

# A Beginner's Guide to Video Conferencing

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO VIDEO CONFERENCING

Many volunteers and colleagues in our Clubs, Regions and other organisations have recently entered the new world of video conferencing. The favourite appears to be Zoom. Skype, WebEx and Microsoft Teams are also used. WhatsApp is also used frequently for groups up to 4 people.

This guide is from a beginner's experience, plus some shared experiences from colleagues across the online community and some independent research. For really robust information study the help and guides on the internet and ask the experts.

There are two particularly good training videos:

1. **How to Use Zoom:** A Video Conferencing Tutorial for Beginners by Stewart Gauld: [Click here](#)
2. **How to teach online with Zoom:** A complete introduction by Russell Stannard. This is aimed at teachers and bigger groups but very clear and helpful for anyone: [Click here](#)

This guide is divided into 7 sections:

1. Starting up / choosing a platform
2. Organising a Video Conferencing call, based on Zoom
3. Be safe
4. Preparation and etiquette
5. During the call
6. Chairing a Video Meeting
7. Advanced options

### Starting up/ choosing a platform

First find out about how you start or join a video call on any of the big 3.

- **Zoom** is an American company and has initially been found by many as the easiest facility for video conferencing with more than 4 people.
  - Download the App and/or Click the link [ZOOM](#) and you can set up and create your own account.
  - First try Zoom basic which is free and allows for a maximum of 40 minutes and multiple attendees and unlimited one to one sessions. But you can restart the same call after you are timed out.
  - You are able to set up a meeting and invite guests via Outlook or other calendar applications such as iCal on Apple devices.
  - For meetings longer than 40 mins you can take out a subscription that allows for group conferences for longer (up to 100 people and unlimited minutes). It costs £11.99 +VAT per month but this payment is for your personal hosting use only or you can assign a scheduler. There is a fancier package allowing multiple hosts. Some Committees are making use of this so that sub-committee leads can use the same account.

- **Skype** is free with Microsoft and your Microsoft 365 Family or Personal subscription comes with 60 Skype minutes.
  - Skype-to-Skype calls are free.
  - You can also use Skype to call mobile phones and landlines, a facility called 'Skype Out' but there is a charge for this and you will need an account with a pre-payment.
  
- **Microsoft Teams** is free with Microsoft. You can join a call without a Teams account if you are invited.
  - Setting up Teams is something we will be looking at in more detail in the future.
  
- **WhatsApp** is available as an App and is free of charge
  - It is free of charge for video calls with up to 4 people and good for informal catch ups.
  - Information is easy to find on the internet.
  - Users might find a slight time delay compared to the others and the functionality is restricted compared to Zoom.

## Organising a Video call

This section is based on Zoom. Organising a call is different on an iPad or a PC/laptop. It is reasonably intuitive though can be a little quirky and frustrating.

The following procedure is on the basis that a Zoom account has already been created and the application is installed on your various devices.

### On an iPad:

1. Go to the Zoom App. Your personal meeting id is at the top. On the left click HOME.
2. If you want to start a meeting straightaway, click the orange box NEW MEETING, START A MEETING then click CALL USING INTERNET AUDIO. On the top R click PARTICIPANTS and at the bottom of that little screen click INVITE. Choose whether you invite by text message or email.
3. If you want to schedule a future meeting and invite others, click the blue box SCHEDULE. Put in details of your meeting and enable all the various options and click ADD.
4. Go to the home screen again and click on MEETINGS. Click on the meeting you have just set up and click on ADD INVITEES. Choose email. In the box that comes up you can edit the invitation. When you finish click the send arrow.
5. When the meeting time comes (or 5 mins earlier) go to your Zoom home page and Click MEETINGS on the left, choose the meeting (you may now have several meetings in there) and click START.
6. Look out for participants in the waiting room and let them in. You are in control.

### **On a laptop:**

Very similar to the iPad but when you have completed the details and clicked SCHEDULE it takes you straight through to your outlook or other calendar application and you can do your invitations from there.

### **Joining a Zoom call:**

You just need to follow the link sent to you in your invitation. Before you click the link, note the password in case you need it. Start the joining process 2-3 minutes before the call is due to start. You may need to manually start audio and/or video. Check the controls in the bottom left hand corner of the Zoom window.

### **Be Safe**

There have been incidents of people hacking into video calls known as 'ZoomBombing'. As an organiser you have an obligation to follow appropriate security precautions when you organise a call. Be aware that if you share the link and meeting ID publicly you will be running risks. For big meetings and quizzes, the best advice is to request that people register their interest and the meeting ID and Password are sent out just prior to the meeting. Of course, different privacy settings are available, but for anyone not IT savvy, this seems to be the best advice.

### **Preparation and etiquette**

- **Decide whether you use your PC, laptop, iPad or phone.** Obviously bigger screens are better for bigger groups. Phones are more limiting. You can get 9 faces on an iPad and more on your laptop. Some people are clever enough to link to their TV screen and you can see lots more again. You may want to set up using a combination so that you can video conference on one and look at documents on the other. This can be really helpful if discussing spreadsheets or reports.
- **Check the device camera and microphone both work.** Check the volume on your microphone. The Zoom application has controls that allow you to do this.
- **Have a fully charged battery, be plugged in or have a portable charger ready.** These facilities use up battery power very quickly. Don't get caught out mid-way through a call.
- **Get the best reception and to avoid feedback and strange background noises:** close your background apps and internet searches before you start. Also consider closing your Outlook and silencing your phone to avoid the 'dings' and 'pings' from your notifications disrupting your meeting. If using a Wi-Fi device, the closer you are to your wireless router the better.



- **Sort out your setting and background.** Use a quiet place with no distractions. Zoom enables you to set up a virtual background by clicking using a stock one or choosing your own photo. These are great for disguising untidy workspaces. One way of doing this is: when you are in Zoom on an iPad, click on the MORE button for and select VIRTUAL BACKGROUND. You can select of those on offer or press the + button and go to your own photos. On a laptop go to STOP VIDEO to find virtual backgrounds. For more information about Zoom backgrounds see Zoom's [virtual backgrounds](#).
- **Lighting is important.** Bright rooms are best and avoid sitting with a window or light behind you or your face will be in the shadow. If you have a desk light then placing it behind your device and pointing it towards you will help.
- **Check your camera position.** Its best if the camera is at eye level and you are looking forwards. It's not a good look if the camera is pointing under your chin or nose or at your knees. This is why the couch is generally not a good place. Look at yourself in the thumbnail on the screen. Make sure you can see your whole face. Use a stand for your device if necessary or slant your screen to get into view.
- **Consider your appearance.** There are some great funny jokes around with people in shirt and tie above the desk and beach shorts/pyjamas under it. If you do this, remember to sit still!
- **If you are using headphones/earphones, check others can hear you.**
- **Have water ready.** Unless your call / meeting is quite casual, it is not that cool to have fancy drinks and snacks, just as it's not generally cool to have partners, friends, children or pets joining you.

### During the call:

- **Ensure you make appropriate use of the mute button.** For larger meetings it's advisable to be on MUTE all the time only turning off when you are invited to speak by the chairperson. The chairperson may not use mute as much as everyone else if they are involved all the time.
- **If you leave the room, turn the video off.**
- **On an iPad you can swipe your screen to see more people.**
- **If someone shares their screen to show a presentation you can change view so you just see the speaker and the presentation.** This may happen automatically.
- **Look into your camera when you're speaking.** This takes a bit of getting used to since you naturally want to look at your colleagues' faces, but try to look at the camera when you're talking. This will mimic the in-person feeling of eye contact and will make the other people feel like you're really talking to them.



- **Consider your contributions.** There is no need to speak just to agree. A simple thumbs-up or say nothing to show your agreement. There is no need to speak just to agree. In the MORE section you can click on icons for thumbs up and clapping.
- **Give the meeting your full attention.** It's tempting to multi-task while you're sat in front of your laptop/phone, but where possible give the meeting and your colleagues on the call your full attention. Close your Outlook or put your phone on silent if you think they will distract you. If you do have to dip in and out of emails during a meeting, make sure you press mute so that your typing doesn't distract others on the call.
- **Try to hold off eating meals whilst on Zoom.** If you are back-to-back and don't have time to eat before/after, consider turning off your camera and use mute until you have finished eating.
- **If you do happen to drop off the call** (technically not literally!) reconnect as soon as you can and don't feel the need to explain and disrupt the call.
- **If your internet speeds are struggling to maintain video and audio,** disabling video will generally free up enough bandwidth to help you stay connected to the meeting and enable others to hear you clearly.
- **Familiarise yourself with keyboard shortcuts for a seamless experience:**
  - Mute or unmute audio: Alt + A
  - Start or stop video: Alt + V
  - Pause or resume screen sharing: Alt + S
  - Raise or lower hand: Alt + Y
  - See Zoom's full list of hot keys and shortcuts [here](#)

## Chairing a Video Meeting

This is not particularly different from chairing a face to face meeting:

- Organise and share the agenda and papers beforehand.
- Put in time at the beginning for initial idle chit chat and everyone checking in.
- At the start lay down the rules about using the mute button. You may choose to mute everyone yourself or let individuals sort it out. Explain how they will indicate they want to speak. If you can see everyone this may be by simply raising a hand. If not you can ask them to use the raise hands function or the chat facility to ask a question. If the latter you must make sure you respond to raised hands or questions from the chat room.
- Be especially prepared to ensure that everyone is included and that you manage someone who talks over others. This can be harder by video conferencing than in a room but in extreme circumstances there is always the mute button in your control.

## Advanced options

- **Screen Sharing:** This is very useful for presentations and collaboration. You can share documents, PowerPoint, spreadsheets or videos with others on your call. This saves you time sending through files by email. Others can see the presentation plus the presenter but not each other. [Click here](#) for instructions on how to do this.
- **Breakout Rooms:** If you want to run group activities or breakouts during your Zoom meeting, you can split up your participants on the call into separate, smaller rooms. You can set the rooms up before the meeting begins to save time. [Click here](#) for instructions on how to do this.
- **Whiteboard:** You can also share a built-in whiteboard. This feature enables the host and other meeting attendees to annotate on the board; perfect for brainstorming and visualising ideas. [Click here](#) to find out more.
- **Record and share your meetings:** You can record your meetings to review afterwards or share with participants who were unable to attend. A notification will appear on screen to tell attendees if you're recording them, but it's advisable you tell everyone involved beforehand! It's easy to do, just [click here](#) to learn how.
- **Reactions:** Add some fun engagement to your meeting without disrupting the flow of it by using the [reaction features](#), which includes sending a clapping and thumbs up icon.
- **Multiple cameras:** There may be times when it would help to have two cameras on Zoom, particularly if you're hosting training – well the good news is you can!

Please visit the Zoom [Help Centre](#) for more tips and tricks to get the most out of your Zoom meetings. They also have daily live video training and a [YouTube channel](#) filled with useful tutorials to help improve your experience.