A guide to Zoom meetings

NOTE: This guide was compiled for an Apple Mac or Windows user. Details may be a little different on tablets & smart phones.

The provider is zoom.us. It produces on-line guides to operating its system.

YouTube help. George Kao's lesson 'Zoom meeting' covers most topics.

1. If you have never used Zoom before, you will need to allow Zoom to download the App to your device. Where it asks you to allow access to your contacts DON'T do so, then when it asks you to allow Zoom to contact you, directly under the button where it asks you to accept Zoom contacting you, click on the small link just below the large button, and then you can turn the frequency of the Zoom contacts right down to a minimum. By doing this, you will get contacted pretty infrequently by Zoom.

2. When you receive a Zoom meeting invitation by e-mail simply click on the highlighted (usually blue) part of the message a few minutes before the scheduled start. Zoom asks if you want to join the meeting using computer audio and video, accept this option. You do not have to set up a Zoom account to join a meeting as an invitee.

3. Before joining a meeting please mute yourself. Zoom is a live broadcast. To stop unwelcome talking, eating, drinking and other noises going out to others in the meeting, go to the mic icon at the bottom of the screen and select 'mute'.

Video. Be mindful that everyone can see your background if your video is switched on. You can stop and start your video using the video icon as a toggle switch. While the speaker is giving the talk, it is helpful if you turn your video off, as it reduces the amount of bandwidth needed.

You may need to position your cursor near this location in order to bring up the line of icons.

4. The host should mute everybody else while the main speaker is talking.

5. While muted, when you wish to say something to the meeting, merely press your space bar as you would on a two-way radio & say your piece. When you release the space bar it reverts to mute. Alternatively, you can press the mic icon to toggle between mute and not mute. You'll avoid talking over others if you pause a moment. Zoom identifies the current speaker, and always has some latency in switching between speakers, so do not try to speak when someone else is speaking.

Note that if you leave your microphone ON, small noises, eating or coughing, for example, reaching your device will bring up your picture as though you were the main speaker.

6. To test your audio, go to Preferences on the title 'zoom.us' at the top left of your screen. You will be offered Settings > Video and Audio. Using these test speaker and test mic [you will have to say a few words here]. Volume controls are provided.

7. If you are using a smart phone or a tablet, turn off the video and mute yourself if you go walkabout. Keep your device still for the whole meeting: once it's positioned, avoid moving it. The shifting picture and/or extraneous chat with others in your home or study is disturbing to others in the meeting. Make sure too, that the picture of you shows your full face, not the top of your head or your nose & chin only. Sit back a little from your screen, a metre or so. Your in-built camera will show you in a better light. Don't forget to have room lighting on, though avoid a bright light source showing on the picture.

Don't eat or drink while you are on camera (or do anything else untoward). Remember everyone else can see you.

8. Gestures such as thumbs up and clapping appear in the 'Reactions' icon at the bottom of the screen though they don't last very long. Thumbs up, smiles and nodding are all great ways to give feedback.

9. Chat. This is opened through an icon at the bottom of the Zoom screen. It allows you to write a message either to an individual, the host for example, or to the whole audience. Use it to say "Hello" rather than speaking to everyone. Incoming messages will be signified by a red numeral above the icon. It is also useful for putting questions to the speaker. The speaker and the host can review them in due course. If there are many people trying to ask questions, it avoids the difficulty of getting attention. If there are many others using Chat, put "Question" at the start of your question so it's clear it's not just a comment.

Some hosts disable chat to avoid irrelevant chit-chat.

Remember if writing a question in the chat box your question can be read by all participants unless you message the host, and if you ask a question orally, all participants can hear you. You should never share anything online that you wouldn't in real life.

To ask questions without Chat, keep your hand raised in and your video screen on so that the host can see you. Do not try to butt in, particularly because of latency

mentioned above. Remember to unmute yourself using the mic icon when invited to speak by the host. Mute again when this section is over.

10. The green icon "Share screen" is for the host and the speaker to show their slides. It is not for you to use in order to see their slides. The host has the option to make it available to everyone, or just to the host. If it's available to everyone and you press this text, everyone can see your screen, and you have to end it by clicking on the "Stop Share" text at the top of the screen. Nobody else, e.g. the host and the speaker, can use this feature until you end your share screen, so it is critical not to use it. Some hosts address this issue by making those who need to use "Share screen" co-hosts, so they, and only they, can use this function.

11. Background. If you'd like to have a background picture other than the current view of your kitchen/study/bedroom you may add one or more virtual backgrounds from your picture library. Pick from your photo application and move to a new folder on your desktop. Choose one at a time for your current background. You might also find that your software has already made some pictures available. Some older devices may not have this capability.

12. Identification while in the zoom meeting. Show your name on video. Choose a name which most people will recognise. Showing, for example "I-Pad2" or "Regandmarciastablet" won't be known by the world. Right click on your picture (or your name on a Mac) and choose 'rename' to put up something more appropriate. Change it for different meetings if you wish.

13. View options are located at the top right of the screen. It allows various views, the whole population (gallery), speaker or combinations.

14. Other options. There are further options such as recording, statistics and feedback: ignore these. Accessibility, however, brings up text alerts in a box, useful if sight or hearing is impaired. Choices can be made within this option.

Breakout groups. This is a way of selecting groups of participants for a time and re-combining them later. It's a bit complicated to manage, and is a separate advice document.

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