender neutral childcare areas
15. Spaces for assistance dogs to be walked
16. Floor cushions, mats, other soft furnishings to dampen sound and allow people to sit on the ground
17. Clearly marked exits and rooms with multiple exits
18. Provide spaces where personal belongings can be safely stored
19. Sockets available for recharging support devices

Seating

1. Comfortable, padded chairs; seating options so people can select from different types; seats that allow for all sizes and don't make noises; modular seating that can be moved
2. Seats during food portions of the day – being able to sit while eating
3. Providing info on amount and type of seating
4. Casual seating areas separate from a large open main room
5. Saved seating (near doors) for people with disabilities; bookable special seating
6. Chairs that are not attached to each other or super-close; room to stretch legs; chairs with no arms
7. Priority seating not just at the front, but around the whole facilities; allow these people the opportunity to leave first rather than last

Sensory conditions

1. Quiet space / space away from activities
2. No laser pointers for presenters
3. No flickering lights; low-light areas; no strobes; no flash photos (or limited to certain areas, well sign-posted); non-fluorescent lights
4. No high-pitched electronic noises
5. No background music during discussion times
6. Scent ban / fragrance-free policy; scent-free soap; warnings about recent work that involves paint, glue, etc.; no air fresheners
7. Temperature control; if in spaces that have a tendency towards being cold or hot, alert people in advance?
8. No clapping after speakers
9. Ear plugs distributed to guests

Presentation conditions

1. Having alternative formats available for everything (e.g., something other than print handouts if you are blind)
2. Summing up audience questions prior to answering
3. Instant transcript on screen (Dragon Naturally Speaking + projector); supplement talks with captions or notes provided in advance so people can follow along
4. Multiple screens to make seeing easier; large, readable text on slides (check from across the room)
5. Use microphones; use T loop system; face crowd for lipreading; stay in one place for all of the above; audio jacks at chairs so audience can adjust their own volume
6. Map out panels and encourage people to stay in known position for people who aren't good with faces / memory (also helpful for captioners and transcriptionists)
7. Keep audio/video volume to level similar to that of speakers rather than super-loud; set up before people attend, in order to prevent discomfort with, e.g., feedback sounds
8. Content warnings (esp. with video, noise, etc.); trigger warnings
9. Post-session recaps

10. Good colour contrast on presentations and other visuals
11. No cold-calling anyone to talk in front of the group

Transport and mobility

1. Close physical links to public transport
2. Information on terrain for walking and using scooters / chairs between public transport / parking and the event
3. Space for wheelchairs; toilets where wheelchair users have access and aren't at risk
4. Wide walkways and space to manoeuvre when using devices for mobility
5. Contrast strip edging on stairs and steps to provide depth perception info

Scheduling

1. Frequent breaks
2. Sticking to schedule (not eating into breaks or letting things go long – needed for people with issues to attend to); providing a timeline well in advance so people can plan; provide updates if there are delays, to help people plan
3. Don't start the event too early and don't let it run too late

Social interactions

1. Name badges are large and visible; encourage people to say their names so vision-impaired people don't have to rely on reading (also important during panels—e.g., 'radio etiquette')
2. Interaction badges as well as a space for pronouns; 'no photos' lanyard
3. Moderators to facilitate discussions at more open / freestyle events (to assist with, e.g., ADHD, Asperger's, etc.)
4. Corral journalists to prevent unexpected/unwanted photography (especially flash photography)

Assistance

1. Having visible staff members (including caterers) available to answer questions and provide support (before and during)
2. Sign-in desks that aren't too high; registration online instead of with handwritten signatures; someone to help if needed
3. Clear guidelines for speakers and moderators to help them set up and navigate each session in a supportive / inclusive way
4. 'Strongly enforced expectations from all moderators, organizers, presenters, etc.' – written with respect to using the microphone but applicable to everything
5. Dedicated accessibility person and accessibility buddies (to show directions, to serve, to act as line surrogates, etc.)
6. Jargon glossary; translators

Prior to the event

1. Tele- and videoconferences in order to save carbon and help people be more comfortable – maybe not always possible but do when feasible?; telecasting of talks
2. Consider events not just 'hearing stuff' or 'sharing stuff' but also 'making relationships'
3. Accessible booking beforehand
4. Audit the entire area around the venue and any associated spaces and make this information freely accessible (as well as used by organizers)
5. Informing all attendees, security, organizers, etc., about appropriate behaviour and regulations
6. Ensure any tech can be interacted with (ergonomics, simplicity, etc.)
7. Create a code of conduct that addresses and supports inclusivity by, e.g., outlining repercussions of sexual harassment, describing expectations around accessibility, etc.

Health and wellbeing

1. Access to fridge for meds/food
2. No flowers or other plants to which guests may have allergies
3. Latex-free options where needed
4. Scooters, wheelchairs, crutches, etc. that can be borrowed
5. Places to lie flat if needed in order to take a nap (especially helpful if narcoleptic)