

Technical Tips for Virtual Gatherings

Platform Options

Below is a sampling of popular platforms for virtual gatherings.

Free Conference

[Free Conference](#) offers free (with a suggested invitation to pay what you can) audio and video conferencing. One account can host up to 1,000 callers on unlimited 6-hour conference calls. Free Conference supports video conferencing, screen sharing, breakout rooms, and recording. Users must create an account.

[Here](#) are FAQs with links to Host and Participant Instructions.

Zoom

[Zoom](#) is free for gatherings up to 45 minutes (though you can simply start a new meeting immediately after the 45 minutes ends to allow for longer gatherings). For longer calls without interruption there are various paid plans. Zoom supports video conferencing, screen sharing, breakout rooms, and recording. Users must create an account.

[Here](#) are some user guidelines you can share with participants.

Google Hangouts

[Google Hangouts](#) is free and allows for video gatherings of up to 10 people. All users will need a Google account. Hangouts supports video, audio, and instant messaging. Starting a hangout is easy once everyone is logged in to their Google account.

Other tips

Consider muting everyone upon entry (you can typically do this through “Settings”) and recommending that participants keep themselves on mute unless they are speaking. This will help reduce background noise.



Use the “share screen” function to offer visuals of anything that participants may find helpful, such as readings or poems. You can also use this feature to share video or audio clips. Remember to switch this function off when you’re complete with the visual so that folks can continue to see each other’s faces when speaking.

Encourage participation with “raise a hand” features and through written chats. You might also consider using breakout rooms to support small group dialogue within larger group discussion.

Consider sharing a loose “agenda” or gathering flow with your participants beforehand. Let them know if it will be helpful to have any specific materials that might support their participation in the gathering.

Be gentle with yourself and others in navigating the technical aspect of gathering virtually.

