



# BEING HYBRID

A CHEAP AND EASY  
GUIDE TO HYBRID EVENTS

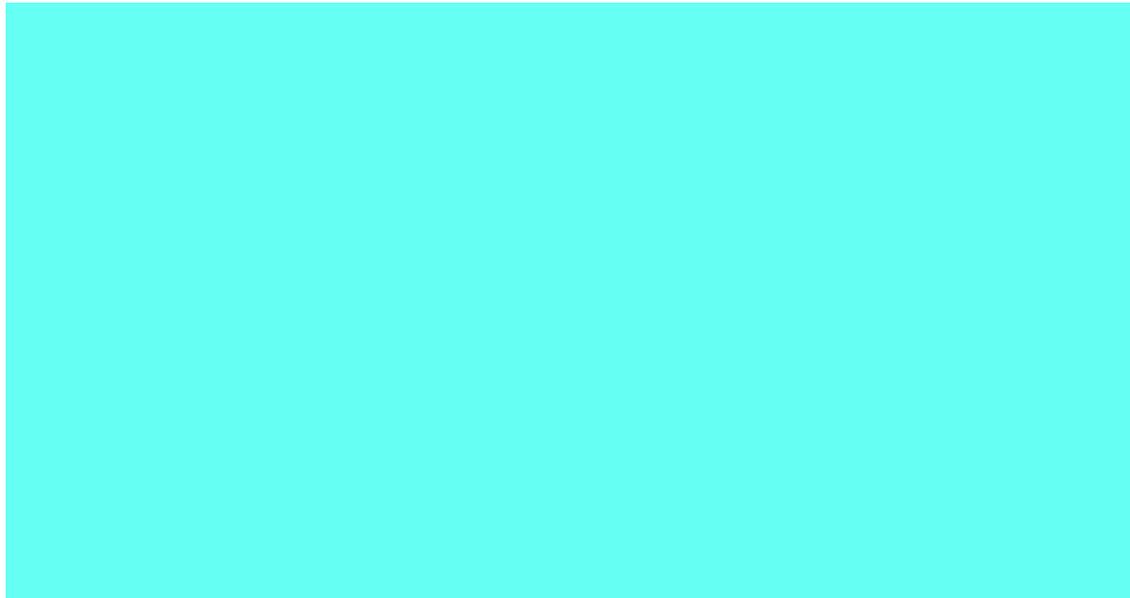
FULL GUIDE

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# OVERVIEW



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With a full return to in-person events, more and more literature organisations are casting Zoom to the winds and reopening doors to welcome back the crowds.

However, in doing so, they are simultaneously closing the door to another group of attendees. This is a potentially far larger group - not limited by regional or even national barriers - and one which is more geographically dispersed, more likely to be disabled, be poorer, have caring responsibilities, and be unable to attend your in-person event. Many of these people are likely to have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, where online programming was vital to people's connection to the world - and now that's gone.

In an ideal world your hybrid programming would be equal in value to your in-person programming, with a budget for your online venue, support team, and access. You would be organising the announcements, workshops and registration. You might not be running it as identical to your in-person stream, but you would have built them simultaneously from the beginning of your planning work.

However, if this isn't the case, you might feel a bit stuck.

You've got a designed and curated event, a very limited amount of funding remaining, and potentially not much time. Maybe you realised in dawning horror that you haven't got a hybrid version, or maybe you got reminded by someone that without a hybrid offering, you risk excluding very marginalised audiences. Either way, you're overwhelmed. The idea of suddenly going hybrid might feel like a huge amount of work, with very little time, for an unclear payoff.

It needs doing anyway - not just because it's a matter of arts,  
but because it's a matter of your moral centre, and your  
commitment to access and equality.

This guide isn't "how to run an accessible hybrid event". Running an accessible hybrid event relies on having accessibility provisions built into the main event (such as BSL interpreters, captioners, rest breaks) that you may or may not have in place. Whilst it will make recommendations on how to use those provisions you have in a hybrid event, ultimately, if they're not there - that's the subject for a different guide.

Instead, this is designed to support a time-poor and resource-poor organisation in working out what they need to do in order to offer the best hybrid programme feasible.

When we talk about a hybrid event, there's a difference between streaming an event and it being hybrid. A streamed event offers people the chance to view it from anywhere - but a hybrid event focuses on engagement, on participation, whether in-person or online. While streaming events is very valuable, hybrid events go far beyond that. This is what we hope you can reach towards with the help of this guide.

I'm not going to pretend you'll necessarily get high numbers. You may be looking at an empty stream for hours - but this isn't because of the lack of demand for hybrid work, it's because of the lack of planning and promotion. And if nobody comes, was it worth doing? Yes. You're building skills and expertise in your organisation, you're offering the possibility of attending to people who wouldn't otherwise be able to come, and if you try it in an ad-hoc way this year, you can include it in a funding bid next year.

## THIS GUIDE CONTAINS

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Beyond audiences: hybrid speakers & facilitators

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Access and hybrid events

# 1

## Five reasons for making an event hybrid

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If you've read this far, you're considering making your event hybrid - but maybe you haven't thought about all the excellent reasons for a hybrid event - so here are five of our favourites.

In this chapter, we'll show how going hybrid can help you:

- 1 Access a wider range of speakers and attendees
- 2 Demonstrate a commitment to access and equity
- 3 Increase attendance
- 4 Increase income from ticket sales
- 5 Make reporting and documentation easier

Let's break these down and think about the benefits a bit more

# 1

## Access a wider range of speakers & attendees

A hybrid event has a far wider range of potential presenters and audiences. Rather than being limited to people who can attend one geographical space at one point in time, you're opening up to anyone who is free at that time and wants to attend. This allows you to broaden and strengthen your national and international networks as a part of the event.

This makes savings on travel costs for presenters, audience members, and your own organisation, and is more environmentally sustainable. This is particularly crucial to consider if you have funding from Arts Council England, where you might need to report on environmental sustainability.



# 2

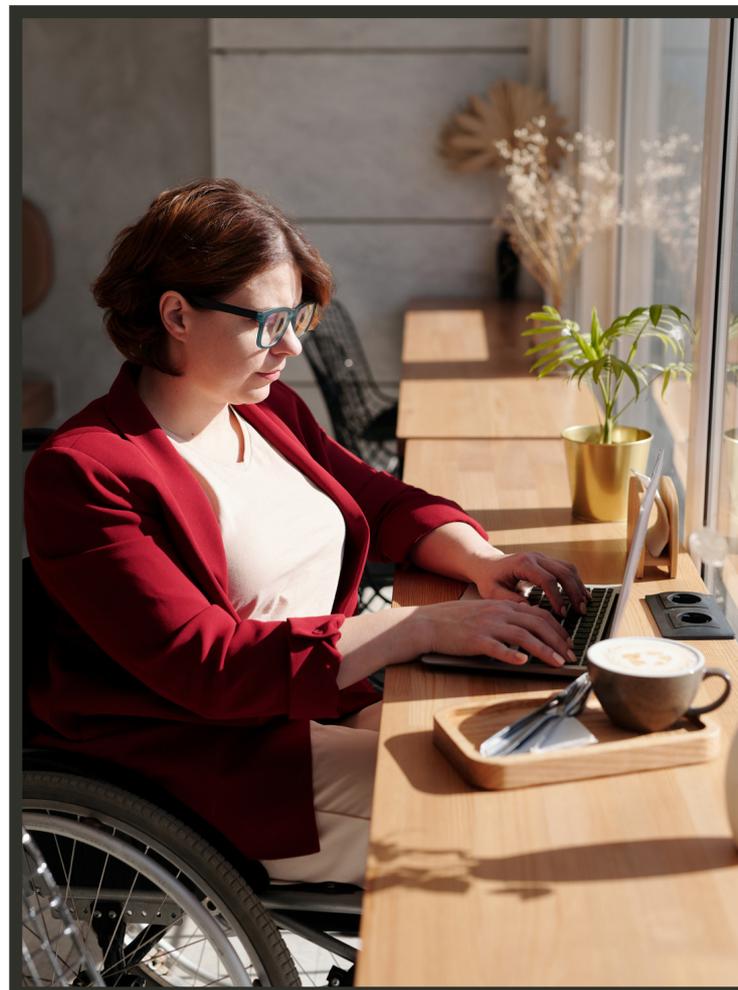
## Demonstrate a commitment to access & equity

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Offering hybrid provision isn't a substitute for offering wheelchair access at venues. Using the existence of hybrid provision to tell disabled people that while there's no physical access, the online offer makes it accessible is discriminatory.

However, hybrid provision specifically benefits people who wouldn't be able to attend the event. This includes disabled people, people with caring responsibilities and geographically distant people.

This is also good for your reporting statistics if you choose to collect demographic and diversity data from your digital attendees. There is a high chance that you will demonstrate that you were able to reach people who would have been unable to engage with your event (and other literature events) without this hybrid offering.



# 3

## Increased attendance

If your physical space has limited capacity, you might not be able to have all the people you want present in the space. However, you can increase your attendance by having people present digitally also. If it's a non-participatory event, or one where audience participation is limited to asking questions, you would be able to have as many attendees as wanted to attend, within the limits set by your streaming platform.





# Increase income from ticket sales

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Whether to sell tickets to the online part of your event or make it free is a difficult decision. On the one hand, if people in the room have paid for tickets, you may want digital participants to do the same. On the other hand, the cost of tickets could put off some of the audiences you're trying hardest to reach. There are a few ways of increasing income from a hybrid event without excluding those individuals, including:

- Suggested donations based on the additional cost of hybrid provision divided by the number of attendees
- Solidarity pricing, encouraging people with a higher income to donate towards the cost of the hybrid provision, keeping it free for others
- Tiered pricing, with ultra-low-cost tickets for people with a lower income, and higher cost tickets for people with a higher income
- A limited number of free places, or free places available on request for people on certain incomes or income-related benefits (this should be done on a basis of trust)

If you are offering free or lower-cost places on the grounds of income, do not ask people for evidence. It can be upsetting and humiliating, and demonstrates distrust.

It's also worth considering that the additional costs of the hybrid event may well have been minimal. Keeping it very low cost or free could be part of a commitment to make the event more accessible to the people that you most want to attend.



# 5 Make reporting easier

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Many event funders or organisers will want to know how the event went. It can be hard to remember everything after the flush of stressful work. This means you need to be in a place to document everything - and recording the online version of your events offers that.

Whilst events should never be recorded without the consent of everyone present, people will often accept this, especially if it's just for your own personal reflections. If you are recording it with the intention of later public sharing, you will of course want to have signed statements of agreement, and to pay additional fees to speakers as appropriate.

If you collect diversity and demographic data on registration for the online event this will also add to your ease of documentation after the event has ended.

If you use auto-captions on the online platform, you can save these at the end of your event. They will offer a very rough transcript, which will be useful for writing up the event afterwards. However, they are not an acceptable accessibility provision for deaf and hard of hearing people, as they are slow and frequently inaccurate.

# 2

## Going hybrid with limited time

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Making an event hybrid is going to take some time. The amount of time it takes is, obviously, directly related to the scale of the event. A single night of performances can be streamed far more easily than a full day of workshops and events. Nonetheless there's a lot you can do to minimise the time burden.

In this chapter, we'll consider how you can go hybrid with limited time:

- 1 Event Structure
- 2 Registration: Finding the right platform
- 3 Marketing: the power of automation

NOTE: Any event that you have running in a streamed or hybrid form will be likely to need someone monitoring the stream - whether passing questions on, letting people into the virtual space, or managing the chat - but this is often not a role that requires a high degree of focus.



# Event Structure

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Single speaker events are probably easiest to make hybrid. All they require is a camera pointed at the speaker or performer and some basic software, and you're beaming them across the world (see 'low tech'). If you've got no time, start with the easiest things, and work your way down.

Similarly, in terms of participatory discussions, it'll be easier to have a round-table as a hybrid event than a creative workshop. In terms of technical ease when you have limited time, this is probably the order of ease for creating hybrid events. If you can't do everything, working from the easiest part first is often sensible.

1 Single person talks

2 Single person readings

3 Static conversations between two people

4 Static conversations between 2+ People

5 Round-table discussions with a chair

6 Creative workshops

However, if you have a single part of your event which you anticipate being high-demand, sometimes it's better to make that hybrid before focusing on everything else.

Making a workshop hybrid is going to require more work from the facilitator to make sure everyone has a fair and equivalent experience. They might not be confident - or have the time - to do this. One option for workshop leaders is to stream the workshop (allowing external people to follow along, but not actively participate).



## Registration: finding the right platform

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There are lots of platforms for managing registration, but Eventbrite is probably the simplest one. It also has all sorts of options to manage capacity, send reminder emails, and ensure people have the joining information for the event on whatever platform you have chosen to use.

If you are charging people for tickets, it will charge a service fee, but does not charge for free tickets and events.

To get people to register, simply set up the event on Eventbrite and add it to your marketing. If you automate the reminder emails, you can make them sound friendly, while still encouraging people who registered to attend.

# 3

## Marketing: the power of automation

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Without marketing, people won't know to come to your event, and marketing will need to be different for hybrid events. For many in-person events people will book well in advance, but for something hybrid people might want to book right up to the last minute.

So few events offer hybrid options that people won't know about it unless you market it very enthusiastically. Luckily, a lot of social media marketing can also be automated. Here are a few things you can do if you are keen to market your hybrid event effectively:

- Do a press release about the hybrid provision you're offering, and why you're offering it - this emphasises your commitment to accessibility and brings it to people's attention
- Create discount codes for tickets to encourage people to book immediately rather than waiting until last minute
- Use a social media scheduler to ensure that you're posting about the content right up to the event. While it might take some time to get everything into the scheduler, once you have you don't need to remember to keep advertising
- Contact mailing lists of disability arts organisations, rural arts organisations and international arts organisations to encourage them to advertise the event and attend, providing them with sample social media content to use, tailored to the reasons they might be interested in a hybrid event.

# Marketing: Go Beyond!

If you want to really focus on marketing your hybrid event to people who won't be there in person - there's a lot more you can do.

When you're considering your audience, you're no longer bound by location - they can be anywhere. This means looking at the things that makes your event unique, and then planning marketing campaigns based on that. Are you focusing on nature poetry? Why not contact nature poets and organisations interested in the interconnections between science and art worldwide? Do you have a specific poet with a very focused interest? Contact organisations that share that interest with invitations and booking links.

You should also consider the audiences who might find it hard to travel physically, whether due to location, being disabled, having parenting or caring responsibilities etc. If this event is designed to be welcoming for them, contact organisations that focus on those issues and encourage them to market the event for you.

When you're contacting people and places, consider providing them with some pre-made social media content (text, graphics (with image descriptions) etc), so they can utilise that in their own outreach.

# 3

## Going hybrid with limited technology

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If you're looking at streaming something simple, where there is an audience watching a person or people as they speak, then technically it will be quite simple. You will want to familiarise yourself with the settings on your chosen platform for the event, but once you've done so, it should be easy to run.

Remember that a hybrid event is more than just the streaming - it's also making it possible for the people watching the event to participate to the same degree as the audience in the room. That means monitoring a hand-raise or chat function, and taking questions and discussion points from people who are virtually present, as well as people who are physically present.

NOTE: If you're having a hybrid event for audiences, you could also provide hybrid access for speakers, performers, and facilitators. See Section 5, Beyond Audiences.



# Basic tech considerations

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Streaming an event sounds like it would need a lot of technology - but that's not necessarily the case.

Streaming it is very simple. The bare minimum you will require is a device (ideally two devices) capable of a video-call (e.g. a mobile or laptop), though the more technology you use, the higher quality the stream can become.

Your device will need to have a microphone and camera, someone to operate the video-call, and you will need a videoconferencing platform on which you can hold the event. You will also need some form of Chair, facilitator, or host managing the video platform during the event and supporting people with any technical issues.

If you have multiple people to put into the stream at once (e.g. you have a BSL interpreter and want people to see the BSL interpreter as well as the speaker) you will need a separate device to connect to the stream, which you can simply connect without using audio (or with its mic off and sound muted). That will need to be pointed at the interpreter at all times to ensure that they're visible on the screen. Depending on platform, you may need to 'pin' them.

Most streaming options that have auto-captions and host controls are paid, but they may have free trials that you can use - and if you time your event correctly, you might well be able to manage it during those free trials. If not, you're probably looking at a cost of sub-£50 to stream, assuming you already have a device with internet access.

# 2

## Streaming platforms

### Our recommendation: Zoom

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#### STREAMING TO ZOOM

Here, you have a camera and microphone in front of the speaker (you can use an old laptop, tablet, phone etc), which is streaming to a Zoom room or webinar

#### ADVANTAGES

People are used to Zoom and will understand how to join it

It has auto-captions which you can enable - though while these can help some audience members, they're not accurate enough to provide access to deaf and hard-of-hearing people

People can ask questions and engage, either in the typed chat, or into the room itself

#### DISADVANTAGES

Zoom isn't free for this purpose. You will need a paid account due to the limit on the number of people in a Zoom meet (3 people for free account). For more information, see pricing.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER

If you are primarily 'streaming out' and taking audience questions in a managed fashion you will need to:

- Mute everyone
- Switch off audience video
- Hide non-video participants

This will still allow people to contribute via chat, or via 'hand raising'

# An alternative: Google Meet

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## STREAMING TO GOOGLE MEET

Again, you can use a camera and microphone in front of the speaker, only this time you're streaming to an event on Google Meet

### ADVANTAGES

It is free to use on a scale that would suit smaller events

It has auto-captions which you can enable - though while these can help some audience members, they're not accurate enough to provide access to deaf and hard-of-hearing people

People can ask questions and engage

### DISADVANTAGES

People are less familiar with it than they are with Zoom, meaning there are more likely to be issues with people unmuting themselves and interrupting

There may be fewer host controls, making it harder to (e.g.) forcibly mute an audience

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

If you have 'Google Workspace' you will have far more control over a meeting held on Google Meet, but again, this isn't free. This does allow you to pin video, mute everyone, turn video off etc.

If you have the speaker sharing slides, you can do this via the platform you are using to hold the hybrid event, using screen-share to show the slides at the same time as the speaker. This will allow digital audiences to follow along with the slides as well as the speaker.

# 3

## Making hybrid tech work

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In order to present the work properly, you will need either a large screen or a projector, with the appropriate cables. This will allow the speaker to be visible to the audience. Alongside that, you will need to have speakers that are powerful enough to be heard clearly around the room. Simply propping your laptop up probably isn't enough - but many venues have a projector and speakers available.

### YOU WILL NEED TO CONSIDER

- Are you asking the speaker to deliver their work pre-recorded, live, or a mixture? There are advantages and disadvantages to all of these - live work is far more engaging, but is susceptible to connection problems at the last minute, while a pre-recorded section will not rely on a good internet connection
- If there is an interactive section, how will you make sure the speaker can see and hear the audience-members as they speak? Sometimes if there's not a good microphone, the best option is for the Chair to relay questions from the audience to the speaker
- What will you do if there are connection issues during the event? It's often wise to have a backup plan for this - such as people using their mobile phone network as a hotspot - but this isn't infallible and sometimes connections just are unstable. However, if this seems like it would make hybrid events impossible, remember the same thing can happen in person. People can leave an event or be unexpectedly late or absent to it.

# Tech: Go Beyond!

If you've got a bit of extra human time and budget, you might be thinking "how can I improve the tech to make it easier for the hybrid event to work". Here are some ideas.

## SOUND & CAMERA

Ensuring that people can see and hear the stream clearly is really important. If you've got the extra budget and time, this is a good place to spend it.

Better image quality can be achieved by a camera on a tripod. You can often use a good DSLR camera for this, and this is especially valuable if you're keen to record the event as well as streaming it. You can also have several cameras in place - for example one focused on the speaker, one on the host, one on the interpreter, and one on the audience - and either have them all on the stream, or have someone managing the technology and using a service like XSplit to show selected views at different times.

If you want to show a table of people, a wide-angle webcam is often a good idea.

Having the right microphone and speakers in place can really improve the quality of the event. There are a range of different speakerphone-microphones that are designed for hosting meetings. It's worth thinking about whether you are looking to have a single speaker, or whether you'd rather use a microphone that is designed to pick up sound from a table of speakers.

Some microphones have built-in speakers, while others will need separate speakers. These will need to be selected as your input and output devices in whatever programme you are using to stream.

## PROJECTION

For workshops and interactive discussions, one way of integrating everyone is to have the digital participants present on a projector which the in-person participants can see, and a wide-angle webcam focused on the table of people (or two webcams if needed) to allow digital participants to see everyone.

You can then have a good-quality audio-conferencing speaker and microphone in the room, which will allow people to see and hear each other as far as possible.

## HIGH QUALITY STREAMING

Google Workspace and Zoom Webinar both offer a lot more (paid) features for managing your meeting. If you don't want the audience to be shown, but want them to engage and ask questions, Zoom Webinar may be a better option for you (though workshops will want a regular meet)

If you're really keen on going that one step further, consider using a tool like Xsplit. Xsplit will allow you to create a hybrid event on Zoom, by creating a 'virtual webcam' from a range of different inputs - while also letting you stream live to places like Youtube. This means that if you have lots of different cameras, you can decide what layout you want - maybe you want to show the BSL interpreter all the time, and click back and forth between the host and speaker. Maybe you want frames with your logo on to appear around speakers, or you want to show a fixed image at the same time as a speaker.

Xsplit isn't free, but it will allow you to run your event as a high-quality and professional stream and record it for future use. It's very simple to set up a range of sources (cameras, webcams, skype streams, google slides etc), and will present a powerful and professional look which will go a long way to building engagement with future content.

# 4 Putting it into practice

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In this section we'll look at how to make different types of events hybrid. Including:

- 1 Talks, Readings & Panels
- 2 Workshops, round-tables & discussions
- 3 Open Mics



# Talks, readings, and panels

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Making static, low-speaker, audience question events stream-able is very simple, and there are lots of platforms that can do it. If you've held an online meeting on Zoom or Google Meet, congratulations, because you're half-way there already - and a simple hybrid event is broadly the same as hosting one of those meetings.

## HOST ROLE

You will need someone whose role is to manage the hybridity of the event - focused both on the online and the in-person. This will include:

- Admitting people from the waiting room into the event
- Checking that sound and video levels are working for digital audiences
- Pinning or spotlighting active speakers (be careful when doing this if you want to also have BSL interpreters on the stream)
- Ensuring everyone is muted with cameras off, so that the digital participants are able to focus on the speakers
- Monitoring the 'chat' and 'hands up' function for questions
- Relaying questions as part of any question or discussion, giving digital participants equal opportunity and profile as in-person participants
- Dealing with any technical issues
- Screen-sharing slides for speakers if appropriate and necessary
- Ensuring auto-captions are working effectively

# 2

## Workshops, round-tables & discussions

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It is harder to ensure hybridity works well for workshops and discussions. This is because if not everyone who might speak can see both the digital and in-person participants, the meeting can become weighted towards one side or the other.

### TIPS & TRICKS

To make a hybrid workshop, round-table, or discussion (in which participants are present both in person and digitally) you should consider:

- Having a host or chair whose role is to monitor the event (as above)
- Make the ground rules of engagement clear (that people need to wait to speak until invited to do so)
- Ensure everyone knows how to indicate that they want to talk
- Encourage people to have cameras on unless they prefer not to, to create a more communal and engaged atmosphere
- Have the digital participants on a laptop or tablet. Pass this round the in-person participants such that when an in-person participant is speaking, the laptop is in front of them. This ensures that the digital audience will see them. When a digital speaker is speaking, put the laptop pointed at the room, so everyone present is able to see them

It's sometimes better to have two devices in the room at once. One has sound, mic, and camera on, and is the 'participant' device. This is the one that will be passed around. The other has sound, camera, and microphone off, and is the 'host' device. This allows the host to monitor the chat, waiting room, and keep an eye on the hands going up in the digital meeting so they can make sure they're engaging both parties equally.

# 3

## Open mic events

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Many literature festivals have open mic events as well as performances. These are an incredible opportunity for people to sign up and perform work - maybe for the first time. They also allow for people more established in the industry to be exposed to new talent, and can open a huge number of doors. As well as that, they're fun and people want to attend them.

### TIPS & TRICKS

Making your open mic hybrid is surprisingly easy if you're already offering hybrid talks. You can easily invite people to both be in the audience and perform as part of this. You will need to make sure that your sign-up and line-up processes allow both digital and in-person participants to register (and remember that digital drop-off is probably higher than in-person drop-off).

Here, you need a way for audiences to see and hear what's happening, and for performers to perform. This is exactly the same as managing a workshop, where the audience will usually want to see the person speaking or performing, and the video-feed on the laptop is the interface - either sending the sound and video from the room to the digital space or the opposite.

# 5

## Beyond Audiences Hybrid Speakers & Facilitators

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This guide has primarily touched on making hybrid work for your audiences. This isn't because they're the only people that benefit from hybrid, but because it was written assuming you had your programme set already. However if someone has to pull out because they can't travel, this raises the question of "did they need to travel"? Could they have delivered their work from home instead?

### Five advantages of digital speakers and presenters

- 1 Digital speakers can be anywhere - even at short notice
- 2 You can save money on travel and hotels
- 3 Pre-recorded material can help make your event more accessible
- 4 Pre-recorded material can give you more reliable timings
- 5 The event can be structured to meet different audience access needs



# Digital speakers can be anywhere

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Rather than being limited to people who are both in the right place, and there at the right time, you can have speakers come from anywhere around the world. In places without reliable internet, their part might need to be pre-recorded - but that can have its advantages as well. Otherwise, they can check in from wherever they happen to be at the time you need them.

This is both an advantage in the structure of the event, allowing you to pick the very best readers, speakers, and presenters, but also in the context of access for marginalised groups.

An expectation of physical presence is likely to marginalise disabled people, parents, carers, people without transport, and people who can't afford transport. By offering them a choice between running the session in-person or hybrid, you're letting them select the most accessible approach for them.

If you have hybrid provisions in place, the event is far less exposed to the risk of minor illness or travel breakdown. For speakers who were anticipating attending in person, but become unable to attend while remaining able to deliver their reading or workshop (e.g. due to very minor illness, making travel hard, or travel breakdown), the event is able to pivot to hybrid for those people, meaning it can retain its original line-up.



## Save money on travel & hotels

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Travel and accommodation can be key parts of the budget for an event - and as well as the environmental cost to travel, can make it far more costly and cumbersome for employers.

Having some people speaking or performing virtually has the big advantage of saving that money (though there may be other costs that they acquire and might need to discuss with you).

These additional costs may be around recording good quality versions of their work, typing up materials for workshops etc.

It should be acknowledged that if you are making extensive cost-savings on travel and hotel, some of this funding should be made available to support people in delivering the best work they can, even if that means purchasing minor equipment.



# 3

## Pre-recorded material: making your event more accessible

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If you have pre-recorded material, you can get accurate captions made (or create them, using auto-captions before editing the auto-caption output). This makes the material far more accessible for deaf and hard of hearing people, and reduces the cost of live captioners.

However, captions are not a substitute for providing British Sign Language interpreters, and not all BSL signers will be able to understand an event using captions, without an interpreter being present.



# 4

## Pre-recorded material: giving you reliable timings

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When you're using pre-recorded material, you know what the length of the piece is, meaning you can create a more reliable structure for your event. If you know the run-time of a piece, this can make the event far more accessible for attendees, who will be given a more confirmed schedule.

This also makes the event easier for other readers and facilitators, who are then able to be more certain of their own call-times.



# Event Structure & Access

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Not all access requirements are easy to reconcile. Some people are unable to manage long days, and require several short days, while for others, fewer longer days are more accessible.

This may relate to disability, but also to other life commitments, travel distance, responsibilities, etc.

If you have some material pre-recorded, this can be offered to attendees in advance, allowing them to take in that part of the work at a time that is suitable for them and meets their own needs, meaning that there are fewer 'live' hours scheduled in any given day.

This allows physical and virtual audiences to rest during the sections of pre-recorded delivery if they prefer - but also the opportunity to attend those parts with everyone else if that meets their requirements better.

# Beyond Audiences: The Hybrid Workload

It's important to be careful never to underpay people because they're delivering the work from home instead of from your venue. There are lots of time and cost commitments that people doing a talk or reading from home might face that people in the space don't. Pay should be equitable in terms of workload, rather than weighted towards in-person (or remote) provision.

## CONSIDER...

Think about the effort that goes into getting camera and lighting right, microphone right, having good enough technology and the right internet speed connection in place to deliver the work. If you've asked people to pre-record, this often involves endless takes and edits - and this is also work (not to mention the tidying up in the background and making sure you won't be disturbed).

Having hybrid speakers allows you - much like with audiences - to reach beyond those regional and national boundaries, and to invite the best people, not just the closest people. However, ensuring that their delivery works is also partly your responsibility.

# 6

## Access & Hybrid Events

Making your event accessible to deaf and disabled people is crucial. This guide has focused on making the hybrid event work - but addressing accessibility is a key part of this.

It's important to make your access provision clear from the outset. It is not reasonable to expect people to get in touch with you for the basic information you should be providing already. Just as you (should) have a statement about your in-person access provisions, you will also need one about your online access provisions.

1. What platform your hybrid event will be using
2. What immediate support there will be (e.g. will there be a host present) and how this can be accessed
3. What the schedule is
4. When the breaks are
5. That your event is relaxed and people can come and go as they wish
6. What content notes are likely and how you plan to deliver these
7. What support is in place to help people contribute if they're not comfortable speaking verbally
8. What provisions you do (or don't) have for BSL interpreters
9. What provisions you do (or don't) have for captioning
10. Whether and how people can access slides and presentations in advance
11. Whether and how people can access scripts from speakers and readers
12. What provisions you have for visual descriptions

See this as a starting point, rather than something definitive.

# 1

# General Considerations

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When thinking about access for digital participants, much of this will cross over to relate to in-person participants also, although not all will. Some general access considerations include:

- Having regular breaks at pre-determined times
- Ensuring that everyone knows the schedule for the day
- Events should be 'relaxed' - allowing people to come and go as they need. Let digital participants know they can come and go
- Being clear in advance what you are expecting from attendees - e.g:

This is a talk. For the first 45 minutes your camera will be off and you will be muted. For the last 15 minutes there will be audience questions. If you wish to speak, please use the chat or hand-raise function. If you send a question in chat, please tell us whether you would like to read it out yourself or have it read for you. We ask that questions are short and address something the speaker has said. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to call on everyone.

- Giving clear 'content notes' (advisory notes regarding potentially upsetting content). This is not the same as a trigger warning - it is a broader concept that says "this talk addresses themes including..."
- Ensuring all instructions for workshop exercises are available in text as well as audio format (e.g. pasted into the chat)



# Specific Considerations

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## TECHNOLOGICAL BARRIERS

There are a wide range of people who might face barriers related to understanding the technology of the event and who might need clear information. These barriers might affect a wide range of people including people with mental health problems, neurodivergent people, people with cognitive and learning disabilities, and people who are technologically isolated.

There are things that you can do to mitigate this including the provision of clear information and support.

## ACCESSING THE EVENT

Give clear instructions on how to access the event. There are lots of sets of instructions online that you can send to a guest.

Ensure that automated emails are sent out on the day of the event with joining links and instructions.

Provide an email contact if people are struggling to join the event.

## DURING THE EVENT

Be available to answer any questions or offer technical support if needed.

Be clear and supportive around how much engagement people should have, and supporting them to speak if they desire.

# 3

## Barriers faced by deaf & hard of hearing people

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Deaf and hard of hearing people - especially Deaf signers and people who need captioners or lipspeakers - are excluded from the literature world. Many events don't provide even basic access (e.g. booking interpreters). This perpetuates the exclusion of Deaf signers and other deaf and hard of hearing people. It's crucial to make sure your hybrid event is accessible.

### BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Writing this, I hope you already have British Sign Language interpreters available. Without this, Deaf BSL signers will be unable to participate in your event, whether in person or online. It's a crucial access provision, and one that you should have costed into your funding and event from the outset.

If you have BSL interpreters in place, you will need to ensure that they're visible in the hybrid event. This means that they will need another device pointed at them which is focused on them throughout. If two interpreters are switching, you will either need two devices, or for them to also switch seats, so they remain visible on the stream.

Platforms like Zoom often let you pin or spotlight multiple people, and Zoom also has the capacity for the hosts to allow participants to "multi-pin" which fixes multiple people on the participants screen (such as the speaker and interpreters).

Discuss this with the interpreters you have booked. Be aware that your contract with them may need to be altered if they are being streamed as well as working in-venue, and that it is likely to prohibit you from recording them.

## CAPTIONERS / SPEECH-TO-TEXT-REPORTERS (STTRS)

A speech to text reporter uses a specific keyboard to type at up to 200wpm, and therefore can keep up with speech during an event, accurately captioning it for attendees.

These captions provide crucial access for not just deaf and hard of hearing people, but many neurodivergent people and people with auditory processing disorders.

If they are booked live in the venue, their equipment can also often be patched into a Zoom call or similar, but this will need advance discussion with the STTR about the technology and capacity they have.

Captions are an even more crucial access requirement for hybrid events for a far broader population where distorted audio and lower quality video can make it harder for people to follow speech where they would have easily been able to do so at an in-person event.

### BUT DON'T AUTO-CAPTIONS EXIST?

Auto-captions are a really useful facility. They are free on Google Meet and Zoom. They can provide you with a transcript of an event, you can follow a lot of it, and with some judicious editing, they're often quite good. But they don't make an event accessible. They are flawed, they rely on specific tones, patterns of speech, and accents. This means that they are often a racist algorithm. They also don't work where people have difficulty to understand speech. The fact that auto-caption software fails when speech becomes harder for people to hear means they will never be an acceptable access provision.

This isn't a reason not to use them if they're the only option. Having them is still better than not having them, and the facility they provide you with in terms of access to a transcript after the event will be useful for you. They may make it possible for people to participate who wouldn't have otherwise been able to - but they're inadequate to be advertised as an access provision.

## OFFERING SCRIPTS

If you're at the point where you want to go ahead with your event, but you know that the auto-captions won't cope with people reading experimental poetry - there are other options. Asking people a copy of their script allows that to be shared with people who require it in order to follow what's being said. If writers are unwilling to share their scripts with attendees to have and look at, they may be willing to share the script with a host, who can then copy-paste them into Zoom, line by line.

## HYBRID POETRY

Capturing the rhythm of poetry and performance in text is challenging. While a STTR or captioner is excellent at transcribing a discussion in real time, a lot can be lost from poetry during this process.

In order for it to be received as written, the most accessible way of captioning a poetry reading is typically for the poems to be 'screen-shared' and projected, such that online and in-person attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing can follow the pacing of the poetry as laid out on the page.

This is also the simplest option technically - isn't it great when the simplest option is also the most accessible?

It's still important to provide captions - as poets will often speak as well as reading their work - but making it standard to share the text of the poem alongside the audio and video will improve access to that author's work across-the-board.

This is also one of those access provisions that lots of people who aren't deaf or disabled also benefit from, because it allows them to appreciate the work in multiple mediums at one time.

However, screen-sharing can make it harder for people to see the BSL interpreter so it's important to make sure anyone using the interpreter knows how to resize the screen to maximise the interpreter and minimise the poem.

# 4

## Barriers faced by blind and visually impaired people

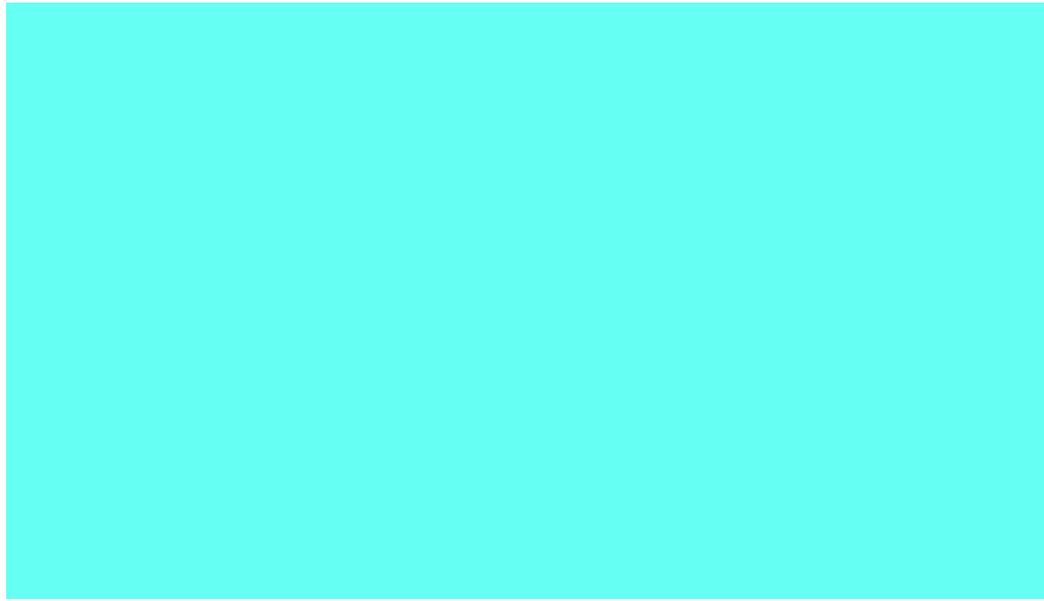
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Hybrid events create a number of specific barriers for blind and visually impaired people. Whether present in person or digitally, they may struggle to see people attending or speaking on tiny screens, and it is especially hard to follow any digital material, such as slides.

### THERE ARE A FEW THINGS YOU CAN DO HERE TO MAKE IT EASIER:

- Share any slides or presentation documents in advance, so people can familiarise themselves with it and don't have to try and read it during the meeting. Make the slides available as a plain text word document without images or formatting, as well as in the formatting the presenter has chosen to use
- Ensure the host is clear about whether the immediate speaker is present physically or virtually
- Ask people to give a quick visual description of themselves when they introduce themselves (e.g. "My name is Jamie. I'm a white person with dark red hair and a ginger beard, wearing thick, black-framed glasses and a black t-shirt in a large electric wheelchair. My pronouns are they/them"). This allows people to flag things about their appearance - like being in a wheelchair - that matter to them
- Ask people to always give their name before they speak, so people know who is speaking (or as an alternative, have the host do so)
- Ensure you have a way of knowing if any blind or visually impaired people want to contribute digitally. Finding ways of indicating e.g. typing in chat or clicking a specific button may not be accessible, so you may need to ask them to flick their camera on and wave

# FINAL THOUGHTS



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Ultimately, what builds audiences is sustained and active engagement.

This means making a single event hybrid will achieve nothing - growing your base will require you to continually carry out hybrid events, engage audiences, and build networks of contacts. Nothing is a substitute for time - but with that time the real value of this work will come through.

It's not just a game of 'how many' but also 'who'. If your hybrid provision allows you to reach people who wouldn't otherwise have made it, then you've succeeded - so, well done.

## WITH THANKS TO...

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We were not funded to create this or paid for our time in writing and producing this guide, and have been limited in the range of accessible versions we could provide. If you need an accessible version that is not currently available, please email [contact@cripticarts.org](mailto:contact@cripticarts.org) and we will do our best to create it.

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