



Webinar Best Practices

I. Before Webinar

A. Have a plan.

Create an agenda with most pressing items first, and make sure everyone has it, preferably in advance! Provide time and space prior to the meeting (or as it begins) for attendees to contribute their own agenda items as well. Let participants know who they can contact (send a private chat) for technical support during the meeting. This information can be permanently posted in the waiting room.

B. Decide roles

Depending on the size and purpose of the webinar, decide who will host, co-host, monitor the chat box and be available for tech support. See examples of various roles & responsibilities in the Zoom Roles guide. Be sure everyone knows what their role is before the webinar starts. If someone is taking notes, agree on how detailed and how they will be distributed.

C. Never assume the tech will work smoothly.

Log in 15 minutes prior with hosts, co-hosts, panelists, etc. to make sure everyone understands the controls and has audio/camera working.

II. During Webinar

A. Set the right tone.

Beginnings are important! Welcome participants and set the tone for the webinar. Is this an informal check-in with lots of conversation, or a focused, presenter-directed webinar? Make it clear if they are welcome to unmute and chime in, or if you'd prefer questions/comments come later.

B. Agree on discussion and turn-taking etiquette.

Consider posting guidance on opening screen in larger webinar:

- While you are waiting for the webinar to start:
 - Please use headphones with a microphone if you have them.
 - Test your sound before the webinar starts.
 - If you have technical issues, please contact **[tech support]** via the chat box.

- Please silence your cell phones during the webinar.
- Please contribute to the discussion with questions or comments by raising your hand or via chat box. Click on the microphone button by your name to mute & unmute yourself when you talk.

C. Take breaks!

If a webinar lasts more than an hour, take a break! Experts recommend a 5 min break every 45 min or so (see [article](#) in references). Display a countdown timer showing the break time remaining; this is an essential aid for getting everyone back online on schedule. If your webinar platform doesn't have this capability built in, the leader can share their screen during the break, displaying a large-digit timer counting down the minutes. You can also "insert video" from YouTube, for example, of a timer into Google Slides or PowerPoint. (Here is an example of a [5-minute timer](#).)

D. Create a sense of community.

Use a warm-up chat to get everyone to share something at the beginning of the webinar. In smaller webinars, have everyone share their webcams briefly to say hello/introduce themselves. Use breakout rooms to more effectively engage participants in discussion/activities. Consider adding "light" content to put participants at ease, like memes, quotes, scenic photographs.

E. Respect attendees' time.

As the webinar begins, recall the webinar end time, and ask if anyone has any additional time constraints that may affect the agenda. Try hard to end on time, and adjust the agenda as necessary to move things along.

III. After Meeting

A. Notes

As the webinar facilitator, review and finalize notes if they are to be sent out. Download the chat box log and merge any relevant comments into notes. Be sure webinar notes are archived in a logical place and accessible to those who need them.

B. Follow-ups

If appropriate, send a follow up email thanking attendees, attaching the notes, tasks, related links, relevant announcements, etc. Be sure any to-do's are well spelled-out and the next webinar is clearly scheduled, if applicable.

IV. More tips!

On Zoom, for people calling in on their phones only, the *9 can be pressed to raise their hand.

Specific Technical Advice

Zoom - see following pages for extensive guidance on Zoom roles and tips on making the technical aspects of zoom go smoothly, including a checklist and a sample script for the host.

References/further reading:

Some tips regarding how managing online group conversations, turn-taking, etc.:

- <https://www.conferencethatwork.com/index.php/event-design/2020/04/who-goes-next/>
- <https://www.conferencethatwork.com/index.php/event-design/2020/04/who-goes-first/>
- <https://www.business.com/articles/7-powerful-tips-for-highly-productive-online-meetings/>
- <https://hbr.org/2015/03/how-to-run-a-great-virtual-meeting>
- <https://www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/resources/your-guide-to-successful-online-meeting>

Taking breaks during online webinars:

- <https://www.conferencethatwork.com/index.php/event-design/2020/05/schedule-breaks-during-online-meetings/>