A Guide to Microsoft Teams for Sign Language Interpreters

Microsoft Teams is a tool for people to connect and work with others inside and outside their organization. It contains dozens of features like meetings, phone calling, document collaboration and connection to countless other applications. Organizations using Teams can enable/disable features and settings for their users and guests as needed. This customization is useful for organizations but can be a challenge for interpreters to navigate.

The following guidance is written specifically for interpreters. We will walk through the typical steps of signing in and joining a Teams meeting, while highlighting features that are useful for sign language interpreters. Here are the features included in this guide:

- **Downloading Teams**
- **Signing In**
- **Teams Desktop App Features**
- **View Profile and Switch Accounts**
- **Useful Settings for Interpreters**
  - **DESKTOP USERS – Accessing Settings**
  - **WEB USERS – Accessing Settings**
  - **Device Settings**
    - Set Video and Audio Devices prior to joining a call
    - Set Video and Audio Devices during a meeting
  - **Joining Meetings**
  - **Meeting Lobby**
  - **Sign Language View**
    - **DESKTOP USERS – Enable Sign Language View**
    - **Enable Sign Language View during an active meeting on Desktop**
  - **WEB USERS – Enable Sign Language View**
  - **Live Captions**
    - **DESKTOP USERS – Enable Live Captions**
    - **Enable Live Captions during an active meeting on Desktop**
  - **WEB USERS – Enable Live Captions**
  - **Screen Share Pop Out**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This document was created by an independent interpreter as a resource for other interpreters. The information contained herein is not endorsed by Microsoft.
Downloading Teams

There are two versions of Teams for desktop users: Home and “Work or School”.

| | Interpreters who do not have either (1) an account associated with the company/organization or (2) a Microsoft 365 business account must use **Teams for Home.**
| | **All meetings must be joined via web browser**
| | Interpreters with organization-joined accounts or a Microsoft 365 business account should use **Teams for Work or School.**

All versions of Teams are available here:
[Download Microsoft Teams Desktop and Mobile Apps | Microsoft Teams](#)

* Teams is also available on Android, iPhone or iPad. This guide does not include instructions for mobile.

Signing In

Typically, interpreters joining Teams meetings are “guest” users and do not have full access to all the Teams features as an employee user. This can cause barriers to access, particularly when joining meetings at organizations that have highly restricted access settings for guests users. However, when an interpreter “guest” user has gone through a few initial setup steps, they may find their experience on Teams greatly improved.

If the interpreter does not have an email account at an organization, it is still helpful to sign in as an authenticated user with a Microsoft account. Signing in can allow access to Teams Chat, which enables Deaf professionals and Interpreters to communicate over IM.

For interpreters who don't already have a Microsoft account, here are two options:

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<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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| **Outlook.com account** | • Free  
• Potential access to Teams IM with Deaf professional, depending on their org settings | • Only available on Teams for Home  
• Must use web browser to join meetings  
• Limited meeting features |
| **Microsoft 365 Account for Small Business** | • Is an authenticated Teams for Work account  
• Can use Teams Desktop  
• Improved access to meeting features  
• Access to Teams IM  
• Access to Teams collaboration features | • Subscription fee (similar to cost of Zoom account)  
• Additional account to manage |
To sign in to your Microsoft account, you must use Microsoft Authenticator app on your mobile device. [Sign in to your accounts using the Microsoft Authenticator app - Microsoft Support](https://support.microsoft.com/

**Teams Desktop App Features**

Teams has many features such as chat, calls, meetings, team collaboration, etc. It is helpful to know that these exist, but most interpreters will not utilize these features. I will not cover them in this guide.

**View Profile and Switch Accounts**

For those with access to multiple organizations, there is an option to switch accounts in the top right corner of the app window.
Useful Settings for Interpreters

Here are a few recommended settings for interpreters.

DESKTOP USERS – Accessing Settings

To access the Settings menu, click the 3 dots button in the top right corner.

WEB USERS – Accessing Settings

Settings can only be applied in the pre-meeting lobby or during an active call. The following pages will indicate where each setting can be found on a web browser.
Device Settings

Set Video and Audio Devices prior to joining a call

DESKTOP USERS

To set devices outside of a meeting, use Settings > Devices. Devices can also be selected in the pre-meeting lobby or during an active call.

WEB USERS

Choose settings in the pre-join “lobby”.

This is helpful!!
Set Video and Audio Devices during a meeting

During an active call, users can change video and audio devices by clicking on the down-arrow next to the Camera and Mic buttons.
Joining Meetings

Use the meeting link

In the Teams Calendar, click “Join with an ID”. Enter the meeting ID and passcode.
Meeting Lobby

DESKTOP USERS

WEB USERS

Guest users can also change their display name here. (Authenticated users in an organization will not be able to change their username.)

Guest users may be placed on hold in the lobby until they are admitted into the meeting.
Sign Language View

Sign Language View was built by Deaf people for Deaf people using interpreters. It’s very useful!

To read more: Use Sign Language View in Microsoft Teams - Microsoft Support

What Sign Language View does:

- Allows a user to designate any participant as a “Signer”, keeping their video feed in full view at all times.
  *Settings will only apply to an individual user’s view.

- When screenshare is used during a meeting, those designated as a “signer” will be displayed in corner of screen. Users can click on the signer’s video to bring it back to center stage again.

- Signers can be designated from within Teams general settings, so that any time a signer-user joins a meeting, their video will be prioritized.
  - Deaf users can use this to set a list of interpreters or Deaf coworkers.
  - Interpreter users can set a list of Deaf people and team interpreters.
  - NOTE: Users must have organization authenticated accounts for this feature

To access Sign Language View, you must first enable the feature in settings.
DESKTOP USERS – Enable Sign Language View

Settings > Appearance and Accessibility > Sign Language View

**Sign language view**
Signers will appear larger on your screen throughout your meetings. This setting only affects your view.

*Manage signers*

**Add people as signers**
Signers will be prioritised on your screen in meetings when your view is set to Sign language.

*Add someone as a signer*
Enable Sign Language View during an active meeting on Desktop

View > Sign Language

Select a user’s video feed and click the 3 dots, or right click to bring up menu
1. **ACTIVATE** Sign Language View

   Settings > Accessibility > Sign Language View

   Note: Web users must activate Sign Language View for every call. Feature can only be activated from within the active call.

2. Once the feature is activated, designate a meeting participant as a signer.

   Click the 3-dots menu next to a person’s name OR right click on their picture

   OR

   Use the Participant List to designate a user as a Signer
Live Captions
Another useful feature for interpreters is live captions.

DESKTOP USERS – Enable Live Captions
Outside of a meeting: Settings > Captions and Transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Captions and transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts and orgs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notifications and activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance and accessibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Files and links</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>App permissions</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Calls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions and transcripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Recognition</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Transcription
Automatically identify me in meeting captions and transcripts

Live captions
Filter profane words in meeting captions
Always show live captions in meetings

Enable Live Captions during an active meeting on Desktop

Once captions have been enabled, color/size/position can be changed here
WEB USERS – Enable Live Captions

*Only accessible within active meeting settings

Settings > Language and speech > Turn on live captions
Screen Share Pop Out

When a presenter shares content in a Teams call, Desktop users can select “Pop Out” to open screen share in a separate window. This can be a very useful feature when it is critical to view a Deaf person and the screen share at the same time.

A couple things to note about using Pop Out:

- This feature is only available on Desktop
- Activating and deactivating this feature can take a moment. Be prepared for it to interrupt your view of a Deaf person’s video feed for a few seconds.
- Captions will be visible in both windows
- This feature can use up additional processing power on your computer, so it may slow things down.
- If you will be using this feature for an important meeting, it is advisable to test it out first.