

# Virtual Meeting Best Practices

## A Movement Guide



*We can do this! Shifting meetings to an online format may feel overwhelming, but help is available. Many smart people have been working on how to make digital meetings effective, engaged, inclusive, and we can benefit from their learnings. Below is an overview of some best practices compiled from several resources (listed at the end of this document).*

### **What is a digital meeting, and how is it different?**

A virtual meeting is a way to gather, organize and do work from many different physical locations, using phones or computers, an internet connection, and a digital meeting app.

Digital meetings are different from webinars. Rather than a lecture format, with one person delivering information to listeners, a virtual meeting means we will all participate and contribute.

That also means that if your only purpose is to share information, a digital meeting isn't the right format. To share information, consider an email or recorded video message.

As you plan for digital meetings, keep in mind that all your skills running face-to-face meetings will still come in handy:

- ⇒ Practice good time management. Respect everyone's time by starting and ending on time.
- ⇒ Plan not only an agenda but how you will [continually engage](#) and pull folks in.
- ⇒ Get clear on the meeting's purpose and goals. What will the end result be?

## **We recommend:**

- ⇒ [Zoom](#): Free 40-minute sessions for up to 100 participants.
- ⇒ [GoTo Meeting](#): Virtual meeting app starting at \$12 per month for up to 150 participants.
- ⇒ [Google Hangouts Meet](#): Video conferencing for up to 100 people starting at \$6 per month
- ⇒ [Slack](#): Video conferencing for up to 15 people starting at \$6.67 per month
- ⇒ [FreeConferenceCall](#): Provides free conference call functionality.

## **Community Agreements for Digital Meetings**

To create a sense of shared ownership over the meeting, set community agreements before or at the beginning of the gathering.

Suggested community agreements for virtual meetings (add yours!):

- ⇒ Test technology before the meeting starts:
  - » Do you need to download the meeting app?
  - » Is your internet connection sufficient?
  - » Every meeting app has a help section. If you're not sure how to use the app, check out a tutorial.
- ⇒ Noise level: Background noise can be very disruptive to virtual meetings.
  - » Use the mute button when you are not speaking.
  - » Access the meeting from a quiet space. Background noise can make it hard for others on the meeting to hear.
- ⇒ Turn on your video as much as possible. It's helpful for us to see each others' faces.
- ⇒ Be present. We are all busy, but a virtual meeting is not an excuse to multitask.
- ⇒ Make space/take space: In a virtual meeting, only one person can speak at a time.
  - » We will use go-rounds and other turn-taking styles of sharing.
  - » If a conversation is derailing the meeting, the facilitator may ask you to put it on the virtual "parking lot" so we may return to it when there is more time.



## Tips for participants:

- ⇒ Ask for help. We want everyone to be able to participate in meetings, so if you cannot hear/read captions/see video, let the facilitator know in a direct message.
- ⇒ New technology can be intimidating. Know that tech support, facilitators, and other participants can help you figure it out.
- ⇒ Don't have internet access at home? Most apps can be downloaded on your phone and used with your mobile internet connection.
- ⇒ Learn other's names and [pronouns](#) and use them. Write them down if you need to!

## More Resources to Explore:

### *Designing Digital Meetings:*

- ⇒ [So You Want To Hold a Web Meeting](#)

### *Tools for Remote Teams & Work:*

- ⇒ [The Ultimate List of Virtual Team Technology Tools](#)
- ⇒ [More Online Collaboration Tools](#)

### *Reviews of Digital Meeting Platforms:*

- ⇒ [Meeting Solutions](#)

## Tips for facilitators:

- ⇒ Have folks introduce themselves. Share pronouns. Do an icebreaker.
- ⇒ [Center accessibility](#). Can everyone participate?
- ⇒ Have a plan in place if participants have technical difficulties. Know how to contact tech support or offer an audio-only connection.
- ⇒ Create engagement by using tools like small group breakouts, polls, and screen-sharing facilitated whiteboard activities.
- ⇒ Create space for everyone to speak with a go-round. Draw a virtual table on the shared screen and write everyone's name. Each person gets to speak. When they've finished, they call on the next person at the "table".
- ⇒ Don't rush. People need time to take in and understand what you're saying, then to use the raise hand button or to type in their questions in the chat.
- ⇒ Need to edit a document together? Try Google Docs, where multiple participants can make edits to a document together in real time.