

accessibility in organising

A DSC ZINE GUIDE

**by us (2018-19 DSC committee)
+ designed by mia watanabe!**

CONTENTS

[navigating the world of activism as a disabled person can be overwhelming. Inside this zine you'll find all sorts of ideas which you might like to use so that your activism may be as accessible as you are able to make it.

However, this is by no means exhaustive. There are no rules here - read this zine however is most comfortable for you, in whatever order, wherever, whenever.

Practise with compassion.]

[What types of disability might affect organising + activism?](#)

(a non-exhaustive map)

[How do we make our activism accessible?](#)

1. physical
2. meetings
3. direct actions + occupations
4. online communication

Generating awareness

Intersections

Anticipating needs

Managing expectations

What types of disability might affect organising + activism?

(a non-exhaustive map)

- **Anxiety**

- Issues speaking up in meetings
- Being around new people
- Being new to organising

- **Communication**

- Missing out on info
- Engaging with different types + speeds of communication (IRL + online)
- Confusing jargon
- Being loud may be due to a disability e.g. AS or a hearing impairment

- **Mood**

- Anxiety + panic attacks
- Exhaustion
- Mood changes
- Guilt about not doing 'enough'

- **Physical + mobility**

- Accessing locations
- Being comfortable + able to care for yourself

- **Fatigue**

- Meeting lengths/locations/times
- Attending meetings
- Mood-related exhaustion
- Fatigue during a task

How do we make our activism accessible?

1. Physical

- step-free access
- comfortable seating
- toilet access (especially important during occupations)
- accessible by bus or otherwise in a central location
- explicitly saying people are welcome to get up/move/leave whenever without having to explain why or being judged
- place to relax/take a nap
- saying a certain area is okay to rest in
- providing a guide to rallies/ occupations/meetings for people who aren't used to them

2. Meetings

- a system for anonymous submissions
- no shouting or aggression
- start meetings by affirming that everyone is already doing enough + closing with an affirmation that everyone did well enough
- live meeting minutes (online)
- upload agendas beforehand
- encouraging clarification
- policy of one person talking at once + seating in arrangement so everyone can see each other so people can lip read if necessary

- short/regular breaks
- use non-technical/non-jargon-y language + define technical words
- allowing food whenever
- asking 'is anyone able to do X?' rather than 'who wants to do X?' as the latter encourages overburdening
- try to share the workload
- having someone who regularly attends meetings and is comfortable on hand to meet people beforehand

3. Direct actions + occupations

- physical accessibility (above)
- consider/warn for noise + crowd-related (e.g. anxiety + sensory overload) in emotionally charged situations (e.g. men shouting)
- making people aware of a wide variety of ways they can participate so they are more likely to find an aspect they are able to take part in
- having someone to meet/stick with throughout protests
- texts of chants/speeches available in advance

4. Online communication

- provide text-only versions of resources
- use content notes + trigger warnings
- use multiple platforms if necessary
- provide access statements for every meeting + event in advance

Generating awareness

- ★ collectively adopt the mentality that everyone is helpful, and be willing for the movement to be as big, small, and inclusive as it can be
- ★ be careful not to adopt a 'more disabled than thou' attitude (e.g. belittling people or assuming they have it easier than you)
- ★ don't assume people do not have disabilities/certain experiences
- ★ make accessibility part of skillsharing
- ★ involve the person(s) affected by a problem in choosing the solution
- ★ explaining to people who are concerned that they are not the only person with X disability in the group
- ★ content noting for upsetting topics and making it clear that people don't have to stay for related discussions

Intersections

- ★ be aware that women are typically expected/feel more like they 'have' to take on certain stuff
- ★ use stickers with names + pronouns - this helps with misgendering/feeling included. also still introduce pronouns verbally in case of visual disabilities
- ★ be aware that those with less supportive families/less resources will not have the same support network as you
- ★ avoid pigeonholing people who have disabilities as well as a more visible marginalisation into activism on the visible (e.g. disabled women being expected to work on sexism)
- ★ formulate diverse activism (e.g. LGBT+ and decolonisation both have large overlaps with disability + ableism due to medicalisation and results of oppression)

Anticipating needs

- ★ work on being proactive so the onus is not on the individual to flag things up but it is important to also balance this with the needs of people involved in planning for every eventuality
- ★ double check with people (without patronising them) that they are able to do what they are taking on, to avoid potentially taking on too much
- ★ define, implement and continually review processes
- ★ have a specific space/chance for people to flag up requirements in private or anonymously

Managing expectations

- ★ shift the emphasis from individuals to what collectively needs to be done (e.g. don't call out specific people for not doing as much as expected; avoid directly asking one person in a meeting to do something; be clear that you don't have to verbalise a reason for not doing something)
- ★ try to get new/less confident people to do things, supporting them with help from others and allocating fall-back people up front if necessary
- ★ if struggling to book an accessible room because of last-min planning, consider how to shift organising to be less last-min.
- ★ knowing that there are rules/procedures where needed may help some neurodivergent people as well as the group in general
- ★ develop a compassionate process for dealing with disruptive individuals