

Event Accessibility Checklist

Columbia is committed to assuring that events and programs are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Disability Services has created this checklist to assist student clubs, administrators, and meeting or event planners to create programs that are accessible to all. The purpose of this guide is to provide information for event planners about the elements of disability access that will foster full participation. Advance planning and communication is critical to making events accessible. Providing key details related to an event in advance, such as the agenda, format and activities, will help participants determine what accommodations may be needed. This will allow the participant to request the necessary accommodations to best access the event.

Disability Services is available to provide guidance in planning events. Contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 or disability@columbia.edu with questions or concerns regarding your event.

Event Planning and Announcements:

- All advertisements should include a statement informing attendees how they may request disability accommodations, including locations and wayfinding information for the accessible entrance(s).
 - Recommended Accommodations Statement: Use the following language on all announcements, including emails, printed materials, and websites:
 - Columbia University makes every effort to accommodate individuals with disabilities. If you require disability accommodations to attend an event at Columbia University, please contact Disability Services (disability@columbia.edu or 212-854-2388) at least 10 days in advance of the event.
- Participants can also request accommodations and accessibility information through a registration form on the event website or other identified mechanisms (i.e. contacting event planner/host).

Venue Accessibility:

- For on-campus events, it is strongly recommended that events are held in venues that are accessible. Should a person with a disability wish to attend an event that requires an accessible location, the event will need to be moved.
- All off-campus University-sponsored events for students must be held in a wheelchair accessible venue. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring department or student group (hosts) to ensure that the event is accessible. Contact Disability Services for consultation regarding venue accessibility.
- Know the wheelchair accessible routes to the event location as well as accessibility of the building (e.g. elevators), including identifying the nearest accessible restrooms. To help identify campus accessibility, refer to the Morningside [Disability Access Map](#). Hard copies of the map are available at Disability Services.
- Non-accessible entrances should have signs with directions to an alternative accessible entrance.
- Ensure that the registration area has a lowered counter or an accessible table.
- Make sure that each room has moveable seating to allow for space for wheelchair seating. In auditorium-style venues, wheelchair spaces should already be available but it is best to confirm with the venue manager.

- Provide assistive listening devices upon request. Test assistive listening systems in advance of the event. Disability Services can provide assistive listening devices to on-campus venues upon request.
- Sign-language Interpreters should be situated in the front of the room proximate to the speaker and within the sight line of the Deaf attendee so that both the interpreter and speaker can be viewed simultaneously.
- [Service animals](#) are permitted on campus anywhere a member of the public would be allowed to go. Participants with service animals are not required to notify the University prior to bringing their service animal to an event.
 - It is important to note that event staffers are permitted by law to ask only two questions of an individual with a service animal:
 1. Is your animal a service dog required because of your disability?
 2. What work or tasks has your dog been trained to perform?

Event Activities:

- Ensure adequate lighting (e.g. for persons with low vision or if a Sign Language interpreter is needed).
- Ensure that all film or audiovisual content is captioned.
- Be mindful that attendees may need added time to move between rooms or sessions when planning the logistics and timeframe of the event. Depending on the length of your event, you may also want to work in breaks for all attendees.
- Should the event include group activities, be prepared to modify or adapt the activity to support the inclusion of all participants. Invite individuals with disabilities to share how an activity can be modified so that they are able to fully or partially participate. Providing an agenda or descriptions of the activities in advance best facilitates any adaptations or modifications that need to be made.

Handouts:

- Be prepared to make any materials disseminated in hard copy available in alternative formats (e.g. accessible electronic copies, Braille, large print) upon request. Require materials to be submitted in advance so that they can be forwarded to individuals who may not be able to view from a distance as well as Sign Language Interpreters so that they are familiar with the content.
- Have printed copies available (both in standard print and in larger font).
 - Font recommendations: 20 point, Sans Serif font.

Presentations:

- Verbally describe visual materials to the audience for participants who may be blind or have low vision.
- PowerPoint slides should be [accessible](#) and designed with clear, well-sized font and contrasting colors.

Sound and Audio-Visual:

- Control background noise to the greatest extent possible.
- Ask all presenters and attendees to use [microphones](#).
- Repeat questions posted by the audience before responding, especially if there is not a roving microphone available. Presenters or audience members may express confidence that they are loud enough and do not need a microphone. Regardless, ask them to speak into one to ensure accessibility.
- Ensure that all video content is captioned and conduct a test in advance to ensure that they display correctly on the screens used during the events.

Best Practices:

- Make sure that an emergency evacuation plan for persons with disabilities has been discussed.
- Exits should be clearly identified, and fire and emergency alarms should have audio and visual signals.
- Food options should be made available for participants with dietary restrictions/allergies.
- Note that some on-campus event locations may require CUID card authorization for accessibility purposes, requiring advanced Public Safety support. Refer to the [Disability Access Map](#) for these locations.
- Check with the presenter(s) to determine if they require accommodations.

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