

Zoom for Absolute Beginners

Downloading Zoom

Zoom allows people to video chat together, using the built-in webcams and microphones on laptops, tablets, and mobiles. If you're using an older computer without a webcam, that's OK because you'll still be able to chat to people by typing, and you'll be able to see and hear everyone.

You can even dial in using an ordinary telephone if the call's host has chosen to allow that option, which means you can listen and speak although a bit of patience and careful management is needed on both sides since you can't raise your hand or otherwise indicate visually when you want to speak.

You access a zoom call on a computer or smartphone by clicking on a link which the host will provide (probably in an email, or perhaps on a website or on a facebook page). Usually that's all you need to do, but depending on how the call is set up, you may be asked to enter the meeting ID or password. A link and meeting ID details will look something like this (don't worry that the link doesn't actually work – it's an old one!):

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89845455948?pwd=Y3Z5MjVqQkdYYnQ0K3pNOGFU3N3Zz09>

Meeting ID: 898 4545 5948

Password: 758261

The first time you join a zoom call, make sure you allow plenty of time as your computer may have to download a little bit of software to make it all work (the 'zoom client' in technical jargon).

You'll also need to register for zoom – you can do this by putting in an email address and setting a password, or if you have a facebook or google account already you can use that to log in.

Once you get into Zoom

Muting and unmuting



Your sound on zoom is controlled by the little microphone icon (bottom left on most devices but top right on iphone/ipad). When there's a line through it like this, the other people on the call won't be able to hear you. When there isn't, they can.

It's very useful to stay muted, especially in large groups, to avoid background noise and feedback (where your microphone picks up the sound that's being transmitted to you along with your speech, creating an echo for other participants).

Unmute yourself when you want to speak – there are two ways of doing this. One is to click on the microphone icon (that turns the mute function on and off) the other is to hold down the space bar, which just turns mute off for as long as you're holding it, so make sure you don't let go until after you've finished speaking, or other people won't hear the ends of your sentences.

Video



The next icon along from the microphone is the video camera, which (as you may have guessed) controls what people can see.

When the camera is active, as in the picture above, the other people on the call will be able to see you and everything you are doing on camera. When it's not active (there is a line through the camera) people can't see you. Instead they will see either a static picture of you (if you have one set up in your profile – either because you added one when you set up your zoom account, or because you logged into zoom through facebook or google, which gives zoom access to your profile picture from that account) or a black box with your name or the name of your device in white text.

To turn the camera on or off, click on the icon to start or stop video.

Your name

If your name is showing on the screen as you'd like it to, congratulations, you don't need to do anything!

If you're currently showing up as 'Peter's ipad' or 'Jane's phone' or Galaxy S9 or something else that isn't very helpful to the other people on the call, it might be useful to change your name. The easiest way is to click on the three little dots on the top right of your picture, select the option 'rename', and type in the name you want to be known by.

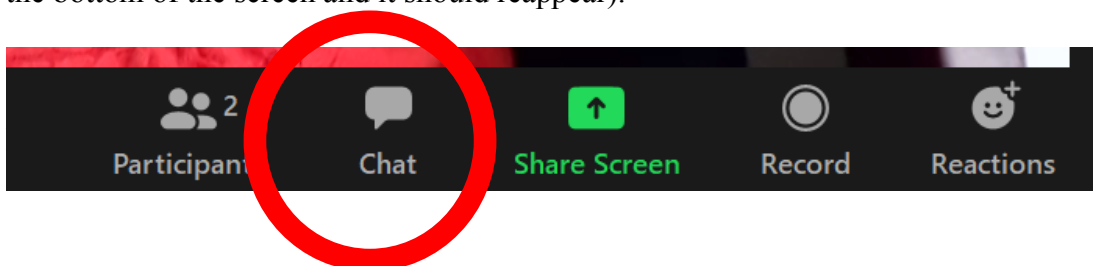
This is particularly helpful if two people join a zoom meeting using one computer: for example, if Jane Brown is in a meeting and then Peter joins in for coffee and chat afterwards, she can change her screen name from 'Jane Brown' to 'Jane and Peter' so other people will know how to address him.

Other useful features

As long as you can mute and unmute, and start and stop the camera, you can probably get by in a zoom meeting. But there are lots of other features, some more useful than others, that you will be able to explore over time. Two of the most useful are 'Chat' and 'Reactions.'

Chat

If you've ever used Messenger, Whatsapp or anything similar, you'll probably find the chat function very easy to use. On a computer, you open the chat by clicking on the white 'speech bubble' icon at the bottom middle of the screen (if the menu bar isn't showing at any time, hover your mouse near the bottom of the screen and it should reappear).



If you're on a phone, click on the three dots at the bottom right to get 'more' options and then click on chat.

When the chat comes up, you usually have the option to send a message to Everyone or to pick a person from a drop down list and send them a private message – but do bear in mind that the host may be able to access messages sent if they download the chat records from the call, so don't send anything too personal or sensitive.

Sometimes the host will use chat as part of making a meeting work more smoothly – for example, to ask for responses to a proposal in a committee meeting, or to invite brief prayers of joy and concern in a service. Other times they may ask people to stay off chat unless they need to use it for a technical reason ('I can't hear the speaker very well – is anyone else having this problem?').

Reactions

You can use 'reactions' to give the speaker a thumbs up or applause when they make a good point.

Participants

Clicking on 'participants' will give you a list of who is on the call, and some options such as sending them a message. If you are the host, you will have more options, such as muting and unmuting participants, or making them host or co-host of the meeting.

The host also has options to record meetings and even show them live on facebook or youtube, but don't worry about these just yet!

Virtual backgrounds

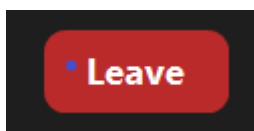
You may see people making calls from what appear to be exotic locations like tropical beaches or the bridge of the starship enterprise. It's a lot of fun, and handy if you want to hide a messy room – although the messier the room is, the more confused the computer is likely to get between background and foreground, which can have rather odd results.

The option to use a virtual background will appear when you click on the arrow next to the video camera, provided your device is capable of it, and the setting is enabled in your zoom account. Some older computers, and a lot of tablets, won't do it, so don't panic if the option isn't there – it's not you!



Ending the Call

When you've finished, click the small red button marked 'Leave' in the bottom right hand corner of the screen.



If you're the host, you may see 'End Call' instead – if you click that, the call will finish for everyone, not just you (unless you've passed control of the meeting to someone else using the options in the Participants menu).

