

## **Guidelines for Written Discussions—Long Version for Moderators/Organizers**

Juliane Wenke, Paula Mund, and Anja Werner

with Christiane Kuller, Sabine Schmolinsky, and Lisa-Maria Hofer

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Version 1: Succinct Version

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## 1 Introduction and Objectives

In these guidelines, we introduce the concept of written discussions (WD) in detail. What are they? When can they be applied? What are challenges? Our goals are

- a) To provide information about how to prepare, conduct, and wrap up a written discussion.
- b) To raise awareness of this format among participants in written discussion.

## 2 General Information: What is a Written Discussion?

Written discussions are a **purely written form of communication in a shared online document**. It is conducted entirely in writing, without audio or simultaneous visual display. Like speech-to-text interpreting, it is a **low-barrier alternative communication format** for people with hearing impairments. It also reduces barriers for, e.g., people with ADHD, as written discussions make **intensive exchanges in a low-stimulation environment** possible.

Events can be conducted entirely as written discussions. However, it is also possible to use written discussions as working methods for specific tasks or exercises in video conferences or during in-person events to broaden the communicative spectrum or to work methodically in an inclusive manner.

The written discussion can thus be understood as a field for practicing and testing collaborative written communication, in which **everyone interacts on an equal footing and in the same modality (i.e., in writing)**. It means, all participants can communicate directly with each other at the same pace, without the need for, e.g., interpreters. However, it also means that people may experience new barriers in this format if they, for example, have dyslexia, visual impairments, or are not well-versed in the written language that is being used, or if they are native signers. It is therefore **absolutely necessary to ascertain beforehand if any participants in the written discussion need assistance with reading and writing**. If so, adequate inclusive measures for the written discussion need to be prepared in advance, such as interpreters or assistance who read aloud and take notes for those with special needs.

Written discussions take place online **in a shared document such as an Etherpad**. They can be adapted to different contexts as needed, e.g., one-on-one meetings or large groups, experienced or inexperienced participants, discussions/exchanges, or seminars. However, a **trained moderator is essential** even for smaller groups.

Written discussions are a much more active tool than speech-to-text interpreting, as **all participants join in on an equal par and follow the same set of rules of interaction**. There is no speaking, only writing and reading. The **interaction results in a transcript**, which can be retained if all participants agree to it—this should be determined before the written discussion starts. All participants in the written discussion have access to the transcript at any time for as long as the shared document that is being used is active. A shared document for the written communication can be an Etherpad, which has a maximum duration of one year. The Etherpad needs to be set accordingly when it is being created. Each time the Etherpad is used, it will be active for one year from then on (or less, depending on the initial settings).

The Etherpad has a **chat function** that is visible in a chat window next to or below the text window. The chat is retained when the Etherpad is closed. Unlike the text window, **the chat cannot be edited anymore once it was released**. This should be taken into account if the Etherpad is to be used

for subsequent events with other participants. Everything in the **text window can be edited or deleted at any time**. It can be reinserted anywhere at any time. Therefore, a new Etherpad should be created for each new event, unless it is a continuation of the previous event with the same group of people (e.g., a seminar for a semester or a regular work or team meeting).

The written discussion, including the chat, can be converted into a permanent written document using the copy-paste function. The chat allows other readers to make spontaneous comments, such as additions or references, while someone is writing in the text window. However, it is not always possible to determine afterwards which specific passage of the chat refers to which passage in the text window. For example, chat comments like “I totally agree” can no longer be assigned to a specific point in the discussion later on, as the chat is unconnected to the text window. Hence, **when commenting in the chat field, it is important to reiterate to what the comment refers**.

Unlike video conferences, written discussions are a purely written form of online communication. Participants therefore do not see other participants unless the conversation takes place in person in a workspace or during a video conference—but that is rather unusual and not absolutely necessary. In a typical written discussion, everyone sits by themselves in front of a screen. They are not seen and do not see other participants, which makes it easier fully to concentrate on the contents. Written discussion therefore are **a comparatively stress-free form of communication**.

Written discussions are usually a **decentralized form of communication**. When applied in teaching and meetings, they consequently require a different didactic approach than during face-to-face events. For example, it is currently not possible to incorporate visual materials such as images or films unless a video link is used simultaneously, which, however, makes the moderation considerably more complex. Furthermore, it is exhausting for moderators and participants simultaneously to monitor multiple windows of information flow on screen. We recommend that written discussions actually focus on the written exchange. Visual materials can, however, be sent in advance as “pre-circulated” materials, which also provides a good basis for starting the written discussion.

Like speech-to-text interpretation, written discussions have advantages and disadvantages as well as benefits beyond the circle of people who are affected by barriers.

### 3 Advantages and Challenges

#### 3.1 Advantages

Written discussions are a practical tool beyond their importance for people with hearing impairments who communicate orally rather than manually. Since the written discussion takes place in a shared document, **participants do not need to take additional notes. All participants receive the same information at the same time and in the same modality**. Since all participants use a different font color in the Etherpad, a color-coded participant list makes it easy to assign each contribution to its respective author. The button for the participant list is located in the top right corner of the Etherpad (sometimes also on the left or bottom). It is a small square in a different color with a group icon. All participants need to register by name and select or adjust the background color when they join the Etherpad. When they write in the text or chat fields, their contributions will be highlighted in this color. Each participant should use a different color that contrasts with those of other participants and that is good to read (for example, you should make sure not to use dark blue if another person is using black).

If written discussions are prepared well, they **tend to be very focused**, as there are predefined rules that give it structure. For instance, the order of writing is determined by a moderator similar to the structure of a face-to-face spoken discussion (see appendix). The rules of written discussions can be adapted to the format of the respective event. A seminar, a team meeting, or a consultation will have different numbers of participants, processes, and objectives, which must be taken into account when preparing and conducting the written discussion.

The written discussion also makes **collaborative and non-linear work possible**. It means that work can be carried out simultaneously in different places in the document (e.g., Etherpad) that is used for the written discussion. The moderator can specify appropriate work structures. The moderator also specifies when and in what format the work is to be carried out. This way, highly effective project and working sessions can take place—provided that they are prepared well. It is advisable to prepare such work structures, instructions, and contributions, for example, in a Word document and then insert them into the written discussion during the event at the desired time. More on this can be found in section 5.2 of these guidelines.

In contrast to a spoken conversation, a written discussion offers the **possibility to return to a point that was already discussed and to expand on or even correct the original message**. If, for example, there are participants who rely on interpreters (see point 3.3.), the discussion may already have reached a new point once the participants who speak a different language and who are delayed due to interpretation have received all the previous information. In contrast to a spoken conversation, however, the previous point (noted further up in the Etherpad) can then be taken up again without any loss of information. This creates a non-linear protocol in which individual points are discussed in depth. This working method is particularly suitable for working sessions to develop joint documents.

Since nothing is spoken, the written discussion can also be conducted on the go in a public place (e.g., on the train) using a cell phone or other mobile device. No one will be disturbed by loud speaking. All participants need is a consistently good internet connection.

Written discussions are also suitable for **flexible participation**. By this we mean, for example, a meeting that takes place with flexible start and end times besides a core time. This makes it easier to manage scheduling conflicts by allowing participants to arrive later or leave earlier. It is possible to read over what has already been discussed and add to individual discussion points at a later time until a scheduled ending time after which the document should have reached a final stage for that particular event or meeting. This is important so that everyone knows when the final version is available online for a final review. Since written discussions are by themselves also minutes of this particular meeting or event, the format is well suited when it is expected that attendance might fluctuate. During the meeting, a late participant can quickly review what has already been discussed and, if necessary, add on to an earlier point. This makes the format suitable, for example, for groups in which people with care responsibilities participate or for seminar sessions with students who are unable to attend individual sessions on time due to necessary part-time jobs, family commitments, or health issues.

**For the above reasons, written discussions are particularly effective in small groups.** Such groups can be working groups, project teams, or seminars or workshops—all formats in which, ideally, all participants contribute actively.

In contrast, lectures and presentations are less suitable for the written discussion, as in these formats, primarily, one person gives a presentation, while the other participants take a more passive role, except for interjecting questions. Such presentation and lecture formats are typically more uneven

discussion events, for which speech-to-text interpretation is a useful tool to reduce barriers (see our guidelines for speech-to-text interpretation).

### 3.2 Slowing Down Discussions

One **challenge** of written discussions is that it is **significantly slower than a spoken conversation**. This must be taken into account when scheduling such an event—for instance, for a seminar that would typically last 90 minutes, 120 minutes should be scheduled instead when conducted as a written conversation. If that is not possible, the content should be reduced. Moreover, we recommend to raise awareness of the slower pace before the event, especially with participants who join for the first time. Experience has shown that **fewer points may be discussed**. The discussions are, however, **more structured, intensive, and comprehensible**, since the written discussion is retained at least temporarily and can also be stored permanently.

The inherent slowness of written discussions has, however, the **advantage** that **all participants have more time to think and to prepare how to express their thoughts**. Furthermore, they may already write out short statements in a separate, private document while someone else is writing in the shared document. When it is their turn, they can paste their prepared text into the Etherpad. Last but not least, the work is much more focused because “conversations on the side” are limited to the chat window next to the text window. Everyone can read the chat, and the moderator can call for discipline. In our experience, such “conversations by the side” have always been very constructive additions to the exchanges that were happening simultaneously in the text window.

**Written discussions slow down the exchange of information, but they also allow for more time for reflection.** Ultimately, written discussions allow for fewer content-related points to be discussed in the same time frame as a spoken exchange, but these fewer matters are analyzed more intensively (that is, the information is more likely to stick with participants).

### 3.3 Written Discussion as a Barrier for Some Groups

For some potential participants, written discussions **creates new barriers**, e.g., for non-native speakers or writers, for people who communicate by sign language, have dyslexia, visual impairments, etc. It is therefore important to seek appropriate solutions well in advance of the written discussion and to combine different communication formats. For example, an assistant can be hired to read aloud and write contributions on behalf of non-writing participant of the written discussion. Communication could be organized by telephone or video link, or even with the help of a physically present assistant. For this reason, it is **necessary to prepare for written discussions well in advance** and to **assess individual needs beforehand** so that assistance and, if necessary, financial resources can be organized in a timely manner.

## 4 Preparation

### 4.1 General Information

As a first step, a moderator will be appointed. As a basis for work, this person should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the format, its capabilities, and limitations, as well as with the technical aspects of the Etherpad.

The following preparatory steps are necessary for the organizers and moderators, both in the short and long term, before a written discussion:

### 4.2 Long-Term Considerations Before the Written Discussion

- Assess possible special needs of all registered participants.
- Organize assistance, if necessary, and the necessary funds to finance it.
- Review the technical requirements—all participants need a computer workstation and a good internet connection. It is theoretically possible for two people to work together in one Etherpad. However, in this case it will be impossible to tell which of the two participants is typing, as they are working in the same browser. It is therefore desirable for each participant to have their own computer workstation (or mobile device such as a cell phone, tablet, etc.) with internet access.
- Determine the chair and moderator. A chair is someone who is responsible for the content of the session. The moderator's role is to maintain a general overview of the Etherpad and the chat. It simplifies the flow of the written discussion if these tasks are shared between two people.

### 4.3 Short-Term Considerations Before the Written Discussion

- Check the **technical requirements** once again—all participants need a computer workstation and a good internet connection.
- Check that provisions have been made for any **special needs**, e.g., will assistance be available.
- **Set up an Etherpad** and send the link to all participants.
- **Send any visual materials** such as images and videos/links or texts **before the written discussion**, possibly as a basis for the written discussion.
- Especially if the participants have no previous experience with written discussions or the Etherpad, it is advisable to insert the **guidelines for the written discussion** (see appendix) at the very top of the text window and give participants the opportunity to read them and ask questions about them. We recommend to use the very short version for that and, possibly, to send a longer version to participants ahead of time.
- Send an **agenda with the timetable or a structure** for the event to the participants (at least the start and end of the written discussion). In addition to providing the agenda in the Etherpad, it

is possible to **prepare the Etherpad for individual agenda** items by listing the corresponding subheadings below the agenda.

- **Prepare short texts** (Paragraphs) that can be pasted into the text window during the written discussion. On the one hand, such prepared texts can be instructions or a structure for a discussion that the moderator can use to guide collaborative work (see section 5.2 for more information). On the other hand, such texts can be contributions from the lecturers/session leaders and the participants themselves, for example, by pre-formulating paragraphs on a previously circulated question, source, or item for discussion.
- Last but not least, **information should be provided about how long the Etherpad will remain available** after the written discussion so that participants know until when they can access the transcript. This is particularly useful for meetings or colloquia in which individuals receive concrete feedback on their work. Participants may also decide to delete the Etherpad immediately after the meeting for reasons of discretion or data protection. For example, it is possible to set up an Etherpad for just one day. These types of Etherpads are used for speech-to-text interpreting.

## 5 Conducting a Written Discussion

### 5.1 General Information

A written discussion typically begins with the **participants registering by name** and by **choosing their color for writing** (click the small square group icon for both). This is followed by a welcome in the chat field, where all participants make a note when they are actively present. At this point, the moderator can ask everyone to read the rules of the written discussion and can offer to answer any questions about it.

If non-public lectures or meetings are being held, it is advisable to include a reference to data protection and discretion before the written discussion begins. This is especially important if participants are not yet familiar with the format. A possible formulation could be:

**The contents of this written discussion are intended only for the participants and may not be shared with third parties without first consulting the organizers of this event.**

As is the case with spoken discussions, requests to speak are coordinated by the moderator. Participants write, e.g., “rts” in the chat window (short for “request to speak”). Participants then wait for the moderator to ask them to write in the text window. The moderator uses the chat to invite people to write in the text window. The moderator can also use the chat to allow several people to write in the text window simultaneously (more on this in 5.2.1).

**In contrast to a spoken conversation, in a written discussion it is important that all information that cannot be seen is also passed on in writing via the chat field, e.g.:**

- Once you finished writing or pasting your contribution in the text window, write **“finished” in the chat window** so the moderator knows that they can continue.
- If you are briefly absent and unable to respond, write something like **“away” or “not at my desk for a moment” in the chat window**, followed by **“back”** after you have returned to signal to everybody that you can once again actively participate in the discussion.

- The same applies if you are distracted by unforeseen events while at your desk. If possible, please write something like **“on the phone”** or **“my child needs me”** or simply **“briefly distracted”** in the chat. Please notify everybody in the chat when you can be fully attentive again.
- Last but not least, **participants need to be made aware if you mean to write something with irony, anger, or as a joke, etc.** It might not be self-evident to all participants as they cannot see your facial expressions or hear your tone of voice. Therefore, **such information should be added in the text field after the respective passage in parenthesis** to avoid misunderstandings, e.g. **“(meant ironically).”**
- The moderator can also participate in the conversation in the text field, just as in a spoken conversation, by pointing out their own request to speak in the chat window and then calling themselves when it is their turn (e.g., **“I’m writing”** or **“myself next”**).

It is important to remember that in a written discussion, participants typically sit in front of a text screen. Unlike in a video conference, **participants cannot see each other**. Information is shared exclusively by writing. Therefore, it is particularly important to **inform others by writing in the chat if you need to leave your workstation temporarily** or are distracted while still logged into the Etherpad. **The chat therefore also serves as a substitute for facial expressions and nonverbal communication.**

## 5.2 Special Working Methods Specifically for the Written Discussion

### 5.2.1 Nonlinear and Collaborative Working Options

A special feature of the written discussion is that people can **write simultaneously** in the Etherpad. Since people typically read faster than they write, it is furthermore possible to write simultaneously in different places, for example in small groups of participants. This can be used for collaborative or non-linear work. The moderator coordinates such activities via the chat. To avoid chaos, it is important that participants mind the guidelines when **non-linear working methods** are used during a written discussion.

Simultaneity works with smaller and, to some extent, larger groups. For example, in workshops or seminars, **a task can be prepared in advance** and inserted at the desired time. Afterwards, **the names of all participants are pasted into the text window so that they can write down their answers behind their names at the same time**. For this, everyone is allowed to write in the text window for a specific period of time. This saves time and provides a change in working style for the participants. Those who have finished writing can start reading the answers of the others and, if necessary, already respond or at least formulate answers in advance. This must be well coordinated, however, as otherwise several people might start writing at the same time in the same line and accidentally delete something.

When working in **small groups**, it can be **constructive** for several participants to write simultaneously. If there are several points of discussion, new points can be released for some participants to respond to while others are still working on another point. It is **important for the moderator to coordinate such a non-linear writing process well** and keep track of who responds in which place and what order. In **larger groups**, participants **might lose track** if too many people write in different spots at the same time. In this case, it is therefore advisable to discuss answers and reactions coordinated by the moderator one after the other rather than simultaneously.



During a written discussion it is possible to do (practical, asynchronous) **exercises in smaller working groups** in additional Etherpads and afterwards to evaluate the results together. For this purpose, **several Etherpads for group work can be prepared in advance** for the individual groups to meet. After group work, everyone returns to the shared main Etherpad. Each group writes a conclusion (one paragraph) as part of the group work and appoints a **group leader**. **This person adds the written conclusion to the main Etherpad in the spot that the moderator assigned for the respective group.** Results can then be discussed in the larger group.

### 5.2.2 Challenges of Nonlinearity

The **chat** adds complexity to a written discussion, as it is yet another window that offers information. For example, participants might **discuss additional topics** in the chat, which might take up more time and space than the actual discussion in the text window. The chat might thus **distract** from the conversation in the text window. Moreover, information that belongs either in the text or in the chat window might be mixed up. This might confuse participants during the written discussion and make it difficult to review it at a later point, when the chat can no longer be linked to specific passages in the text window. It usually happens when too many people want to contribute new ideas at the same time, and the—at its core—constructively slow pace of the conversation is drowned out by too much information.

If too much information is being communicated in the chat, the moderator must intervene and open the Etherpad to everyone. Everyone gets to write simultaneously but in different lines. The moderator can ask participants to copy their statements from the chat into the text window so that individual discussion points can be connected to the general line of argumentation. Once everyone made their statement, the meeting can return to a linear order writing. With the help of the moderator, all the ideas can now be discussed one after the other. If needs be, participants can—when it is their turn to write—move up or down in the Etherpad to add to specific points.

If two or more people are responsible for moderation, organization, and/or assistance, it is recommended to set up a separate group, e.g., via mobile phone, in which these administrative organizers of the written discussion can communicate directly via instant messaging. This adds yet another level of communication that requires good coordination but also makes effective work possible. It is important to remind participants, especially those with little experience, that typing and internal coordination may slow things down and cause delays in the chat.

### 5.2.3 Dealing with the Challenges of Silence and Invisibility

The working methods for written conversation that we presented in 5.2.1 can also be used to enliven the written discussion, especially when it is a larger group with people who are neither familiar with the format nor with each other.

In various test scenarios, we observed that the written discussion had phases of apparent inactivity and general quiet. Since the moderator cannot see the participants and vice versa, **the lack of any input can be disconcerting**. Both the moderator and the participants need to accept that **silence is not necessarily a bad sign**. Nevertheless, **new ways to interact with participants are definitely needed** in the future, so that the moderator can find confirmation that everyone is still paying

attention, the participants know that the moderator is busy at work with a related task. Written discussions require calm and patience.

We already tested a few ideas that may be used simultaneously and in non-linear writing. The moderator should allow time for everyone to read through the contributions and then encourage discussion of the contributions:

- **Whiteboard Scrabble** [Time limit – 15 minutes]: A working method during a written discussion to practice cooperation in a shared online editing tool, i.e., the Etherpad. On a whiteboard (Etherpad) that everyone can access and edit, a word fitting the subject matter of the meeting is spelled out vertically downwards. Participants now write another thematically relevant word behind each letter.
- **Ask an unexpected question that requires only a very short answer and is unrelated to the topic of discussion:** “If you were a drink/color/..., which drink/color/... would you be right now?” Put a list of all the names on the Etherpad, and everyone writes their drink after their name. This exercise can also be done in chat window if there is a delay and several people are coordinating or moderating the written discussion. One moderator can oversee the chat while others clarify possible challenges. The moderator can write in the chat, “Please write in the chat now which drink/color/... you are right now.” Other possible questions can be prepared, for example: “If you could choose a superpower, what would it be?” This is a good way to get a brief message from all the participants and to lighten the atmosphere.
- **Work with objects:** Take an object from your immediate surroundings that reflects how you are currently feeling. Describe the object and the feeling.

### 5.3 Seminar/Workshop as a Written Discussion

In seminars and workshops, it is particularly important to make sure that there is not just one person moderating the written discussion, but also a chair who is responsible for the content and who should try to involve the participants in an active exchange. Since nonverbal contact (such as eye contact, nonverbal communication, tone of voice, etc.) is not available in a written discussion, it is particularly important to consider strategies to activate participants and, for example, to request their feedback in the chat. In addition to unexpected questions and various exercises that are either playful or provide for a break (see 5.2.2), different tools can be used so that the written discussion does not appear to be monotonous.

Feedback from our previous written discussions shows that the possibilities of non-linear working are a great strength of this format, which participants appreciate a lot. We therefore developed the following structure for written discussions events:

- Introduction with a welcome, checking out the guidelines (brief version), and discussing organizational questions. The moderator/chair provides all information by copy-paste and by writing in the text window of the Etherpad.
- Simultaneous writing in the Etherpad that follows a clearly defined structure, e.g., as an introduction round (all names are inserted so that everyone can write something about themselves) or as a research assignment (participants add prepared homework after their names, write in response to a question, or add researched information on a topic). The

moderator/chair provides clear instructions for this work (which can be prepared beforehand and inserted at this point), including a time limit, e.g., 5 or 10 minutes.

- A structured, linear discussion follows.
- The moderator/chair allows everybody to write at the same time. This is often useful towards the end of the event or when the discussion becomes too lively. In the chat, the moderator opens the Etherpad text field for everyone to write simultaneously. Everyone can write in a new line or add their own comments directly following another person's post. This can result in paragraphs in which several participants provide feedback on a statement one after the other.
- Final wrap-up, such as with a feedback round. The names of all participants are pasted, and everyone writes what they liked and disliked about the session.

This varied structure works well for events of 90 to 120 minutes length.

#### 5.4 Discussion/Exchange as a Written Discussion

During discussions, it can be a good idea to **agree to open the text window for everybody to write** simultaneously. This means that one person writes (in one place) while another person can comment on what has already been written elsewhere. This form of simultaneous writing can be very effective in small groups, but it can become confusing in larger ones. If numerous participants are contributing, it works well to insert a prepared list of names into the text window with blank lines after each name, so that everyone can write at the same time in a clearly defined place (namely, behind their name).

When the moderator/chair allows simultaneous writing, participants may react immediately and start writing without requesting to speak. In such cases, the **moderator needs to observe the activity and end the simultaneous writing session** at an adequate moment.

#### 6 Follow-up

A written discussion can be retained in the Etherpad for different amounts of time—one year, one month, or one day. The timeframe is determined in advance by the moderator. It is advisable for the moderator to make a copy of the contents promptly if the conversation is to be preserved, as participants who return later may edit or accidentally delete parts.

#### 7 Conclusion: Raising Awareness of Written Discussions

As an alternative digital form of communication, **written discussions offer numerous possibilities for participation on an equal footing, not only for people with hearing impairments but also, e.g., for people with ADHD.** It is a versatile and adaptable tool that offers much more than inclusion for persons with hearing-impairments. As such, it is still hardly known.

With good preparation, structuring, and attentive moderation, **written discussions raise awareness of the need for alternative communication formats for persons with hearing impairments but are also beneficial for other groups of participants.** It expands the range of communicative options for all persons who are involved. At the same time, this communication format requires participants to shift

to a different conversational speed and to engage with the necessary guidelines and specifics, such as the slower pace of exchanging information. Quantitatively speaking, written communication cannot compete with spoken communication, but qualitatively, it offers significant advantages for all users if potential barriers for some participants (who do not read and write well) are considered and solutions are found beforehand.

Last but not least, the Etherpad is an open-source tool that may be problematic in academia. The possibilities and limitations of its use must be checked in advance for each specific use. It would be desirable to create highly secure platforms for written discussions in the future in cooperation with computer scientists. Such platforms, through additional features, could also allow for documents and presentations to be shared or might even integrate additional assistance, such as speech-to-text interpreters. Further research and development on written discussions, their possibilities and uses, is therefore desirable.

### Appendix: Guidelines for Written Discussion for Participants

The following rules can be adapted to the format and needs of the planned written discussion and pasted into Etherpad in advance. We provide two versions below: a condensed one and a more detailed one:

#### Version 1: Succinct Version

##### Guidelines for Written Discussions

- Click on the colored, square button with the group icon and enter your name.
- Select a color by clicking on the color panel.

→ The color must be different from that of the other participants.

- If you wish to write something in the text window, please inform the moderator first by writing “request to speak”—or a short version like “rst”—in the chat.
- The moderator will determine the order of writing.
- Write one after the other.
- After completing your contribution in the text window, write “finished” in the chat.
- Make sure nothing is accidentally deleted.

→ If you delete something by accident, the technical assistant/moderator will restore the previous state.

- The moderator will indicate where to write in the Etherpad, e.g., at point “xyz” or from line “123.”
- If you lose track, notify the moderator in the chat.

Please note that a **written discussion is slower than a spoken one**. Please also note that the **content** of the written discussion is **confidential** and may not be shared with third parties without prior consultation with its organizers.

## Version 2: Extended Version

### Guidelines for Written Discussions

#### Preparation:

- All participants should enter their names in the Etherpad. Please do so by clicking on the colored, square button with the group icon in the top right corner (sometimes it is at the bottom of the website).
- Select a writing color by clicking on the color circle.

→ The color must be different from that of the other participants and contrast well for good readability (for example, you should make sure not to use dark blue if another participant has black).

#### Conducting a Written Discussion:

- Begin in the chat with a welcome message ("Hello everybody"). All participants reply to show their active presence.
- Read the rules that should be pasted at the top of the Etherpad text window.
- If you wish to write something in the text window, please inform the moderator first by writing "request to speak"—or a short version like "rst"—in the chat. The moderator will tell you in the chat when to write in the text window.
- The moderator determines the writing order.
- Write one after the other.
- After completing a contribution in the text window, write "finished" in the chat.
- Be careful not to delete anything by accident.

→ If you accidentally deleted something, please notify the moderator via chat. The technical assistant/moderator will restore the previous state.

- The moderator will indicate where to write in the Etherpad, e.g., at point "xyz" or from line "123."
- If you lose track or are temporarily absent from the Etherpad, please notify everybody in the chat field.

#### Notes:

Please note that in a written discussion, you are usually sitting at a computer in front of a text screen. You cannot see the other participants. **All relevant information is communicated exclusively in writing.** This also means that, for example, particular facial expressions or the tone of voice are not visible or audible, as is the case in a spoken conversation. But they also convey information and make the communicative dynamics tangible. This means that such non-verbally communicated information has to be added in writing. For example:

→ If you are not available, please write "not available" and "back again" in the chat.

→ If you wish to point out irony or modify your text in other ways, please add "(meant ironically)" or "(meant seriously)" in parentheses in the text window where appropriate.

These guidelines were developed by the Accessibility Working Group at the University of Erfurt (Juliane Wenke, Paula Mund, Anja Werner, Christiane Kuller, Sabine Schmolinsky, & Lisa-Maria Hofer).  
May 5, 2025.

Please also note that **everything in the text window can be edited at any time**, whereas **the chat cannot be edited or deleted** and remains visible to everyone.