

Helping you enjoy your participation in a Zoom Video meeting

Joining a video meeting has become part of life for many, allowing us to be social whilst practicing social distancing. Before lockdown, Zoom to most people was something rockets did or a 1960s ice lolly! Today Zoom is known as a major provider of video conference facilities.

It has become so popular amongst u3a members across the country, partly through necessity but also because it is really easy and intuitive to use. Many now use it regularly to keep in contact with family and friends.

Equipment required:

You do not need fancy computers. If you can see video clips on your device, you will be able to enjoy meeting via video conference.

Zoom can be used on a smart phone, tablet, or computer. It is best to use a phone or tablet in landscape rather than portrait mode. The device needs to be sufficiently modern to have sound and preferably a built-in camera. As an audience member the camera is not essential to have full benefit of the presentation. You can still see the presentation, but others cannot see you!

How to join a Zoom meeting

If this is your first Zoom event:

On an iPad first download the free Zoom App from your App store and have it fully installed.

You will receive an email giving you a link to the meeting. Please select or click the link about 5 to 10 minutes before the meeting starts. Just follow the prompts and select Yes to questions asking you if you wish to use the video camera and computer audio. You will then join the meeting or be placed in a waiting room until the meeting starts.

If you are using a laptop or computer just select or click on the link 10 minutes in advance of the start as you will probably need a few minutes to download and install the Zoom application software. Just follow the prompts. It's easy.

If you would like to you can contact one of the Committee a day or two before and we will set up a practice session with you beforehand.

If you are a regular Zoom user, click on the email link 5 to 10 minutes before the scheduled start time and follow the instructions on the screen.

Once in the meeting a few things to consider

1. Presentations / meetings generally last between 45 minutes to 2 hours so probably a good idea to have a drink available
2. What is in the background behind you may be seen by others. If you are worried about how you look on the screen you could turn off the video – especially if you have decided to have a 'pyjama day'!
3. Once a presentation starts, images of other participants can be removed. Look for the screen sharing banner, choose 'view options' and select 'Hide Video Panel'.
4. The main controls you may need during the call are:

Mute Button: An icon showing a microphone with a strike-through indicates your microphone is switched off, so others are unable to hear you or any background noise. The position of the control can vary according to your device but is commonly found at the bottom of the screen, or top-right hand corner of your video image.

The meeting organisers may set your microphone as mute. This improves the sound quality of the presentation and allows the presenter to speak without interruptions from barking dogs or a doorbell. If you want to cough it also means that others are not distracted.

The host and / or co-hosts will not mute their microphones to provide support to the presenter. You may, therefore, hear the odd comments / discussion at the start. Unfortunately, it is not practical to have all the microphones switched on. However, you may be asked to unmute if called upon to ask a question and when joining in a round of applause at the end of the meeting.

Video Control: An icon showing a video camera with a strike through indicates your (selfie) camera is switched off. Like the mute button, this controls whether or not other people can see your video image.

Chat: Similar to text on a mobile phone. If there is time, the host will arrange a Q & A session with the presenter at the end of the talk. Look for the chat icon somewhere on your screen, (usually along the bottom), touch, select or click on it and select who you want to send your message to. You can choose between sending it to everyone or one person from the drop-down list. Text your question at any time during the presentation. The default setting sends a message to everyone so choose the option to send to just the nominated person (usually near the top of the list). Use the enter/return on the keyboard to send.

It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the position of these buttons on your machine BEFORE the meeting. If you need help, please contact one of the Committee who will try to help you.

A check on your computer and internet requirements

- Connect to the internet using wi-fi rather than the mobile phone network if you can. A good wi-fi connection tends to be faster, more stable, and less jumpy or noisy.
- If your wi-fi signal keeps dropping out – evidenced by the video or audio freezing or stuttering – try and move closer to your router (the box of tricks that is connected to the telephone or cable network).
- The best connection is if your device can be cabled direct to your Wi-Fi router. Some routers provide a connection cable (often yellow) for a laptop in the 'box of bits'. Cables or adaptors may be available for other types of devices.

We hope this is of some help and will perhaps encourage you to join some of our events in the future.