Getting Started with Zoom
for guests

For just sitting in on a Zoom meeting, you don’t need anything more than the ability to watch a video on your computer - meaning that at the very least you need a speaker on the computer. A smartphone would work, but the tiny size of the display would not be adequate for almost any kind of Zoom meeting. Holding on to a smartphone isn’t the handiest way to be in a meeting, and you do have to aware of facing camera on the phone so that your face - not the ceiling - is centered in the video and it’s not looking up into your nose.

If you want to be able to talk to the host/presenter, you do need a mic on your computer. The best quality for talking, as heard by others, is by using a headset with a boom mic or by using ear buds. The headset or ear buds do away with needing speakers on the computer.

Finally, if you want to be seen by others, you do need a webcam on the computer. Most webcams nowadays come with a mic. But again, the headset or earbuds will provide a much better sound, so don’t rely on the webcam mic for talking.

There is plenty of chatter on the Internet about how insecure Zoom is. I know what the problems are and I have taken steps to ensure your privacy when you attend one of my meetings.

So, get some practice in by going to zoom.us and register to join in on some of the demos that they offer.

First and foremost, I recommend that you download the Zoom Client app whether it is on your smartphone or your desktop computer. This is the best way to have a good experience with Zoom. The browser mode is not all that great, and for Apple users, the Safari browser doesn’t allow access to audio. Zoom is designed to work best with the Chrome browser, but that browser is a memory hog. On an Apple Mac, Chrome might even freeze (hang) after several minutes or an hour.

If you have an iOS device, you can find it in the App Store as “ZOOM Cloud Meetings” here: Download in App Store

For Android, it’s in Google Play. Download in Google Play

Otherwise, the “Zoom Client for Meetings” for Mac and Windows can be downloaded from Zoom here: https://zoom.us/download#client_4meeting

For the beginner using Zoom, there are two video tutorials, mine and Zoom’s. Theirs doesn’t have enough detail for my taste which is why I created mine.

Mine: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_8vQDfSzdY

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Their: https://www.youtube.com/embed/hIkCmbvAHQQ?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

Screencasts Online has a free video tutorial for using Zoom that is worth watching: https://screencastsonline.com/tutorials/mac-apps/zoom

And then there’s the ugly detail: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/214629443-Zoom-Web-Client#h_d058aa08-10b5-4c9f-b029-4ce9603bb2d1

And it’s useful to know something about “being professional” when using Zoom: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5AxcjUHBEE&feature=youtu.be

Selecting a virtual background is important to “hide” the room you are in. However, not all computers can work with a virtual background successfully unless the person has a green screen behind them. https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background

If your computer doesn’t have a built-in mic, then using a headset with a mic solves that issue. If your computer doesn’t have a camera, then a webcam solves both the mic and video issue. For large meetings, a camera isn’t even necessary. However, the best experience with audio is by using a headset for both listening and talking. If your computer doesn’t have Bluetooth capability, then an over-the-ear headset with a boom mic is the only option. Some external mics or the mic built-in to a webcam or the computer will make your voice sound like you are in a large, empty room that echoes.

One way to test your equipment to see if you can join a Zoom meeting is by using a browser and clicking on this link (zoom.us/test) or by typing it in the address bar of your browser. (Does not work with Safari. Use Chrome, Edge, or Firefox.)

Video Conferencing Etiquette
Have you ever attended a video conference and watched what other people are doing in their video? Some of it is distracting, some of it downright distasteful, and some of it just plain annoying. Here are some guidelines for both presenter and attendee to pay attention to when attending a video conference.

Maintain Eye Contact
The remote sites should remain focused in the camera’s direction, avoiding shifts in attention – looking out the window, multi-tasking, etc. It is especially important to maintain eye contact by looking at the camera when speaking. The participants at the host site should consider the camera as another person and look at it during their discussions.

Mute the Microphone
The microphone should be muted when you sign in. The host has the option to mute everyone’s mic and then unmute them when the time for questions arises.
Position the Camera
The participants do not want to see the top of your head (camera looking down on you), or the bottom of your chin (camera looking up). The camera should be at eye level with a strong light behind the camera or in a well lit room with no bright light in the camera’s view or directly behind you. Be aware of light reflections in glasses that you might be wearing. Many people may be watching on fairly small screens so your camera and seating position should be adjusted to fill the frame as much as possible.

Use your Normal Voice
Speak strongly and clearly - Because there might be a one second audio delay (for some conferencing), use a brief pause between speakers to assure the full audio signal has been transmitted. When many people are speaking at once, it is difficult for remote participants to discern the conversation. Repeat questions or comments to be sure that the remote sites heard them.

Avoid Interrupting
Raise a hand to speak.

Be Aware of the Microphone Placement
The microphone can magnify sounds that are normal for a meeting. Do not rustle papers or tap on the microphone or table.

Keep Body Movements to a Minimum
Avoid distracting movements like swaying, rocking, or pacing. Move and make gestures in a fluid, natural way.

Restore Eye Contact after an Audio-visual Presentation
After a slide presentation or screen/document sharing, restore eye contact with the remote sites.

Use a Document Camera for On-the-fly Writing
Do not use the chalkboard or whiteboard, but use a document camera with a nice sized marker to make the writing as readable as possible for the remote sites. Zoom has a built-in whiteboard, but be sure you are very familiar with it before attempting to use it.

Family Issues
Inform the family that you will be on a video call to reduce interruptions or strange sounds (spouse or children shouting, dog barking, baby crying, etc.)

Using the Chat Room during a Conference
Keep all chats short and on topic. Do not ask about lunch, drinks after work, or “did you hear...” It’s very difficult for the host monitoring the chat room to weed out real questions through a maze of small talk.
Leave the Keyboard Alone
No one wants to hear the clicking of your keys on the keyboard. The only acceptable reason to use it is to type questions to the moderator in the chat room! Same goes for tapping on the desk.

No Personal Grooming
Be careful of what you do in front of the camera. The rest of the participants do not want to watch you comb your hair, pick your nose, clean your teeth, etc. Turn off your video and mic if you need to do anything at all distracting or personal.

No Food
Unless the meeting is about sharing food, no one wants to watch you eating. It is distracting and unprofessional, not to mention the crumbs on your keyboard.

Dress Appropriately
You should wear something similar to what you would wear to an in-person meeting. If you choose to not have appropriate clothing on from the waist down, DO NOT get up in the middle of the meeting with your camera running.

Choose an Appropriate Environment
Make sure it is uncluttered (no unmade beds or bathrooms) and where you are less likely to be interrupted. If your device can handle the high CPU strain, learn how to add a virtual background - but keep it simple.

If You Must Step Away
Turn off your video and mic while you are away.

Leaving a Meeting
Always sign off with a formal goodbye so people know you aren’t coming back.