

Video Remote & Hybrid Interpreting

Best Practices

On occasion meetings will take place virtually via online video conferencing software. When interpreting services are provided through video remote interpreting (VRI) there are considerations necessary for effective interpreting to take place. Additionally, hybrid meetings incorporate aspects of VRI and in-person.

When and Where

A mixture of in person, hybrid, and fully virtual interpreting is now the norm for our profession. VRI workstations can be set up at home or other workspace with certain arrangements in place.

Workplace Setup

Whether at home or other workspace there are ways to set yourself up for VRI work. Start by selecting an area that is quiet (or has a way to control access) like a spare room or office. A space with a door is ideal to control access and secure information being interpreted. If there are others living in the space (roommates, partners, children, and pets) it is important to discuss expectations for when VRI work is taking place. These may include ensuring noises are reduced or eliminated, no interruptions unless there is an emergency, not to overload the local internet services, etc.

Once a VRI workspace is chosen there are certain technical components that are necessary, while others are 'nice to have'. Keep in mind you may be requested to log into two meetings simultaneously. There are multiple ways to achieve this set up (more information about this in the following section). The following technical list is offered as a suggestion and is not exhaustive.

Recommended	Nice to Have
Hard wired internet access for all devices, do not rely on WIFI	Headset (similar to VRS) with microphone
Two devices (laptop, desktop, tablet)	Tripod for adjusting webcam height

External webcam for devices (configurable to adjust brightness and turn off auto-focus)	Workspace set up for both standing and sitting
Adjustable lights. Do not set up lights directly in front of where you will stand / sit. Best to utilize ceiling and floor lamps, or ring light to reduce glare.	Second headset (earbuds) for interacting directly with teamer (tucked inside main headset)
External speakers and microphone for main meeting (do not rely on the webcam microphone)	Dual monitors for main device. One monitor to run the online meeting, and the other to display documents.
Plain painted wall, plain curtains, or moveable photography backdrop. Blue and grey are optimal colours	
Two separate video conference service accounts (i.e. two Zoom accounts)	

Once you have collected all the components you require, set up the monitor(s) and webcam(s) in such a way that reduces eye strain and movements. Place the webcam directly in front of you so when you are looking at the Deaf participant(s) and interpreting your eyes will be 'looking' at them. It is suggested to have the ASL meeting on the largest monitor and the main meeting on a secondary device placed below the largest monitor.

For whichever online video conference platform being used it is recommended to download a desktop app. This provides you with more options and settings. Currently Zoom is the preferred platform.

If the meeting includes CART captioning or AI live transcription, the interpreter(s) can also view the captions. The interpreter(s) can monitor the captions for inaccuracies that can be clarified by the interpreter.

After setting up the VRI workspace it is highly recommended to test all the components in advance. Chances are adjustments will be needed and this is much easier, and less stressful, to accomplish before the meeting.

Interpreting Setup

When interpreting via VRI using online video conference services (Zoom, MS Teams, FaceTime, Whereby, etc.) it will be critical to have two meetings running simultaneously

to manage seeing participants clearly. If the interaction is taking place through a phone conference line, then only the ASL online meeting setup would be needed. A note for operating two Zoom meetings simultaneously: two separate accounts since most video conference services will not allow you to sign into two meetings on one device. With Zoom, for example, if the host has selected the 'only authorized users' option for the meeting you will only be able to log into the meeting if you have first logged into the Zoom account with that email address. Some video conference services will allow you to set up a free account, through a Gmail email, through Facebook log in, or through your institution account.

It is recommended to enable captions for the audio source from main meeting. This can support in your processing and indicating who is speaking.

Sole Device Operating Both Meeting:

It is possible for some devices to run two Zoom meetings simultaneously on the one device. This depends on your computer's configuration. It is recommended you have two monitors and utilize one screen for each the Main and ASL meeting. Zoom will allow you to run one meeting through the desktop app and the second meeting through the web browser. Each Zoom meeting will use its own webcam – unfortunately you cannot use one webcam for both meetings.

Two Devices Operating Meetings:

With two separate devices you can run a Zoom meeting on each.

Main Meeting

It is not possible to see the Deaf participant(s) and interpreter(s) videos in the main meeting, especially when there are screens being shared. Each person's video tiles become too small and unmanageable to enlarge or pin. Therefore, it is important to separate users into two meetings.

The main meeting will include all participants including Deaf, interpreters, and CART services. The interpreters and CART captioners will use this meeting for the audio input and output (A-E interpreting). The Deaf participants will join this meeting just like every other participant.

It is recommended that the ASL users log into the main meeting on a secondary device such as tablet or laptop or be placed on the secondary monitor. A mobile phone is not suggested because the screen is small. A large enough screen is needed to see anything

being shared on the screen for visualizing interpretations, as well as viewing the names of who is speaking.

It is ideal for the interpreters and captioners to sign into this meeting and name themselves “ASL-English Interpreter” or “CART” so others in the meeting are aware of who is involved and their roles. It may not be necessary for the interpreter(s) to be on camera in this meeting but have a webcam ready just in case.

ASL Meeting

The ASL meeting would be reserved for the signing participant(s) and interpreter(s). It is best to log into this meeting with the largest screen device such as a desktop computer. If you have dual monitors, use one screen for the meeting and the second screen for preparation materials, CART captioning, team messaging app, etc.

If using Zoom (which is currently the preferred online video conferencing platform) set the viewing plane to ‘gallery’ for each video tile will be arranged in sequence all the same size. Select ‘speaker’ view option to have one person’s tile enlarged.

Set up your webcam up so the sightline is directly in line with the monitor and eye movements are kept to a minimum. It will also help the end user watch the signing since the eye gaze will look directly at them.

CART captions and live AI transcriptions may be embedded into this Zoom meeting or captions can be displayed on a separate browser.

Interpreting & Teaming Strategies

Articulation and placement of signs should be adjusted to maximize two-dimensional space that VRI work is conducted in. Be aware of where fingerspelling is most clear through colour contrast on screen. This can be achieved by wearing attire that contrasts with skin tone and background colour and placing the hands where there is the highest contrast (to the side of body in front of backdrop, or mid-chest over contrasting clothing). Additionally, when identifying who is speaking and role shifting, be cautious to still have clear visibility of signs.

Other items the interpreter should remember:

- Ensure microphone is on mute unless actively interpreting into English.
- Black attire doesn’t always show contrast well on screen. Consider other plain colours that contrast with your skin tone and selected background.

- Set up teaming switching mechanism (private chat window in the platform, text messages) early so it's not fumbled with during interpreting.

It is important to discuss teaming strategies in advance if there are two interpreters booked to be VRIs or hybrid settings. It can be difficult to gain the attention of the actively working VRI to provide a feed or inform them it is time to switch. Switching smoothly is particularly important for Deaf participant(s) to know which interpreter to look at (they may need to change which tile is pinned / make the focus on their screen). Discuss your teaming plan with the Deaf participant(s) so they are aware and can collaborate on the best approach.

Some options for remote teaming are:

- Using a mobile phone (important to ensure it's on mute) to text each other when it is time to switch.
- Using large signing space to indicate the switch of interpreters.
- Using a private chat function within the video conferencing software to message each other when it is time to switch. **Be careful to not message all the meeting participants in a group chat.**
- Providing feeds can be sent via a message to the actively working interpreter or simply provided to the meeting participants by the second interpreter. The latter may work in informal meetings where all participants are used to working with interpreters but may not be appropriate in formal meetings or where participants are not interpreter savvy.
- If you are joining the hybrid meeting through VRI and the team interpreter is on-site, it may work to have the VRI interpreter do E-A and the on-site interpreter to do A-E. Discuss strategies in advance and share with the Deaf participant(s).

Preparation

It is advisable that the interpreting team meet before the meeting to discuss strategies; equally it is ideal to meet with the interpreting service users' right before the meeting to share the strategies the team is suggesting. This will help all users be able to team with the interpreting team effectively and hopefully reduce any stress associated with virtual meetings.

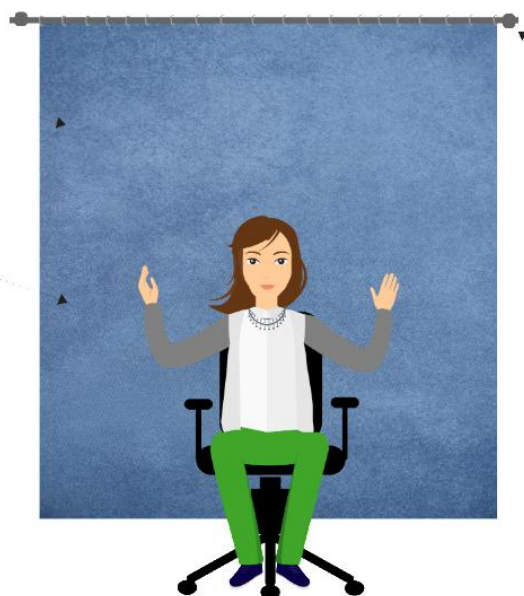
Since teaming during a VRI and hybrid meetings are limited, it is advisable for the team to meet beforehand to review lexical choices, terminologies, each other's technical set up, etc.

Workspace Setup



Blue or grey solid background.

A curtain, sheet, paint, or a photo backdrop could be used for the background. It should be wide enough to accommodate your full arm span.

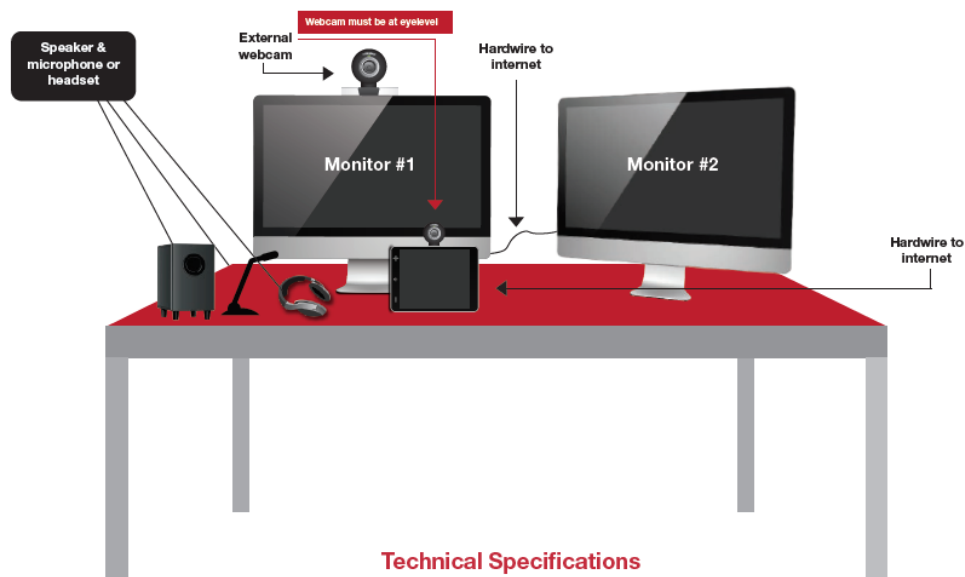


Curtain rod or clamps could be used to secure background.

Option Two

This setup illustrates technical equipment that can be utilized.

Workspace Setup



Technical Specifications

Monitor #1:

- ▶ ASL meeting
- ▶ No audio needed
- ▶ Best webcam

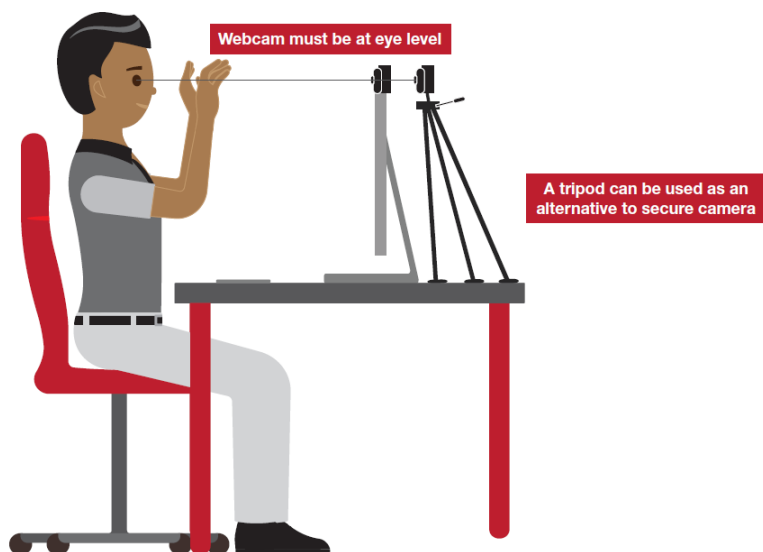
Monitor #2:

- ▶ Auxiliary Info
- ▶ Prep documents
- ▶ CART
- ▶ Messaging
- ▶ Webcam settings control

Laptop or Tablet:

- ▶ Main meeting
- ▶ Main audio feed
- ▶ Secondary webcam

Workspace Setup



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