

Accessibility & Inclusivity Guidelines



Images showing a parrot, a dog, a cat, a horse, a tortoise and a rabbit.

ABTC

ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR
& TRAINING COUNCIL

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Purpose of this Guide



A drawing of brightly coloured hands reaching towards each other, forming a heart shape.

This guide sits alongside our [DEI statement](#) and our commitment to widening participation within the animal behaviour and training industry.

The purpose of this guide is to provide some simple suggestions to help organisations support all their members and make everyone feel included, welcome and appreciated.

We encourage you to implement as many of the suggestions as practically possible, but any changes are a step in the right direction.

By encouraging involvement and collaboration between communities we will do better for our practitioners, our clients and our animals.

Inclusive Language



Photograph of 2 people. The person on the left is wearing all black, they have black and red hair. They are holding two cards which read 'them' and 'they'. The person on the right is wearing a black and white jumper, and has red hair. They are holding cards which read 'he' and 'she'.

- Address groups with gender-inclusive language, such as 'team', 'gang', 'folks' rather than 'guys', 'chaps', 'ladies'.
- Avoid assumptions based on stereotypes or a person's characteristics. Ask about pronouns, or use neutral terms until you are sure.
- Think carefully about slang and colloquial language, which can have derogatory connotations and origins.
- If you make a mistake, stay calm; just apologise and rephrase what you were trying to convey.
- Avoid asking for unnecessary information or labelling such as 'titles' (Mr, Mrs etc.).

- Be aware that not all disabilities are visible, and there are common phrases in our language and colloquialisms that are harmful to people with disabilities (and other marginalised groups).
- Avoid language that suggests people with disabilities are abnormal or victims of their condition, such as referring to "normal people" or describing someone as "suffering from" a disability.
- Avoid using gendered language based on assumptions or stereotypes. Use neutral language until you know for sure, such as "partner" instead of "husband/wife" or "dog carer/dog parent" instead of "dog mum/dad".
- Avoid othering terms that imply that a group is separate from the rest of society. Instead of "the elderly" or "the disabled", you can refer to "older people" or "people with a disability".

Presentation of Information



Photograph of 4 people looking at a laptop on a desk. There are 3 young female presenting people and 1 older male presenting person.

Webinars

- The speaker should be visible on screen to assist those who lip read, and closed captions should be generated in real time.
- The speakers' and hosts' pronouns should be visible. Most video call platforms allow pronouns to be entered in the settings and displayed alongside the username.
- Where possible, recordings should be available after the event to allow people to rewatch and assimilate information at their own pace.

Multimedia Information

- If possible, information should be shared in multiple formats and mediums. For example, video with audio content and closed captioning.
- Text-heavy documents may be more accessible for some users if a narrated version is available.
- These considerations should also be made when requesting information from practitioners and members of the public. There should be flexibility in the formats where possible.

Written Information

- Font should be size 12 or above.
- Font style should be clear. Avoid script styles or anything which significantly alters letter shapes.
- Ensure adequate line spacing.
- Use off white, matt paper to reduce glare.
- The contrast between background and text colour is very important. Keep it clear and crisp.
- Do not rely on bold, underlining and italics to convey meaning. They are often not picked up by screen readers.

What Are Screen Readers?

- Screen readers are devices that help people who have difficulties seeing, access and interact with digital content.
- The technology reads out loud what is on the screen, and users can adapt them to their needs. For example, you can decrease the speed of speech or change the language.
- Screen readers then allow users to navigate through websites and apps using their voice.
- Screen readers only detect text content. They cannot, therefore, read text within images. This is why providing image descriptions and alt text is essential.

Optimised Websites

- The same principles apply to 'presentation of information' as well as 'social media considerations'.
- This is your opportunity to show that you are a welcoming and inclusive organisation. Aim to proactively express that, rather than simply avoiding alienating people.
- There are free accessibility apps available that are compatible with many websites but not all. These allow users to alter text size, spacing and colour which can improve accessibility for some people.
- Aim to include a statement on inclusion and accessibility.
- Encourage users to make contact if they require any special adjustments to make the information more accessible.

Social Media Considerations

- When creating content for social media, representative images should be used throughout.
- Aim to represent an array of people with a variety of visible (skin colour, weight, height, use of mobility aids etc.), and inferred (gender, sexuality, religion) characteristics.
- Alt text should be used to provide image descriptions. This will include any text from the image that may not be picked up by screen readers. Most platforms have inbuilt sections for this in their advance options when posting.
- Video should also use closed captions wherever possible.

Improving Admin & Assessment Processes



A young, female presenting black person stands facing the camera. They are in a library and carrying a notebook. They have black hair in a bun and are wearing a bright stripey cardigan.

- All practitioners must pass the same assessment criteria. However they do not all need to do this in the same way.
- We all have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to make engagement and assessments more accessible.
- Ask if people have any specific accessibility needs or have any requests rather than waiting for them to ask you.*
- Consider how the same criteria can be met using different media. For example a verbal presentation rather than an essay, or a detailed case log rather than an oral exam.

*ABTC has partnered with Sign Solutions – Interpreters Live! to provide services available to member organisations and practitioners to support BSL users. See the [ABTC website](#) for more.



Image shows 2 hands signing as part of the Interpreters Live! logo with text stating Connect to a BSL Interpreter.

- Ensure there are clear guidelines for candidates in what to expect during the assessment procedure, and that these themselves are accessible and available in multiple formats.
- Consider how questions are posed and information presented.
- Multiple choice questions, especially those with very similarly worded options, can be extremely hard for many people.
- You might want to consider putting together some trial questions and asking for feedback from a broad range of practitioners. This can help you find a format that works best for the majority of people.

Accessible Venues



Photo of a white haired person in a wheelchair. They are facing away from the camera, looking at a flight of steps with no ramp.

- While organising and selecting locations for events it's helpful to think about the people who will be wanting to attend.
- This checklist isn't exhaustive but it is a starting point to aid assistance and support.

Wheelchair access

Is the venue wheelchair accessible? Are there ramps/slopes? Is all of the venue accessible?

If yes, how wide are the walkways, corridors and doors? If there is a lift, 'is it big enough to comfortably accommodate a standard wheelchair, or is it a tight squeeze? Not all wheelchairs fit in every accessible space.

Are there accessible toilet/comfort facilities?

How far away are they? Are they unlocked and able to be utilised?

BSL (British Sign Language)

Is translation available? If not, would there be any tech available to help with transcript/ talk to text?

Audio assistance

If a service user or delegate is deaf or hard of hearing, does the venue have hearing loops? Are these at a cost? Do they need to be pre-ordered?

Noise sensitivities

For those who may be noise sensitive, are there headphones available? If not could delegates bring their own?

Lighting

Is there natural daylight? Some artificial light can be very bright and the “white” light often found in clinical settings can be overwhelming. Ensure lighting does not limit the ability to lip read (casting shadows, silhouetting of a speaker, etc).

Parking and Transport

Is there parking at the venue, including blue badge? Is the venue near a public transport link? If so, is there step free access?

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