

Hosting A Small Group Online

Connecting online is a powerful way to help people connect with each other when an in-person group may not be possible. You can encourage each other's faith, share authentically, and care for one another.

Your first few meetings may take some adjusting as everyone gets acquainted with the technology and format. So, don't give up too quickly if your first few meetings have a few kinks.

As you look to connect digitally, this page will help you work through technology usage, determine best practices for a good online experience, and outline what a typical group meeting might look like.

TECHNOLOGY

- **FACEBOOK MESSENGER GROUPS**

- **Pros: Free. Accessible via web browser on computer. Can access without a facebook account.** (If you don't have a facebook account you'll need to **download the app** to your phone and use phone number.)
- **Cons: Phone-in option not available.**
- **Capacity (50 participants/Devices: 6 video, 44 audio)**
- **How To Use:**
 - Open facebook messenger on **web browser** or **mobile app**
 - Login (with facebook account or phone number)
 - Click "New Message" button to add Facebook friends to group chat (see image below)
 - After adding contacts, click the "Video Call" button to start video chat. (see image below)
- **Watch 2 minute tutorial.**

- **GOOGLE HANGOUTS**

- **Pros: Free. Unlimited time. Closed Captioning. Accessible via web browser on computer.**
- **Cons: Requires a google account for all participants.** (can sign up for one **HERE**). **Phone-in option not available unless you have a business account.**
- **Capacity (10 Devices)**

- **How to use:**
 - Open Google Hangouts in **web browser** or mobile app (**apple device , android device, chrome web browser extension**)
 - Login
 - Click “Video Call” button
 - Click “Invite People” and type in their email address (If they don’t have a google account it will send them an invite to setup an account)
 - You can also schedule a meeting on your google calendar and send an invite to join you at a specific time, including a link to your online meeting. (**See Instructions**)
- **Watch 6 minute youtube tutorial.**
- **ZOOM**
 - **Pros: Free. Only hosts are required to have a Zoom account. There is a phone-in option.**
 - **Cons: Limited to 40 minutes unless you have a paid account (\$14.99/mo). Have to download Zoom application to phone or computer.**
 - **Capacity (100 participants/Devices)**
 - **How To Use:**
 - Open Zoom in a **web browser** or **mobile app (apple device, android device, chrome web browser extension)**
 - Create Login
 - Click “Host a meeting with video on”
 - Click “Invite participations”
 - Select how you’d like to send an invite:
 - Default Email, Gmail, Yahoo to send email invite
 - or “copy URL”, “Copy Invitation” to copy a link and send it via a text message, email, facebook message, etc.
 - You can also schedule a meeting on the zoom website and send an invite to join you at a specific time, including a link to your online meeting. (**See Instructions**)
 - **Watch tutorial videos in Zoom video library.**

BEST PRACTICES/ONLINE ETIQUETTE

- 1. Recommend group members to download meeting software prior to meeting.**
- 2. Make sure your face has sufficient lighting.**
 - Lighting works best in front of your face, not behind.
- 3. Make sure your face is centered in the video camera.**
 - We don't want to see your forehead, or neck, or miss you all together.
 - Position the camera to eye level or slightly above.
- 4. Select the quietest room/location you can find.**
 - Turn off anything making noise in the background (TV, radio, appliances).
 - Put pets in a different room or have them in a place where they will be most quiet.
- 5. Only use one device per household.**
 - When two devices are used in one location it produces feedback (annoying noises).
- 6. Mute your computer unless you're talking.**
 - If everyone's microphone is turned on at the same time, the sound quality can be an issue and it can be hard to hear the person who is talking. So the best policy is to mute yourself when you are not talking.
 - If you are muted, make sure to nod your head and listen well so people can recognize you are following them.
 - You will be muting and unmuting A LOT, you'll get used to it.
 - Also, you'll get called out if you don't unmute, so don't be offended.
 - Or maybe, the moderator will mute you, so don't take that personally.
- 7. Be an assertive moderator.**
 - The moderator/host of the group will need to be welcoming and in charge. Make sure as host you jump on a few minutes early to welcome everyone.
 - Redirect the conversation or mute participants as necessary. This may feel rude but is necessary to manage a good online experience.

- The moderator should talk 20% of time and listen 80% of time.
- 8. Create a plan for participants to indicate they'd like to talk.**
 - You may try something like raising a hand, answering in a specific order, or another signal.
 - Since participants will often be muted, having a plan will help you know when to mute and unmute.
- 9. Give full attention, don't multitask.**
 - When participants are not paying full attention it can be a big distraction online just like an in-person group.
 - When talking, spend some time looking at the camera, not just the screen.
- 10. Stay in touch afterwards.**
 - Leverage a group text or **GroupMe, Facebook Groups, WhatsApp**, etc. as a place to stay connected and keep the conversation going throughout the week.
 - You can also put prayer requests and other information in

FORMAT/SCHEDULE

- **Practice Session/First Meeting (30 minutes)**
 - It can be helpful to have a 30 minute practice session together, or take the first half of your first online group get everyone acquainted with how an online group will work.
 - Review online etiquette/best practices (listed above). You may want to review some of these talking points the first several meetings until people figure it out.
 - If your group hasn't connected in the past couple weeks, take the time to catch up by going around the group one at a time and sharing with one another.
 - Help people learn how to use the technology and answer any questions.
 - End by sharing prayer requests; have 1 person pray.
- **Typical Meeting (45-60 minutes)**
 - **Connect - 15-20 minutes**

- Welcome people as they login (people tend to arrive late online, just like in-person groups).
- Begin with an ice breaker.
- **Discuss - 30 minutes**
 - Bible Study/Small Group Discussion . If you desire to hold strictly to 30 minutes
- **Wrap Up - 15 minutes**
 - Ask for any prayer requests.
 - Have 1 person wrap up in prayer.
 - Encourage people to text each other afterwards for further prayer requests and to pray together.