

Virtually staying connected: 25 tips for using Zoom

Virtual meetings are a part of our future and daily routine going forward – it's a great time to learn new things like new software and an opportunity to grow together.

Zoom is just one of a variety of platforms available to stay connected to your teams, clients, family and community during this time of change.

Staying connected with good regular communication helps your health and wellbeing, and the health and wellbeing of your teams, family unit, clients and community partners.

Regular communication in times of change provides clear expectations to your team members, ensures there is fairness and respect to their needs at this time, provides you the opportunity to celebrate achievements collectively and creates comradery by staying connected.

Becoming familiar with online video technology will help you to build confidence, to further use other virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, Facebook Messenger, Skype and FaceTime.

Prepare for and design your meeting

1. **Establish Objectives:** Firm up the objective of the meeting and confirm what you want from your attendees - decisions? input? ideas? discussion?
2. **Circulate material:** Before the meeting, send the agenda (with specific roles for attendees as appropriate) and the key documents that need decisions. This will give your attendees time to review and consider issues. It reduces the chance of confusion for anyone feeling anxious in the new virtual environment and improves likelihood of a good discussion/decision if they are worried about new technology in the meeting.
3. **Schedule a good time:** What time of day is best? - connecting from home brings distractions, background noise and other people doing things nearby, so opt for a time that is suitable (or check with your attendees on their best time).
4. **Backup contact details:** Have all attendees' alternative contact details and give them a "back up plan" - tell them "if your technology fails in the meeting don't panic, just text me and we will wait for you to re-join, or you can re-join us by phone"
5. **Seek feedback:** Ask someone to be the feedback provider for you - in the meeting in real time for any tech issues; then later for reflection, observations and ways to improve.
6. **Prior practice:** For a chair or facilitator, try to do an online zoom tutorial (free, video based) before you host an important meeting

Set up your space for success

7. **Office environment:** ensure you have good lighting, and are conscious that participants will be able to view your private belongings – walls, art works, shelving, background rooms etc. Tidy and neutral is best to limit distractions (or you can apply a virtual background in the zoom function next to video settings denoted by clicking '^')
8. **Safe desk space:** Ensure that your office space is set up so that it is safe ergonomically, is private and you are able to limit distractions
9. **Technology and tools:** Ensure you and your participants have the right tools and are familiar with your tools - a device (phone, PC, laptop, iPad) , a screen (in the device, or separate and multiple), camera (built in or separate), and microphone (built in or separate) and a secure internet connection.

Note: we highly recommend 2 screens if you are going to share content - one screen can then have your shared content and you can drag the chat onto your second screen so you can see that as well.

Before the meeting

Testing microphone and camera

10. **Testing sound and camera:** Please test your sound (both speaking and listening) prior to the meeting – the best way to do this is click on 'new meeting' in the app, wait for it to load then the prompt in a white box in blue writing will ask you to test your sound – close this “mock meeting” once you are satisfied with your sound.
11. **Audio issues:** If you are having trouble with your audio it will most likely be outside of the zoom app in the microphone and audio settings on your P.C or device settings. The other option for testing your audio is to click on the profile bar in the zoom app (your profile will show as a photo or your initials in a blue box) and under settings - you can also test it here.
12. **Camera Position:** Ensure your camera is positioned so it looks to your face at eye level as though you were speaking directly with someone at a café/meeting – avoid having the camera pointing to the roof, from the floor up your body, or positioned too close to your face.
13. **Internet connection:** Make sure your internet connection is stable. If your internet connection is patchy, you can join the meeting without video which may help (as your connection won't take up so much bandwidth) and type any questions you wish to raise on the side +CHAT” panel (see below).
14. **Charge up:** Ensure your device is always charged up, this is important to avoid disruption during the meeting.

During the meeting and engaging your audience:

15. **Mingling:** At the start of the meeting connect on a social level – create a mingling opportunity - as the facilitator you might suggest that team members arrive a little earlier if they wish to “mingle”
16. **Mute:** If you are not the Chair - place your zoom on mute - this can be found at the bottom tool bar of the app
17. **Video on or off:** Turn your video off if you need to move around (phone users) or if you have a major distraction going on in the room. Explain in the chat box (right hand side of screen) if you have your video off for any reason (circumstance, no camera, bandwidth issues etc)
18. **Body language:** Be aware of your body language if you are on video, try and operate as if you were in a café, meeting room, etc. For example, sleeping during the meeting might be weird for the other participants, however we do understand that these are tough times so if you need to rest your eyes perhaps turn off your video. Also be aware the session is recorded.
19. **Interact:** Split the content up with someone or something interesting / requiring action - e.g. ask for an answer / thoughts to be entered into the chat, pose a questions, use a picture - something to keep your audience engaged and active even though they are just sitting looking at a screen
20. **Provide clarity:** Be clear about when you want people to talk, and how to control this - do you want people to indicate via the chat that they want to talk, use the "raise hand" function in the participants box, or a free for all?
21. **Include everyone:** Invite the quieter people to speak - they may have a contribution but not be ready to use the chat or jump in to the speaking spot
22. **Questions and answers:** The best way to raise a question with a very large group of people is through the chat panel to the right-hand side. Please avoid having casual comments and chats here as it is hard for the moderators and chair to keep up.
23. **Verbal Questions:** If you have a verbal question - raise your hand, the movement will ensure you a seen by the chair, and the chair will prompt you for your question. Unmute, ask your question, then mute again.
24. **Be patient:** For some, virtual meetings may be a new experience – so being patient with those still learning, pausing between questions, giving space for the chair to lead will all be helpful to holding a successful meeting
25. **Have fun:** share a laugh- it important that we smile and laugh together to release some endorphins in times of stress and change and it will make the whole experience much more appealing for you, your clients, teams community and loved ones.

Compiled by: Alison Hawkins, Jennifer Rutherford and Alexandra Hare

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