

Zoom adds accessibility features for video meetings

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Zoom, which has become one of the most popular video meeting services, added new features Wednesday aimed at improving accessibility for those who are differently abled.

A highlight for the hearing impaired is the ability to drag and drop the video windows around in Zoom's Gallery View, and to "pin" the ones you want to be spotlighted.

Before the update, the participants' and hosts' videos were fixed

Before the update, the Zoom chat windows were fixed, and you couldn't change the layout. Instead, every time a different speaker spoke, they would get prominent position, and the windows would shift automatically.

With the update, sign language interpreters' windows can be directly next to the speaker. (To keep the windows there, click the three line drop-down on the right side of the chat [window](#), and select "Pin.") For pinning windows, the host needs to grant permission for you to select them.

Zoom's announcement coincides with the International Day of Sign Language. The videoconferencing services are free to anyone, with a 40-minute limit on [meeting](#) length. Premium accounts, which let meetings run longer, start at \$149 a year.

The accessibility features are part of a social media campaign Zoom is launching to "raise awareness" about the features, says Damien Hooper-Campbell, Zoom's Chief Diversity Officer. "Not just for the people who benefit from it directly," but also the entire Zoom community, no matter their abilities, he adds.

For [blind users](#), Zoom beefed up its [keyboard shortcuts](#) and streamlined its screen reader interface (which announces commands) to enable an easier log in experience, without the need of a mouse. The shortcuts can be found in the preferences section of the Zoom app.

For those who need closed captioning support to understand the meeting, Zoom has new tools to adjust the size of the text, in the accessibility section of the app. The platform touts its interplay with professional captioning services which displays live transcripts.?

You can adjust the size of closed captioning and specify your screen reader alerts in Zoom's accessibility preferences.

Rival meeting platforms offer the transcripts feature, as well. Google Meet has a live "transcript" button, but you can't save them, while Cisco Webex does have a caption feature that can be saved.

Zoom has all the features, along with keyboard shortcuts, listed at zoom.us/accessibility

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