

Autism & Learning Disability Digital Inclusion Network

Guide to Running
Online Activities

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Introduction

This guide has been developed by the Autism and Learning Disability Digital Inclusion Network (ALaDDIN) and is based on the experiences of learning disabilities and autism partner groups across the city, during the national lockdown.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a huge increase in activities and support being provided through video conferencing apps. While working towards a return to face-to-face support, we believe that the delivery of online support will play an important role in keeping people connected in future, and could improve long-term access and engagement for people who experience barriers to face-to-face activities.

In this edition, we'll focus on the two most popular video conferencing platforms, Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

We'd love you to share any tips from your own experiences, and to include them in future editions. If you'd like to contribute, please contact Pete:

petehughes@las.uk.net

We hope you find this guide useful.

Which app should I use?

There are a number of apps you can choose from to host activities. Zoom is by far the most popular, but Microsoft Teams is also widely used. Here we'll look at some of the similarities and differences between them.



Zoom	Microsoft Teams
PC / Mac / IOS / Android app or internet browser	PC / Mac / IOS / Android app or internet browser
Up to 100 participants	Up to 100 participants
Host can view all participants when screen sharing	Limited view of participants when screen sharing
Simple and easy to use	Has more features, but this does make it more complicated to use
Works well for groups or 1:1 meetings. Participants can share their screen to show files/work to others.	Works well for groups or 1:1 meetings. Additional features such as live file sharing (everyone can edit) and a shared whiteboard make it especially good for collaborative project work.
Meetings can be recorded.	Meetings can be recorded.



Pricing and features

Zoom

Free	Pro - £11.99/ month/ licence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host up to 100 participants• 40-minute time limit on group meetings• Unlimited meetings• Recordings of meetings can be saved locally on your own device	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Max 9 licences per account• No time limit on meetings• Social media streaming in-built• 1 GB Cloud Recording (per licence)• 50% discount available for charities

Note: Zoom also has 'business' and 'enterprise' price plans for larger organisations, with more features. These start at 10 licences at £159.90 each per year.

Microsoft Teams

Free	365 Basic £3.80/ month/ licence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host up to 100 participants• 60 minute time limit on meetings• Unlimited chat / video calls / messaging• 10GB team file storage and 2gb personal storage per user• Limited to 9 people on screen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No limit on number of licences• Can broadcast using Teams Live Events (but not directly onto social media)• Access to online Office apps (Word, Excel etc)• Increased storage• Non-profits and education providers can access free unlimited licences• Can view 49 people on screen

Try before you buy

Most video conferencing apps have a free option. These have some limitations, but give you the opportunity to try things out before spending any money. All platforms have different strengths and weaknesses, so you may decide to use a mixture, or just stick with one.

If you are a charity, voluntary or educational establishment, it's also worth seeing if you can get a discount, as most providers have some form of concession available. Some concessions may only be able from a third party provider such as <https://www.charitydigitalexchange.org/>



Getting connected

A good internet connection is essential for video conferencing. Bear in mind:

Internet speed – you'll need at least 1.5Mbps upload and download speed to host sessions, and the faster your internet connection is, the better. Check how many other devices are connected to the internet where you're hosting from; the more devices you've got on your network, the faster speed you'll need.

You can test your internet speed at <https://www.speedtest.net/>

Wireless connection – Most modern routers are 'dual-band', meaning they offer a 2.4GHz and a 5GHz Wi-Fi connection. The general rule is that 5GHz will offer a better, faster connection but only at short range (you need to be near the router) and 2.4GHz will be slower but you can connect to it from further away. If you have an older router that only offers 2.4GHz, consider upgrading to a newer model.

To get a really reliable connection, use an ethernet cable to connect directly to your router instead of using Wi-Fi.



Preparing to host activities

Forward planning goes a long way when you're running online activities, so make sure you take the time to prepare in advance.



Practice is essential!

- Practice using the technology to get used to hosting. Have a good play around with it so you're comfortable and confident before hosting any sessions.
- Get used to the features such as breakout rooms, muting, spotlighting, waiting room, removing or renaming people and so on.
- Ask colleagues to join a meeting with you to test the different features.



Planning

- Prepare a clear session plan
 - Think about how you could use props, music, images to bring the session to life, using 'share screen' for images and audio
 - Include a welcome activity and a closing activity
- Allocate roles with your colleagues. Decide who will host, who will co-host, who is responsible for scheduling, sending out invites, reminders, content details etc.
- When scheduling, make sure to enable a waiting room (so you can approve people before they join) or set a password, so only invited people can access the session
- Make sure you can host the session somewhere quiet, comfortable, and free from distractions
- If working from home, make sure it's a neutral space and remove personal items from view



Communication

- Make sure participants receive joining instructions well in advance of the session. Give them details of who they can contact if they need any help or have any questions about joining.
- Send them basic instructions or a link to information about how to access, register and use the platform
- Tell participants if they need to prepare anything in advance, or bring anything to the session
- Make sure they are made aware of any ground rules or expectations you want to set for the activity
- Remind people each week, throughout the week and on the day – as much as you need to!



Hosting the session

- Log on before the start time
- Have another worker present, for both practical and emotional support (and make them a co-host in case your connection drops!)
- Make sure you all know who's responsible for spotlighting / muting / the waiting room etc
- On the first session, take time to explain controls and practice them – switching between views, mute, thumbs up and clap etc
- Encourage people to place their device on a stable surface, and not to move around
- Mute participants where appropriate, especially if working with sound
- Include audio description for people who are connected via phone or have a visual impairment



Video call etiquette for hosts and participants

Here's some suggested guidance to share with your session participants.

Do:



- Be patient and courteous of others – this might be a very new experience for some users
- Dress appropriately – wear clothes as you would when going to work, or to the shops
- Switch off any background noise (TV, radio etc) and put your phone on silent
- Arrive on time
- Speak clearly
- Use the *raise your hand* function if you would like to speak or ask a question
- Use the *mute* function when you are not speaking, or if you need to talk to someone who's not in the meeting
- Use headphones or a headset – this can improve sound quality and reduce background noise
- Take time to pause to allow others to speak and ask questions

Do not:



- Shout
- Speak too quickly
- Interrupt those already speaking (use the *raise your hand* function and wait)
- Share the meeting log-in details with others
- Record or take screenshots without permission
- Share any confidential or private information you heard in the meeting

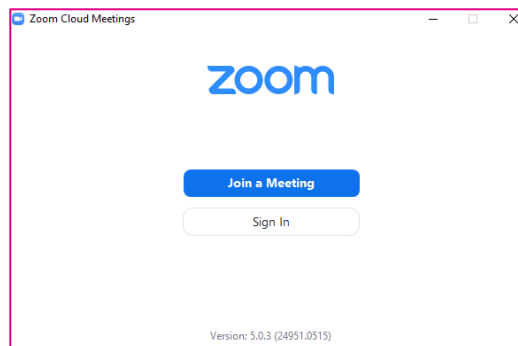
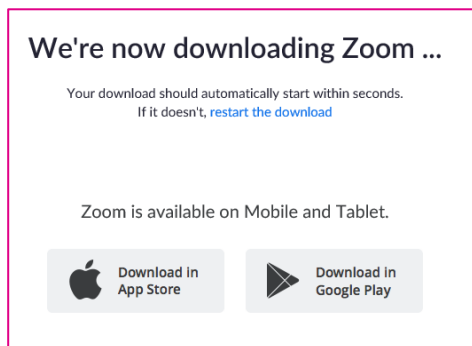


Getting started with Zoom

Downloading Zoom

Desktop

1. Go to: <https://zoom.us/support/download>
2. Click 'restart the download' (if it doesn't start automatically)
3. Your computer will prompt you to run and install Zoom

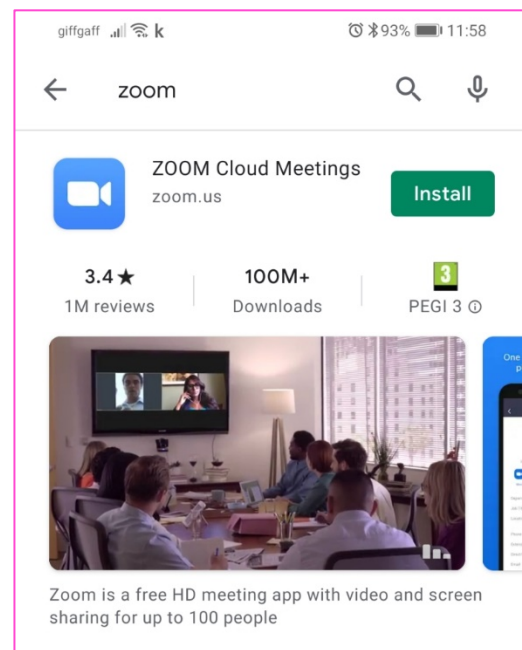


You can join a meeting without an account, by entering the meeting code emailed to you, OR sign in to create an account.

To host meetings, you'll need to create an account.

App

1. Open your device's app store, and search for 'zoom'
2. Check you have found 'ZOOM Cloud Meetings' by zoom.us
3. Click download / install
4. You will be prompted to open the Zoom app and sign-up for an account





Accounts

If you'll be hosting meetings, make sure you use your professional / work email account to register.

If your organisation has signed up for a Pro account, you need to make sure you use the email address the Pro licence has been issued to.

Zoom user guides

Zoom has plenty of easy-to-follow user guides and instructional videos to guide you through set-up and use:

- User guides, hints and tips:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>
- Video tutorials:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials>
- 'How to Zoom' YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKpRxBfeD1kEM_I1Id3N_XI77fKDzSXe



Getting started with Microsoft Teams

How to create an organisation in Microsoft Teams

Desktop

1. Go to: <https://teams.microsoft.com>
2. Sign in to your Microsoft account, or create one

A screenshot of the Microsoft sign-in page. At the top left is the Microsoft logo. Below it is the text 'Sign in'. There is a text input field with the placeholder text 'Email address, phone number or Skype'. Below the input field, there is a link 'No account? Create one!' where 'Create one!' is highlighted with a pink box. Below that is a link 'Can't access your account?'. Further down is a link 'Sign-in options'. At the bottom are two buttons: 'Back' (grey) and 'Next' (blue).

Microsoft

Sign in

Email address, phone number or Skype

No account? **Create one!**

[Can't access your account?](#)

[Sign-in options](#)

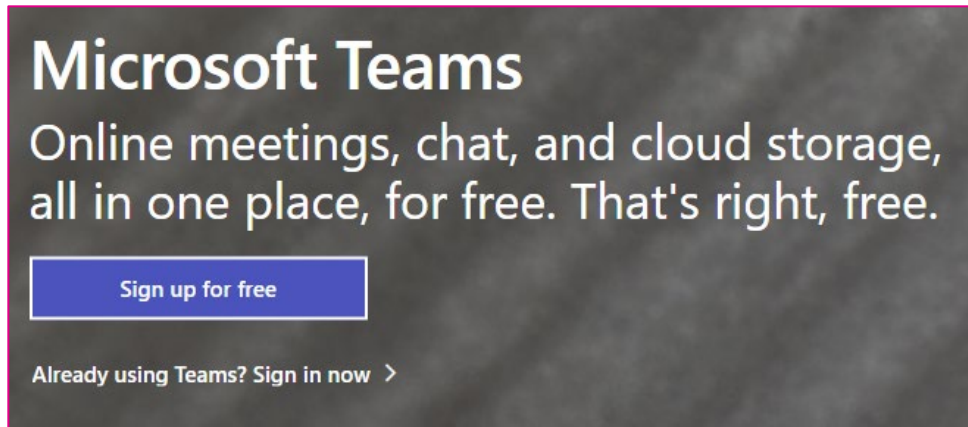
Back Next

3. Once logged in, you will be prompted to download the app but you can also choose to 'use the web app instead', if you'd rather access it through your browser
4. You'll be prompted to 'sign up for Teams'

A new web page will open where you can read through a full list of features for the free version, and compare pricing plans if you upgrade. Teams is free if you're using it with no other Microsoft Office 365 apps.

If you work for a non-profit organisation, there's information on how to apply for the full version of Office 365 for free.

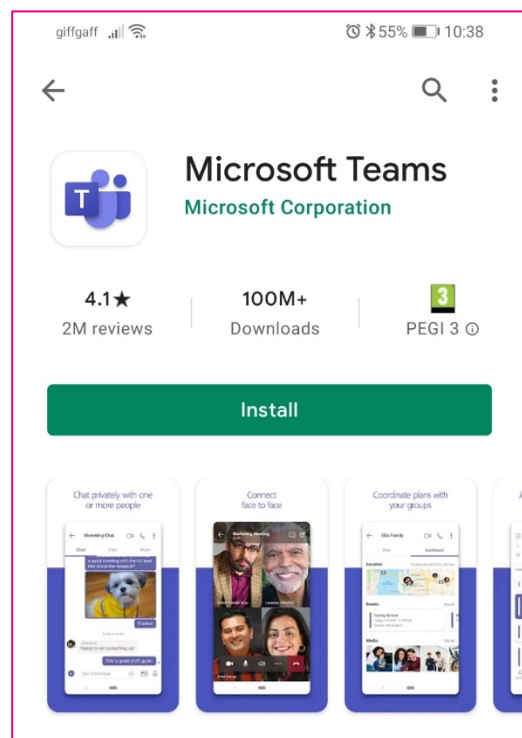
5. If you're joining an existing organisation, choose '*Already using Teams? Sign in now*' If you're starting a new organisation, click '*Sign up for free*'



6. You might be prompted to log in again. Teams will then ask you for your name and a picture (both optional) and then guide you through its interface and features.

App

1. Open your device's app store, and search for 'Microsoft Teams'
2. Check you have found 'Microsoft Teams by Microsoft Corporation'
3. Click download / install
4. You will be prompted to open the Teams app and sign in, or sign up for an account, with the same options as described above



Microsoft Teams user guides

Microsoft has plenty of easy-to-follow user guides and instructional videos to guide you through set-up and use:

- Guide to using the free version:
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-GB/office/welcome-to-the-free-version-of-microsoft-teams-aea40713-307b-4e85-8f45-0fcb57e2edca?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us>
- Help and learning (full version)
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/teams>
- Video tutorials:
<https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7>
- Hints and tips:
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/tips/home/connect-with-teams#chat-based-workspace-teams>

If you find some features aren't as described (e.g. you're limited to seeing 9 people on screen), it means you need to enable the new features Microsoft has recently introduced. (Note this is not available on the free version yet.)

Follow the instructions here:

<https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/microsoft-teams-blog/new-meeting-and-calling-experience-in-microsoft-teams/ba-p/1537581>



Troubleshooting common problems

Getting rid of echoes in video conference calls

One of the most common problems in video conferencing is echoes and feedback which can make it very difficult for hosts and participants to hear, and can be very distracting. Thankfully there are some pretty straightforward ways to fix this.

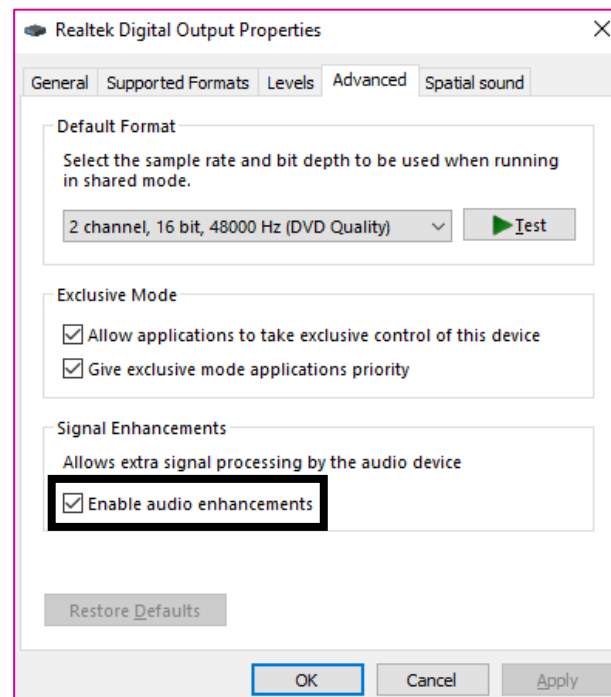
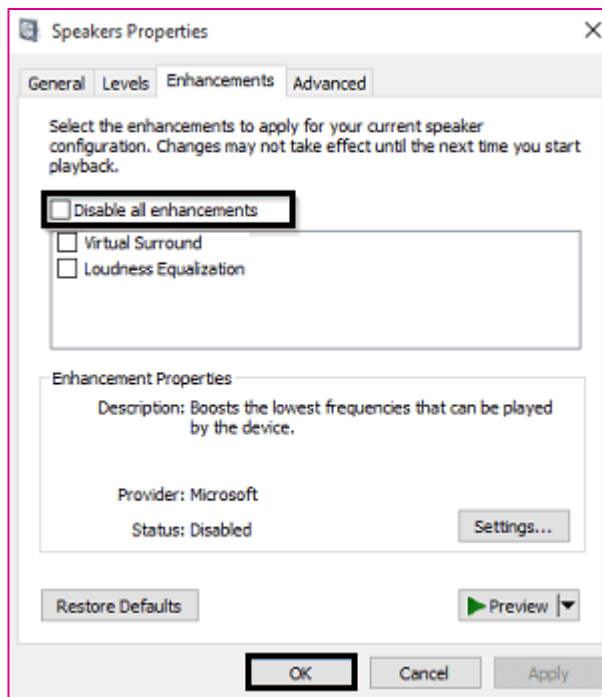
Fix 1: Use Headphones for calls and mute participants

Encouraging the use of headphones is the simplest fix as it will prevent microphones from picking up speaker sounds and causing echoes / feedback.

It's good practice to mute participants when they're not speaking, to reduce echoes and background noise. Zoom and Teams both give hosts the option to mute all participants. You can also remind participants to mute themselves, as is good video meeting etiquette. (Note: Zoom does not by default let you *unmute* participants but there is a workaround, see p18.)

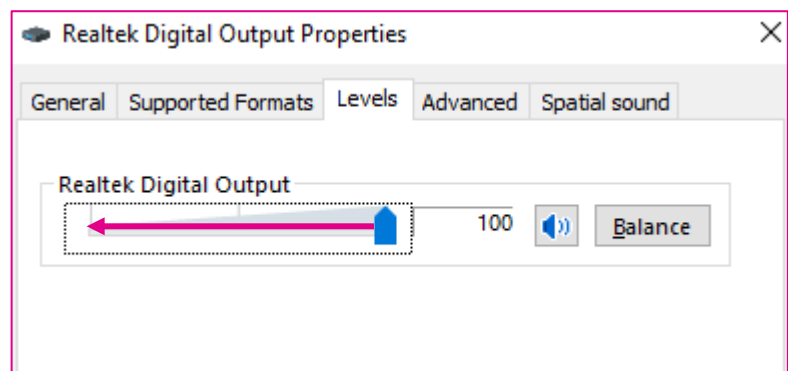
Fix 2: Disable audio enhancements (Windows)

1. Click on the Start button and open the Control Panel
2. In the Control Panel window, click on 'Hardware and Sound'
3. In the hardware and sound menu, click on 'Sound'
4. Then double click on speakers.
5. Depending on your system, you may have slightly different options here. Look for setting named 'enhancements' or 'advanced'
6. You should find an option to enable / disable enhancements (see example pictures below)
7. Restart your computer for the changes to take effect



Fix 3: Disable microphone boost (Windows)

1. Click on the Start button and open the Control Panel
2. In the Control Panel window, click on 'Hardware and Sound'
3. In the hardware and sound menu, click on 'Sound'
4. In the Sound dialogue box, click on the Recording tab and select 'Microphone' or 'Microphone Array'
5. Right-click and select 'Properties'
6. Click on the 'Levels' tab
7. Uncheck the 'Microphone Boost', or reduce it to 0 using the slider
8. Restart your computer for the changes to take effect

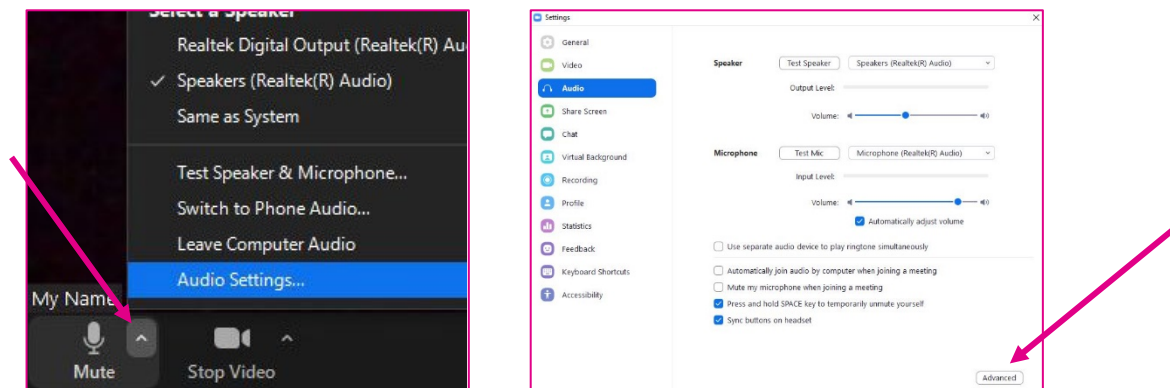


How to stop low-volume signals cutting out in Zoom

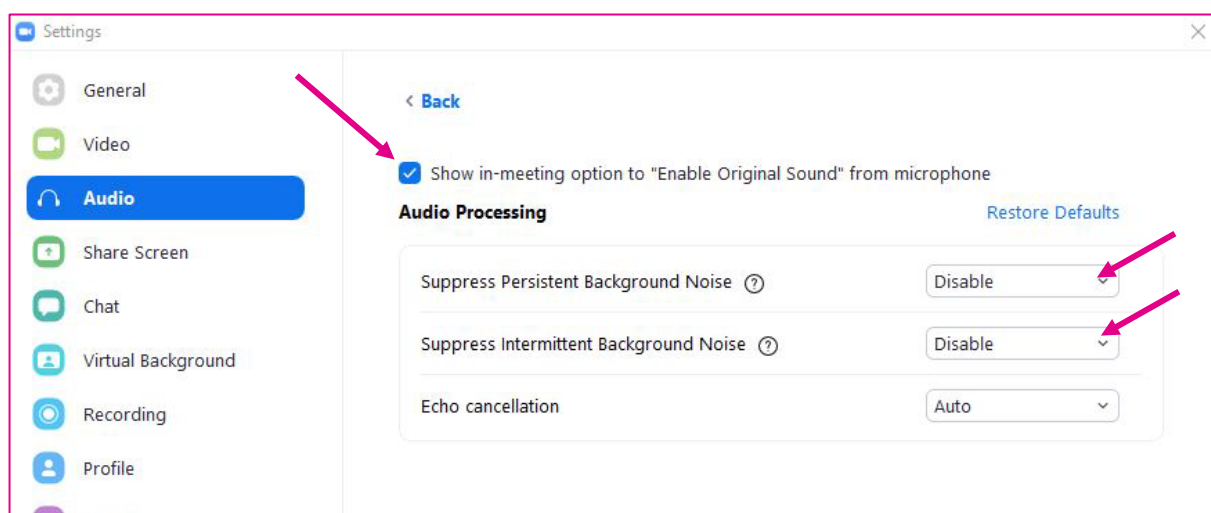
To cut down on background noise, Zoom has built-in noise reduction features, which can be problematic if you need to hear more than one person at once (e.g. during music-based activities). Here's how to disable it:

On laptops and PCs

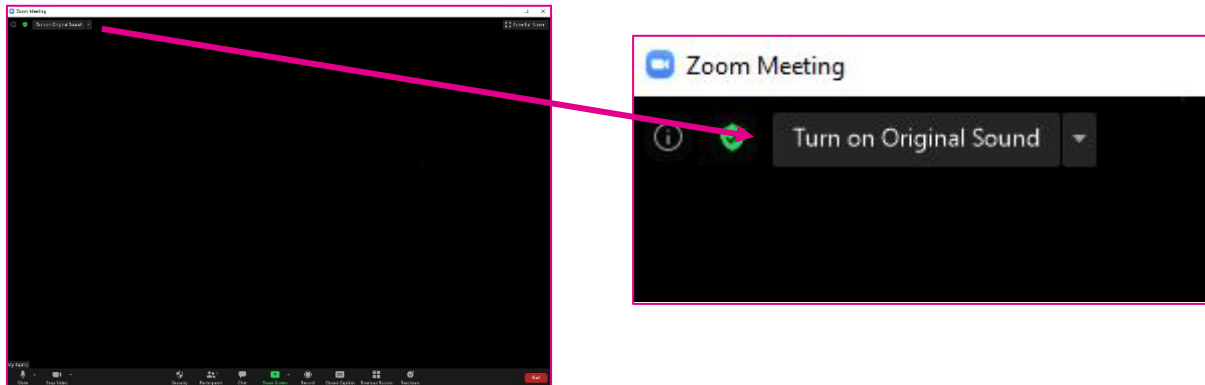
1. Click the small arrow next to the microphone (bottom left), and choose 'Audio Settings'
2. Click the 'Advanced' button in the bottom right



3. Tick the 'show in-meeting option to *enable original sound* from microphone' option
4. Disable 'suppress persistent background noise'
5. Disable 'suppress intermittent background noise'

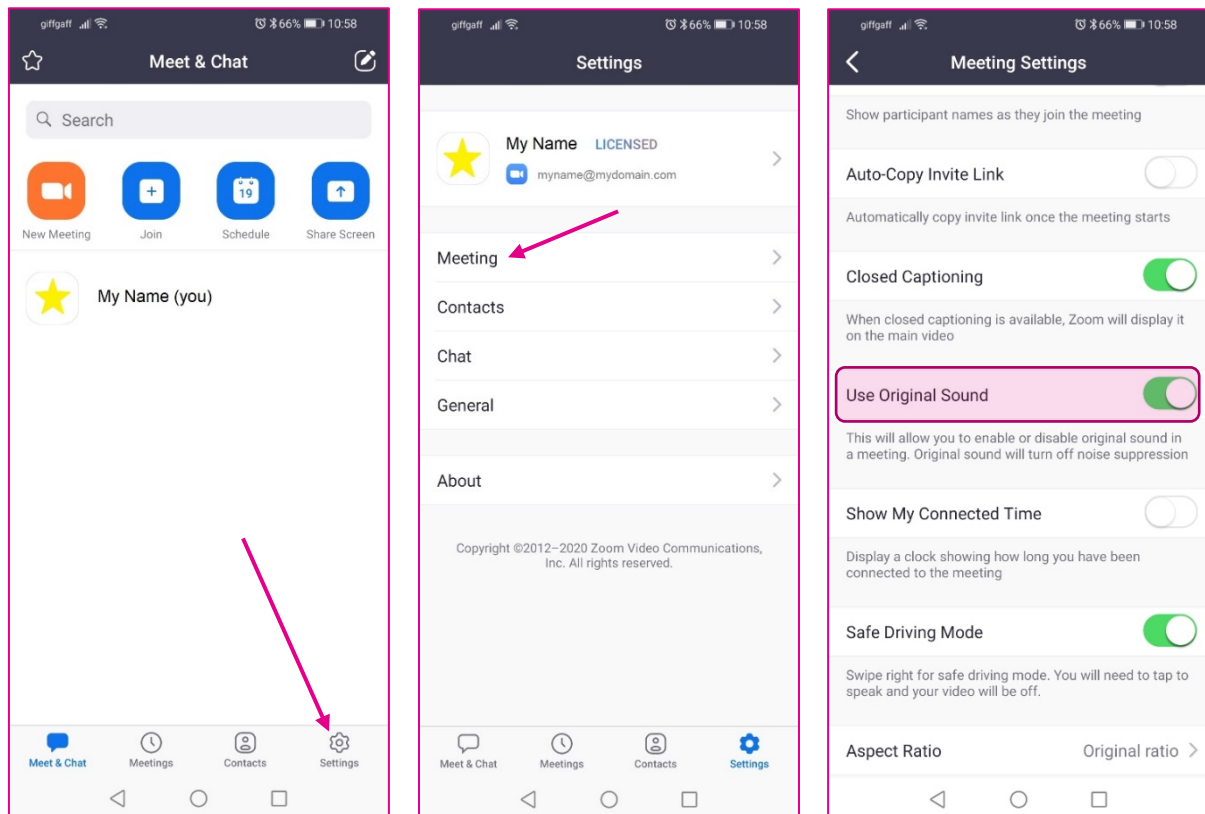


6. Back in the meeting, click the 'turn on original sound' option in the top left.



On tablets and mobile phones

1. From the Zoom home screen, go into Settings (bottom right)
2. Select 'Meeting'
3. Scroll down, and switch 'use original sound' on

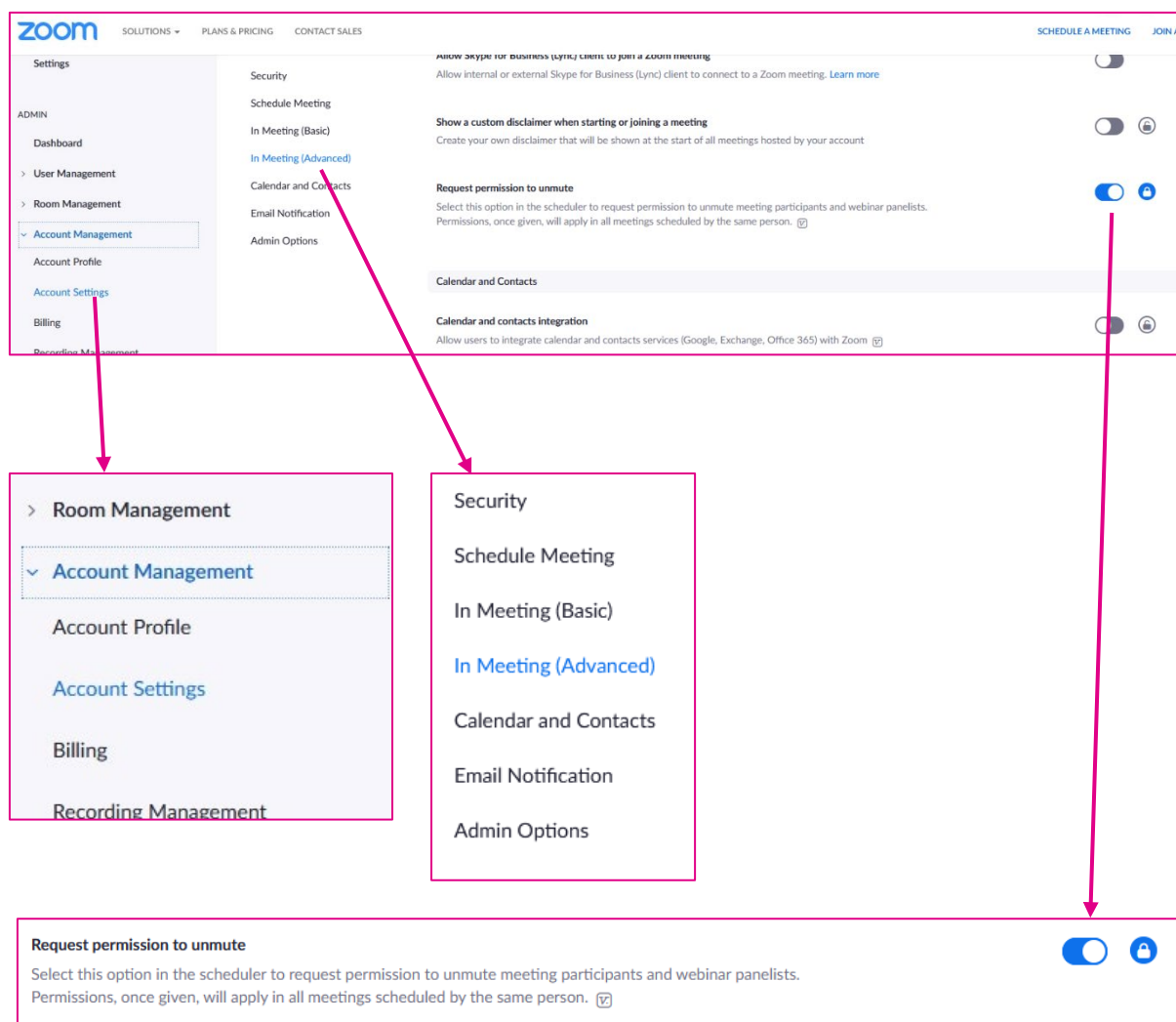


Unmuting participants on Zoom

Zoom's standard settings prevent the host from unmuting participants (instead, the participant is prompted to unmute themselves). To override this, you need to 'enable pre-approved consent to unmute account'.

You need to have Administrator access to do this.

1. Sign in to the Zoom web portal at <https://zoom.us> as an Administrator
2. In the navigation menu, click Account Management then Account Settings
3. In the Meeting tab, go to 'In Meeting (Advanced)' and enable the 'request permission to unmute' setting
4. Use the lock icon to make this setting mandatory for all users



Zoom Guidelines

Security

- All Zoom sessions apart from the disco are open to people who attend our Lifelong Learning Programmes only. Disco participants who don't attend a Lifelong Learning Programme will have completed a basic access needs form, and a list of names and any other relevant information will be sent to disco staff in advance
- Links for the morning workshops will be sent out by Programme Leaders, and so should only have existing participants attending
- Should someone attend an afternoon workshop who none of the staff can identify, please ask for their name and which programme they attend, and ask an office staff member to double check
- All meetings should have a password or waiting room enabled in order to increase security. Any unwanted visitors should be removed from the meeting immediately
- All participants should be aged over 18. Participants under the age of 18 may attend where this has been arranged in advance, but they should be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout the workshop
- No participants should take screenshots as not everyone has given photo consent. Staff may take screenshots, but all images not held on Purple Patch Arts devices should be deleted as soon as they've been shared with office staff. All names, and the faces of anyone who hasn't given consent, will be obscured by office staff before the image is shared online

Before the workshop

- Sessions should be well planned, with consideration given to how a wide range of people will be able to engage with them. Remember that in the afternoon workshops you might not know everyone on the call, and they might not all know each other - build in an activity to make people feel welcome, but keep in mind that some activities, such as going round and saying hello to each person, won't be possible if the group is large
- If you haven't run a session on Zoom before, please spend some time getting used to it
- Meet with other staff members in advance so that they are aware of what will be happening and what will be required of them
- Make sure that you or other staff are able to play music, ideally by sharing an audio player on Zoom, and have the warm up and cool down songs ready to play
- Make sure you have a strong internet connection and a suitable space to deliver the workshop from

During the workshop

- Be organised and ready to start the Zoom call at least 15 minutes early
- Wear your purple t-shirt or hoodie
- If you are the first to arrive, assign other members of staff as co-hosts when they join so that they can mute / unmute participants and share their screens where required
- Remind the group that no-one should take screenshots
- If the group is large, you might want to spotlight yourself so that everyone can see you on their screen
- Lead the Adventure warm up, followed by your activities and the Adventure cool down
- Where relevant, tell participants what they'll need the following week so that people have time to gather resources
- Remind everyone that there are sessions happening every weekday

After the workshop

- Reflect on the workshop with other staff, thinking about what went well and what improvements could be made, and complete a daily report to be fed back to Bronia or Melanie



Introduction

This policy is about delivering or taking part in group work and 1:1 sessions remotely.

Pyramid delivers group work and 1:1 activity. In certain circumstances, sessions can be delivered remotely by video conferencing software, email and phone.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Children Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Photographs and Video Recordings of People Policy
- Professional Boundaries Policy
- Code of Conduct

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we maintain our high standards when working remotely, and that remote activity is delivered safely and maintains appropriate professional boundaries at all times.

Protocols and Guidance

Communication

All direct communications from Pyramid workers to members or volunteers must be with the prior knowledge and consent of a member of the staff team.

Members and volunteers may receive the personal contact details of a Pyramid worker in the course of remote working (i.e. phone number or email address). They must not share this information with others. It is not appropriate to call workers on their mobile phones – always use the Pyramid office number instead (0113 234 6040).



Communication (continued)

Video Conferencing (we use Zoom)

- Use your name and / or role as your screen name. Avoid using personal information such as nicknames, social media handles or email addresses.
- Screen-sharing enables you to share what you're doing or looking at with others. To avoid inadvertently sharing personal or age-inappropriate content:
 - Make sure you have a 'clean' screen and desktop with no open apps or documents (e.g. email or social media)
 - Switch off notifications and alerts for the duration of the session
- Break-out rooms are a feature of Zoom which allow participants to work in smaller groups. Ideally this should always be groups of 3 or more. Working in pairs is permitted but the session host must regularly check-in with each pair.
- When using Zoom, the meeting organiser will always use the waiting room feature and/or a password to ensure only invited people can access the session. Monitor attendance and ensure only those people you were expecting have joined.

Email

- Where planned in advance, workers should ask the Administrator to send information / files by email via the general info@pyramid.org.uk account
- Workers should use their professional email address if sending something themselves, and CC the [info@](mailto:info@pyramid.org.uk) address in all communications to members
- A parent / carer should also be CC'd in communications with members aged under-18.
- Member / volunteer email addresses and emails received will be managed in accordance with the Data Sharing Agreement signed by all Pyramid workers

Phones

- Workers should use their professional phone number when contacting members / volunteers
- Pyramid can provide a SIM and credit to be used with a personal handset as an alternative to using a personal number
- Workers must have the consent of a parent / carer before speaking to an under-18 member by phone
- Phone numbers of members and volunteers will be managed in accordance with the Data Sharing Agreement signed by all Pyramid workers



Location

- Under-18s should be within earshot of a parent or carer throughout the session
- Use a neutral area of your home and remove any personal items from view
- Ensure nothing offensive or age-inappropriate is within view (e.g. posters, TV in background)

Behaviour and dress

- Our normal Code of Conduct applies
- Focus on the activity and don't use other apps / websites / messaging services while the session is happening
- If you need to take a call, mute yourself from the session before answering
- Present yourself as you would at an in-person meeting, wearing suitable clothes for going out in public

Recordings and screenshots

Remote sessions are not routinely recorded but a group may choose to record their session for a specific purpose. The Core Worker or Arts Facilitator hosting the session will always ask the group to agree before making a recording. This also applies to taking screenshots.

Any recordings or screenshots will be managed in line with our Photographs and Video Recordings of People Policy and only shared in accordance with the permissions granted by each individual member featured in the recording / screenshot.

Data Protection

All Pyramid workers sign a Data Sharing Agreement as part of the recruitment process which outlines their responsibilities for protecting and routinely deleting personal data about members and volunteers (such as photographs or contact details). A sample copy of the Data Sharing Agreement is available on request.

Safeguarding

Our Safeguarding policies and procedures apply in the same way when remote working, and any concerns should be raised through the normal reporting procedures.



Workers leading sessions with under-18s have completed additional Safeguarding training for keeping children safe online (delivered by NSPCC).

Parent / carer involvement and expectations

The support of a carer is often needed to facilitate getting set-up but we don't expect carers to stay and participate in sessions unless the needs of the person they are supporting require them to do so.

We do ask however that they stay within earshot in case additional support is required (e.g. for technical problems).

Third-party software

Please note that you will need to register for a Zoom account in order to use their software.

You can register and download Zoom by visiting the website <https://zoom.us>

A basic account is free and will enable you to access Pyramid activities.

Pyramid is not responsible for your Zoom account or any costs you incur using the service.

Please note it is advisable for security to always access Zoom via your web browser, to ensure you are using the latest version of the software. You should also make sure to use a strong password that you don't use for anything else.



PYRAMID

Supporting members to use Zoom

Thank you for supporting our members to access online Pyramid sessions.

The following guidance is to make sure that members get the best experience while attending our sessions and are able to fully participate. We really appreciate your help in making this happen.

It's especially important that members have a quiet space to work in, where they can hear us, and we can hear them. We don't use the 'mute' function in Zoom, because many members find it tricky to then unmute themselves when it's their turn to speak, which can result in them being excluded from taking part. Not using mute means that any background noise is very audible to everyone, and can be a real distraction for the whole group.

Please ensure our sessions are in the diary, and that all staff are made aware of them!
We send a letter at the start of each term with the details, or you can check our website:
<https://pyramid.org.uk/online-sessions/>

Please make sure all staff know where to find the instructions for using the digital device (e.g. login information).

Before the session

- Please check emails in advance
 - to make sure you have the login details for the meeting
 - to see if members will need to have anything prepared before for the session
- Plan ahead for the member to be seated in the quietest area possible, with minimum background noise / activity going on

Please turn over>>



During the session

- Support the member to log on to Zoom, and make sure that sound / video is working correctly
- Ensure they are fully visible on screen, and that the device is positioned securely
- Make sure they can access everything in their project pack
- We don't expect carers to stay and participate in sessions (unless the needs of the person they are supporting require them to do so) but please stay within earshot, in case of technical difficulties

After the session

- If the member has created any artwork, please photograph it and email it to us at info@pyramid.org.uk
- Please check if there is any "homework" activity to complete before the next session

You can always call or email us if you're not sure of anything, and we will be happy to help!

email: info@pyramid.org.uk phone: 0113 234 6040