

## Facilitating Communication at Meetings and Public Forums

Lesson 5: Handout  
Communication Assistant Course



Communication Disabilities Access Canada

### Communication barriers at in-person meetings and public forums

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People with communication disabilities tell us that:

- They may not be able to interject in group discussions
- Their messages may be out of sync with the discussion
- They may miss out on what being said when constructing their messages
- They may not be able to understand what is being discussed
- They may not be able to take notes at a meeting
- They may not get meeting minutes in formats they can read or understand

## Tips to prepare for a meeting

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- Get the agenda ahead of time
- Arrange to meet the person ahead of the meeting
- Find out if the person has prepared messages
- Know the person's signal that they have something to communicate
- Alert the moderator about the need to accommodate the person you are assisting
- Negotiate how the person will communicate during the meeting



## Tips for assisting communication at a meeting

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- Meet the moderator before the event
- Explain how the person communicates and how they want to participate at the meeting
- Find out how the moderator wants to conduct the meeting and if they want (a) participants to stop talking and wait for the person to communicate their message during the meeting; (b) schedule times throughout the meeting when everyone can contribute opinions and questions or (c) wait until the end of the meeting for Q and As.



## Tips for assisting communication at a meeting

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- Hold up your hand to signal to the moderator that the person wants to communicate something and to ask participants to stop talking and wait
- Keep your hand up as the person constructs their message
- If appropriate, provide quick phrase displays (in resource file)
- If required, take notes at the meeting
- Find out if person requires the minutes in alternate formats.



## Tips for assisting with reading questionnaires and surveys

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The person with a communication disability may want you to:

- Ask for the form in a format the person can use (e.g. plain language, large font or electronic)
- Hold and turn pages as they read it
- Read aloud the survey, form or questionnaire
- Explain the questions using everyday language
- Show pictures of what the questions mean



## Tips for assisting with completing questionnaires and surveys

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The person with a communication disability may want you to:

- Write or type their answers on the form
- Check to see if they can save their answers if they need to take a break when completing an online survey
- Assist with alternate signatures (X, thumb print, signature stamp)