

ACCESSIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM FOR STUDENTS WITH AUDITORY AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

Every student deserves equal access to educational opportunities. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has created additional access barriers for students who have auditory and cognitive disabilities in face-to-face and online classrooms.

While students with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations through the University's [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS), the University is committed to designing and developing [accessible information, materials, and technology](#) for all students across campus.

Here are five strategies to support, include, and empower every student, particularly those with auditory and cognitive disabilities.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE CLASS

- 1 Provide Course Materials Before Registration:** To provide an opportunity for all students to be successful in the course, provide course materials (e.g., syllabus, readings, PowerPoint presentations, instructional videos) in advance. This practice gives all students the options to convert course material to their specific accessible format (e.g. audio, highlighted text, large print text) and prepare for class.
- 2 Create Organized Instructions:** Class syllabi are considered instructional learning tools or what Rumore (2016) calls “operator’s manual[s]” that set the tone for the course. Your syllabus should be well-organized, comprehensive, [easy to read](#), and convey information regarding course requirements, due dates, and expectations. The University’s Teaching & Learning Innovation has created resources on how to create an [accessible syllabus](#).

ACCESSIBILITY FOR FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES

- 3 Face the Students While Speaking:** This strategy seems obvious, but many instructors are often writing on the board or reading with their head down while speak to the class. This practice can create a communication barrier for any student, but particularly for students who read lips and facial expressions. Facing the students while speaking creates a sense of inclusion and respect.
- 4 Wear Accessible Masks:** During COVID-19, SDS recommends that instructors wear [accessible or clear masks](#) while teaching students with auditory disabilities in a face-to-face learning environment. SDS points out that wearing clear masks not only adheres to the University health guidelines, but also lets students with auditory disabilities to continue to read lips and see facial expressions.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONLINE CLASSES OR MATERIALS

5 Use Closed Captioning for Instructional Videos: Creating instructional videos for face-to-face and online education can be an excellent way to reach and engage students. But instructional videos can also be used to provide more access to media for students with auditory and cognitive disabilities. The University's Office of Information Technology provides resources on how to make video content accessible:

- [Captions for YouTube](#) - YouTube is a platform used to create and caption instructional videos for increased accessibility and engagement.
- [Captions for Canvas Studio](#) - Canvas Studio allows instructors to create media interactions and active learning experiences with closed captions for online classes.
- [Live Subtitles and Captions in PowerPoint](#) - PowerPoint for Microsoft Office 365 is a resource that can automatically transcribe words during a live presentation and display them on-screen as captions.

The above are just a few ways that you can make your classroom more inclusive. For other examples, please refer to our [Inclusive Teaching Resources](#) and [Teaching During COVID-19 Resources](#).

REFERENCES

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