Zoom: Chat, reactions, and polls

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Audience participation in small Zoom meetings is relatively straightforward, as participants can unmute themselves to speak. However, even in small online meetings, some participants may find it hard to speak. Things that are challenging in person—such as determining when a sufficiently long pause has elapsed and it's socially acceptable for the next person to start—become even more difficult with slight network lags, audio issues and small video windows in a Zoom call. It's a good idea to facilitate Zoom discussions more proactively than you would an equivalent in-person meeting and to solicit audience feedback in different ways, especially as meetings get larger.

Tips for hosts/facilitators

- Provide structures for turn-taking: for example, use a roundtable discussion and have each speaker call on the next person or have host call on people in turn.
- Periodically pause to check in with those who haven't spoken or provide invitation for quiet to speak.
- Use multiple Zoom meeting tools to solicit feedback and participation, rather than only relying on verbal participation.
- Be mindful of conditions that might make it difficult for participants to join in (verbally or in other ways). Consider inviting participants to inform you about challenges in advance or discussing participation challenges and preferences as a group at the start of a meeting.
- Note that even with video on, it will be difficult for many people to gauge each other's responses, especially when someone is sharing screens, there are many participants, or you're joining from a device with a small screen. To make up for this, build in periodic breaks to deliberately solicit feedback on presentations and discussions.

Use in-meeting chat (sanely)

In-meeting chat messages can be a life raft for participants dealing with background noise and trying not to disturb (or be overheard by) room- or office-mates and for those who find inserting themselves into conversations challenging. On the other hand, participants who telephone in can't see chat messages and many people find it hard to follow verbal and a chat discussions simultaneously. To help everyone get the best use out of the chat:

- Ask someone who is comfortable following chat to relay or periodically summarize comments and questions for those who aren't.
- For very large meetings, consider designating co-hosts to moderate the chat full-time, replying to questions in the chat and relaying or summarizing them for presenters.
- Deliberately stop and check in for feedback at periodic intervals. You can ask the chat moderator to relay information and invite additional verbal comments and questions.
- Call everyone's attention to the chat at times — for example, do a quick, informal poll by posing a question and asking everyone to post responses in the chat. Bring these into the main discussion.
by summarizing patterns or inviting individuals to elaborate verbally.

- Participants can increase the font size of the chat if they are having difficulty reading it.

## Solicit non-verbal reactions

Non-verbal reactions were designed to give make participants digital analogues for physical cues like raising a hand to signal the desire to speak. In recent updates, they have become more useful for meeting management since all are now visible in the participants list and the host sees a quick tally of icon types at the bottom of the screen.

With a little direction, hosts and presenters can use reaction icons to gauge responses and manage a meeting:

- Ask participants to click Raise Hand when they wish to speak; they will appear at the top of the Participants list in the order their “hands” were raised. Participants can call on the next person in the list as they finish speaking or a host can.
- Conduct quick yes/no polls by asking a binary question (e.g., Should we move on to the next topic?), asking participants to choose the Yes or No reactions, and viewing the tally at the bottom of the Participants window.
- Use reactions to quickly “take the temperature” of the room. Invite participants to use a reaction to indicate how they are feeling or to give a response to a prompt. Asks for volunteers to elaborate on
any reaction types you found ambivalent or surprising.

- If you're using slides, add multiple choice questions to your slide and map specific reactions to the answer choices — for example, [font name="surprise"] = A, [font name="thumbs-up"] = B, etc. — for more elaborate polls.

Use Zoom’s poll feature

For longer and more complex polls or to keep a record of participant responses, you will need to use Zoom’s polling features. See Zoom’s Polling for meetings documentation for instructions on how to set up polls, run them during a meeting, and accessing polling data after the meeting and for a video tutorial.

- You can only create and manage polls in the Zoom desktop client (Mac or Windows). Android and iOS mobile app users can participate in polls, but not run them.
- The person scheduling a meeting can set up poll questions in advance (in the Zoom web portal only). However, only that person will be able to edit and create polls during the meeting. Co-hosts and alternative hosts will only be able to launch the pre-created polls.
- Polls can be anonymous or identified, but either way this applies to both the in-meeting results and downloadable poll reports — there is no way to record identified answers but only view results anonymously during a meeting.
- Only the person who launches the poll can real-time results as people vote; however, they can share the results overview after it ends.
- Poll reports only include data for the most recent iteration of a poll; if you relaunch a poll, the new results will overwrite the old ones. If you need to keep both sets, create a second poll with the same questions and use it instead of relaunching the original.
- The only way to reliably attach poll results to identifiable individuals is to require registration for the meeting. Registered participants will be identified by the name and email address they gave when registering. If registration is turned off, some participants may only be identified by their screen names.

Questions?

If you have any additional questions or problems, don't hesitate to reach out to the Help Desk!

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