

Tips for Leading Online



Zoom meetings can provide valuable face-to-face interaction for your online group. The effectiveness of your group meetings relies on you as the Group Leader as well as the group members setting up their device so that each person is visible and can be heard by others in the group. It may be helpful to review these guidelines with your group so they feel comfortable in a virtual meeting.



Guidelines for Leaders and Participants

Make sure to test your device camera and audio prior to your meeting. Be aware of the location of the camera and microphone on your device.

Audio

- Speak within proximity of the microphone so people can hear you clearly without needing to yell. Using earbuds or headphones may help with audio clarity.
- It is best to use one device per household. When two devices are used in one location, it produces high pitched feedback.
- Find a quiet location with limited background noise. This will allow you to participate in group interaction without having to mute and unmute yourself each time you have a comment. This is especially helpful during the group discussion time. If you are not able to find a quiet location, mute your computer unless you're talking. If you are muted, make sure to nod your head and listen well so people can recognize you are engaged in the conversation. Be aware of the noise in your background that may be distracting others and mute your device as necessary. You may be muting and unmuting A LOT. Be familiar with the location of the mute button/feature.
- Put pets in a different room or have them in a place where they will be most quiet.
- When video content is being shared all members should mute their devices. This will help eliminate distractions and audio interference during the video content.

Video

- Make sure your camera lens is clean and working properly.
- Turn on your video during the meeting – it shows others that you are engaged in the conversation.
- Position the camera to eye level or slightly above. Your face should be centered in the video camera.
- Lighting - Use adequate lighting to show your face clearly. If possible, have a light source in front of you so that your face is clearly visible.

Being the Host and the Group Leader

- Make sure you join the meeting a few minutes early to welcome everyone.

- The host of the meeting will need to be welcoming and in charge of the discussion. The host is able to control everyone’s mic and video should there be a distraction to manage.
- The host should talk 20% of the time and listen 80% of the time. Ask a lot of questions to encourage participation.



- If possible, enlist the help of another person in the group to share the hosting and leading responsibilities. One could look after the technical side of things and the other could keep the conversation going.
- Be sure to check your emails or text messages as you begin your group time in case one of the members is struggling to get in to the meeting.

Group Dynamics

- Create a plan for participants to indicate they’d like to talk. You may try something like raising a hand or answering in a specific order.
- Try to give your full attention. When participants are not paying full attention, it can be a big distraction online just like an in-person group.

Sharing Video Content

- Mute everyone (including the Host) when a teaching video is shown to minimize background noise and provide the best audio/video quality.
- Consider hiding the video panel of everyone’s faces when sharing video content and then “unhide” faces afterward when returning to the main session for discussion.
- Whenever possible, download the video content to your device and play back from the download. Streaming content into your device and sharing by streaming it out requires a very strong internet connection. Members will likely experience a choppy video or audio stream when the content is not downloaded to the device that is sharing it.

Building Community

- Pray as a group to close the meeting (remind everyone to “unmute” when they begin to pray).
- Stay in touch after the meeting - especially if someone had a prayer request...texting, emails, and calls during the week can really help people feel valued in and connected to the group.
- Consider involving other group members to help with follow-up during the week. It helps build community, allows others to be encouragers, and prepares group members to step into leadership roles in the group.

