

Zoom participant user guide

Zoom is a tool that allows us to have virtual meetings while we're in isolation mode. It is very simple to use, but here are some notes to help you get started.

What do I need?

You can use Zoom on pretty much any computer, tablet or smart phone. The best option is a laptop with a camera and microphone, but any of these devices should work. You also need to sit comfortably in a quiet room and not in front of a window.

The invitation

The host or group leader will send out an invitation for every meeting. If you haven't used Zoom before, it is a good idea to contact the host and arrange a time for them to get you up and running well before the meeting.

Joining the meeting

All you need to do is open the invitation email and click on the link.

The first time you use Zoom, it will ask you to download the software to your device. Exactly how you do this depends on the type of device:

- For PCs, you'll need to download a file and run it. Just follow the prompts, it will take less than 1 minute. If you're asked if you want to allow the app to make changes, answer Yes
- For mobile devices, you'll have to download it from the app store and install it. The process will depend on the make and operating system, but it is normally quite straightforward.

You will probably have to agree to Zoom's terms of service once the download is complete.

When it asks you to enter your name, remember that this is what other people will see under your image on the screen. Unless you want to be known as "Dracula" or "Hot chick", use your real name!

The screen will then go black and one or more faces will appear. There will probably be lots of people saying "Can you hear me?" or "Turn your camera on". Wait for a moment to see what's going on before you announce yourself. The host should see you and say hello before long.

View type

There are two view types available, "Speaker" and "Gallery".

Speaker view has one big head in the middle of the screen and lots of small ones above or to the side of it. The big head is the person currently speaking, and will change as the speaker changes. This is the best setting for a phone or tablet.

Gallery view displays all the participants in a rogue's gallery. The more people in the meeting, the smaller the heads will be. There is a yellow band around the speaker's image. This is the best setting if you're using a large screen on a PC or laptop.

There's also a third view that you can't set up and this is "Share" view. When the speaker is doing a presentation with slides or photos, they will initiate Share view. You'll see whatever is on the speaker's screen, which should hopefully be the presentation or photos.

Meeting etiquette

Mute your microphone during a presentation

Microphones are very sensitive, and they'll pick up any noise you make near them. The rest of the participants will hear it all! Apart from any embarrassment this might cause, it will also lower the speaker's volume, so other people will miss what's being said. You'll see a little picture of a microphone, either at the bottom left of your screen or at the top on a tablet; click that to mute your microphone. Don't forget to click it again when you want to speak.

The host will probably mute everybody while a speaker is presenting.

Don't talk when someone else is speaking

Just like a face to face meeting, it's rude to talk over someone else. Wait for a lull in the conversation.

There is a function to raise your (virtual) hand. The host will tell you when to use that to ask questions.

If you are the presenter...

Have your slideshow open before your presentation starts, so that all you have to do is start sharing. Nobody wants to watch you hunting around looking for the file.

If you're sharing photos, put them all in a dedicated folder in the right order, so that you can just move through them.

Minimise or close all windows other than Zoom and your presentation so that participants can't see anything you don't want them to see on your computer.

Breakout rooms

In any large gathering, such as our monthly meetings, people congregate in twos and threes to talk to their friends and acquaintances for a while and then move on. We can do that in Zoom using "Breakout rooms". The host will allocate you to one of the rooms where there'll be four or five other people to chat with. Every now and then, they'll mix you up a bit, so you can get to chat with more people. If there's someone you particularly want to see, let the host know.