The following is a handy guide to holding efficient and productive Zoom meetings, focusing specifically on large meetings, not one-on-one meetings (which can be much more casual and flexible). Please make sure you download the latest version of Zoom on your desktop or laptop and that you have access to the Zoom link for your meeting well before the meeting itself, to avoid last minute technical difficulties. Make sure to test your microphone and your audio to ensure everything is working well. You do NOT need to have a Zoom account to participate in a Zoom meeting. You do need a Zoom account to host a meeting.

1. **Always plan on using video.**

Avoid audio-only calls unless there’s a clear rationale for it (e.g. if you’re in transit or driving) but don’t make this a habit. Having access to video for everyone and only providing audio for yourself is not fair to other meeting participants. The goal of Zoom is to provide a digitally connected experience that is as close as possible to being there in person. It’s the farthest thing from a cold impersonal conference call where people can just disconnect for the majority of it until they hear something relevant to them.
2. **Dress to impress.**

   It’s easy to give in to the temptation to wear sweatpants and an old t-shirt because you’re working from home. However, your colleagues expect you to have a professional appearance. Dress for your video conference the way you would for an in-person meeting.

3. **Be on time.**

   While regular meetings typically have a few minutes at the beginning when people are sitting down and getting settled in, virtual meetings can proceed much more efficiently if everyone is logged in a couple of minutes early. If you login and you receive a message that the meeting has not started yet, hang tight. It will start on schedule and it helps to have everyone there at the beginning. If you anticipate being delayed, make sure you let the host know so that the meeting can start without you.

4. **Control video and audio quality.**

   If possible, invest in a quality webcam and speaker and microphone headset. These provide better video and audio than your computer’s built-in system. Try to hold meetings in quiet, indoor locations to control ambient noise. If using your computer’s built-in system make sure the webcam is clean from smudges and your microphone and speakers are set to appropriate volume levels.

5. **Adjust your background lighting.**

   Don’t sit directly in front or beside a bright light source, or else all the audience sees is a bright light and a shadowy figure. Experiment with moving lamps and your camera until you can see your brightly lit face on the screen. It’s simple: If your lighting is behind you, people will only see a silhouette. Make sure that any light coming towards your face is stronger than the light behind you. Again, we stress the importance of pre-testing your “camera appearance” before your meeting.

6. **Think about your background.**

   Try to provide a nice, plain background. You want your attendees’ focus to be on the meeting content, not your messy office or your amazing art collection. By having a clean setting with work-appropriate art and decorations, you reduce the chance that attendees will get distracted. You should also try to attend the meeting from a quiet area that has minimal background noise and movement. You can’t control everything in a mobile environment, but you should give some thought to background prior to your meeting.
7. Use virtual backgrounds sparingly.

Zoom now also provides an array of virtual backgrounds (Northern Lights, tropical jungles, Golden Gate Bridge, etc.) for use in conference calls. While you’re welcome to use these if you have a messy or cluttered background, an array of stunning virtual backgrounds in a meeting with 30 people can get distracting pretty quickly. Do not change your background during the meeting either as such change can be a distraction and invitation for others to do the same.

8. Practice speaking to the camera and not the screen.

Our tendency is to look at the person on the screen, but you should look at the camera when you speak so the audience feels like you’re talking directly to them. If you’re looking at yourself on the screen while you’re talking, it will seem like your attention is elsewhere. Direct eye contact into the camera while speaking gives attendees the impression that you are looking at them rather than off to the side, which creates an environment where everyone feels engaged and present in the conversation. Be sure to position your web camera and monitor at eye level so you can look into the camera and simulate that eye-to-eye connection with other attendees.

9. Sharing your desktop or application.

Generally speaking, you should not select “Share Your Desktop” (unless you want every pop-up email and private message on display for your audience!). Instead, open up any relevant documents before the call and share only those during the meeting. Note that when you share, Zoom prioritizes the shared item to the bandwidth. This can reduce the other video feeds’ quality, so don’t share longer than necessary. Once you’re done sharing, relinquish share control so that others may share their relevant materials or you’re able to see everyone’s bright and cheery faces once again.


If you can afford it, increase your bandwidth. If you are wireless, try to remain close to the wireless router and consider installing a signal booster in areas of low signal strength. When you have the option, choose wired (instead of wireless) for video conferencing. If you have issues with sound or video quality, you can connect your audio via a phone call rather than using Internet audio. This can sometimes improve the quality of the audio. Zoom gives you this option at the beginning of every meeting.
11. **Mute your microphone whenever you’re not speaking.**

Zoom has a “Mute Microphone” option that cuts down on ambient feedback for the audience. When there is a lot of back-and-forth discussion you will turn this off, but you should mute yourself when listening to others. If you’re interjecting a quick thought, you can unmute yourself temporarily (walkie-talkie style) by using the spacebar.

12. **Use Zoom’s chat function.**

You can send a question or statement to everyone or privately to a participant. Make sure you know exactly who you’re messaging before you send the message. This can be used to communicate with the meeting host, for example, to add items to the agenda or comment briefly on someone else’s shared content. However, you should not have extensive dialogue in the chat window, running parallel to the video conference. This can be distracting and defeats the point. It’s equivalent to having a side conversation during an in-person meeting.

13. **Think about your actions on camera.**

Always remember that everyone can see you. Someone is watching as you take a big, wide-mouth yawn, stretch, or wander around the room. These exaggerated movements are distracting to the audience and can be disruptive to the speaker. Try to stay still and be attentive.

14. **Introductions and Roll Call.**

Each meeting should begin with brief introductions, especially if there are new attendees. If all faces are familiar, it is good to take a moment for roll call to make sure everyone who should be there is there.

15. **Eliminate distractions and focus on the agenda.**

Notifications from messaging applications, ringtones, and applications running on your desktop can be distracting, which can make your attendees feel disrespected and undervalued. Mitigating these distractions helps keep the meeting focused and free from interruption.

16. **Be aware of your audio and video settings.**

Check whether your microphone is unmuted and that your camera is on to ensure that all attendees can hear you and see you when you speak. If you notice that someone in the meeting is speaking but their microphone is muted, you can alert them that they are muted by requesting that they unmute their audio in the Manage Participants tab. You
also can manage how you start and join meetings — with video on, entering a meeting muted, etc. — in your Zoom Meeting Settings.

17. **Shut out your most distracting housemates.**

If you have a dog, a cat, a guinea pig, or any other animal that can get loud or “in the way” at times, they’re probably going to want to “participate” in your conversations as soon as they hear a little bit of commotion. It’s best to just leave them in an unoccupied room of the house while the meeting’s going on. Similarly, kids can get pretty distracting during a meeting, even if they’re outside the room. We know your little darling is just wonderful, but our best advice is to have someone else take care of the kids while you’re in your meeting to the extent that it is possible.

18. **Type quietly and try to keep typing to a minimum.**

Even if your keyboard is one of those ultra-quiet ones, chances are that participants will hear the pitter patter of little keys, and the noise doesn’t sound pleasant at all coming from a highly sensitive microphone and into a pair of headphones. It also lets them know that you’re not devoting all of your attention to what your participant is saying. Laptops are the biggest culprit, with manufacturers often locating the microphone very close to the keyboard. If you’re using a laptop, either keep yourself muted when you’re not talking or get one of those roll-up extendable keyboards that allow you to type silently. Or you could try to curb your multitasking and focus on the meeting at hand!

19. **Managing discussion and interruptions**

It is generally easier to manage discussion and interruptions in a video call than it is in an audio conference call, as participants’ facial expressions can be very effective either in stimulating or ending discussions. That said, if there is a large number of attendees, you should use the “Raise Hand” feature in the Zoom application or send a quick message to the host so that you can be called upon to provide your opinion. In general, you should avoid interrupting others and talking over anyone else, but this is just good meeting common sense!

20. **Eating and drinking during the meeting.**

There’s a lot to be said about video meeting etiquette regarding eating and drinking. If you’re grabbing a cup of tea or some bottled water, that’s acceptable, or at least more acceptable than downing a bottle of brandy. However, an HD close up of your face while you’re slurping spaghetti during your meeting is pretty much unacceptable.
Also, if you’re sitting in a desk chair that pivots or rocks, try not to rock and move around. We understand the urge you may have to test the limits of this versatile piece of furniture engineering, but let’s all sit like adults, at least while we’re on camera.

21. Leaving the Meeting.

Generally speaking, if you’re hosting the meeting you should be the last to leave to allow participants to exchange parting thoughts before you end the meeting. Always keep your cursor far away from “End Meeting” so you don’t end it by accident. If you’re the host and have an emergency that forces you to step out of your meeting early, click “Leave” during the “End Meeting” prompt so that the meeting can continue without you. You’ll be able to rejoin it at any time!