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Recommendations For Speakers in  
Meetings and Conferences

The European Association of Societies of Persons with  
Intellectual Disabilities

# Inclusion Europe

The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families  
L'Association Européenne des Organisations des Personnes Handicapées Mentales et leurs Familles

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This paper is available in the **Accessibility Pack for Meetings and Conferences**, together with the paper “Recommendations for Organisers”, the leaflet “Rules for meetings and conferences” and the accessibility cards.

This Accessibility Pack can be ordered at Inclusion Europe for 45 euros:

[self-advocacy@inclusion-europe.org](mailto:self-advocacy@inclusion-europe.org)

## Recommendations for speakers in meetings and conferences

### Introduction

It is not easy for a speaker to prepare documents and presentations especially when speaking to diverse audiences, i.e. when people have different languages, different backgrounds, different level of knowledge or include people with intellectual disabilities. Sometimes, speakers do not know how they can transmit information to people with intellectual disability.

Inclusion Europe has much expertise in working with persons with intellectual disability. We have produced, for example, the European Easy-to-Read Guidelines “Make it Simple”. These suggestions aim to help the speaker to make presentations more accessible for persons with intellectual disability, but in fact accessible presentations are important for all participants.

We propose some ideas and examples. We hope that these suggestions help you to prepare accessible presentations, but would also like to call on you to be creative and to adapt these suggestions to the special circumstances.

The most important thing is to answer to the specific needs of the audience. Before preparing your speech, you should therefore make sure with the organisers what kind of audience you will face and with which difficulty level you are required to speak. The following rules should apply for speakers taking part in fully accessible sessions of the conference.

### Your speech

#### **Rule 1. Use clear and simple language**

- Please avoid all technical words, jargon, abbreviations and difficult words.
- Use simple grammar (i.e. present tenses).
- If you have to use difficult words, you should explain these words in easy language. You could have a look in the “easy-to-read dictionary” developed by Inclusion Europe to see if these words were not defined in easy-to-read already.

- Speak slowly and make short breaks for the interpretation.
- One sentence should not contain more than one idea.
- Use always the same term for the same concept.
- Do not give too much information on one paper or in a too short amount of time. Try to present only the most important information

It is easy to get carried away when speaking. Please use short breaks to consider if you are still following these rules. You can also check with audience if they understand.

### **Your support material**

#### **Rule 2. Use clear and easy-to-read documents**

- To write your documents in easy-to-read, you should
  - Use simple, straightforward language
  - Avoid abstract concepts
  - Use short words of every day spoken language
  - Address your reader in a direct and personal form, although in a respectful form
  - Use practical examples
  - Use short sentences mostly
  - Cover only one main idea per sentence
  - Avoid negative language and negations
  - Use active rather than passive verbs
  - Do not assume previous knowledge about your subject
  - Use the same word for one thing, even if repeating words affects the style of writing
  - Keep the punctuation simple
  - Do not use complex grammar (subjunctive tense)
  - Be careful with figure of speech and metaphors
  - Be careful with big numbers (i.e.: write “5 millions” not “5.000.000”)
  - Do not use words from other languages
  - Avoid cross references
  - Avoid jargon, abbreviations and initials
- Concerning the format of your easy-to-read document, you should
  - Never use a picture as background for the text
  - Try to put one sentence on one line
  - Use clear typefaces
  - Use a maximum of two typefaces
  - Use a large type-size
  - Avoid block capitals and italics
  - Use a ragged right edge
  - Do not hyphenate long words at the right margin of the text

### **Rule 3. Use visual aids**

- You could use visual aids, such as Power Point presentation, overhead slides or flip charts.
- When you use such material, you should make sure that whatever is written on it is easy to understand.
- It is very important to use pictures during your presentation.
- Please use concrete symbols (photos, images, drawings). If you use abstract symbols, please explain them to the audience.
- When you show a picture, try not to speak about something else than the picture, or people will get confused.

### **You and your audience**

#### **Rule 4. Involve your audience in your presentation**

- Please speak directly and personally to the audience.
- Create some interaction with your audience
- Use examples to make your presentation more understandable.
- Remember that you are speaking to adults and not to children.
- After your presentation, leave time for questions.
- If possible, test your presentation with people with intellectual disability before the meeting.
- You could present your information in the form of a dialog.
- You could use audiotape, video, websites, maps, and games...

#### **Rule 5. Respect the accessibility cards**

- The participants may show you cards during your presentation. Please, pay attention to these cards. They can be a good help to make sure that everyone understands what you are saying.
  - The green cards will tell you that participants agree with what you say.
  - The yellow cards will tell you that you speak too fast. Please, slow down.
  - The red card will tell you that participants do not understand what you are saying. Please, explain it again with more simple words.