

Zoom Etiquette

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Zoom is a cloud-based videoconferencing app that allows “virtual” meetings, classes, screen sharing, and more. It runs on PC, Mac, Android phones/tablets, and iPhone/iPad. The app became very popular during the pandemic and is likely to be used for years in the future. With the ongoing pandemic, not everyone is comfortable with meeting in-person. There are free (limited features) and subscription (more features) versions. Like in-person meetings, etiquette leads to better virtual meetings. Some suggestions:

Be early. Join the session early. Being late interrupts a session in progress. Early gives you a chance to troubleshoot, adjust seating, camera, and sound. Use the ‘pre-meeting’ to socially reconnect.

Audio. Use the mute button if there’s noise in your environment, such as barking dogs or a phone ringing. Turn off the TV and radio. Use the mute button when you are not talking. Pause when you’re talking in case others need to say something. Video meetings don’t handle people talking at the same time very well. The raise-your-hand icon is useful. Also, be aware the Zoom session may be recorded.

More about audio. NEVER have two devices (desktop + computer + speaker phone) in the same room on the same Zoom session - the echo/feedback will disrupt the meeting.

Video. Without video, the other attendees will only see a name or profile picture. Eye contact and expressions are as important in a video meeting as in an in-person meeting. Beware of multitasking - the attendees can see you’re not paying attention because your eyes are looking at something else.

More about video. Think about where you sit since it will be the background in the video. Dress appropriately. If seeing other attendees is important, use a computer rather than a smartphone or tablet. “Speaker view” is best for listening to a talk or a class instructor; “gallery view” is best for a meeting. An appropriate or pretty background picture is nice, especially if you’d rather not share the background in your house, but avoid distracting background videos.

Internet connection. Zoom requires a good Internet connection. Sometimes a message will flash on the screen “*your Internet connection is unstable*”, the video will freeze, or the sound may get choppy. Try changing the “view” (gallery or speaker) or turn off your video to see if the sound improves.

Chat. Be careful with the chat function. The default is to send a message to *everyone* in the session, like an email reply-all. You can select and chat with one participant.

If you’re the host. Start the session early so you can let attendees into the meeting/class before the scheduled start time. Consider making someone a co-host to share any duties such as admitting attendees or sharing a desktop/presentation or taking over if your Internet connection fails. In some situations, a lecture for example, the host should “mute all” and unmute selectively as needed.

Oakmont Technology Learning Center can help with free Zoom training. To see all tech articles or to sign up for training, go to www.oakmont-learning.org.