

Some helpful tips for creating a virtual meditation hall together and using Zoom.

Preparation

- We encourage you to **create a designated practice space** for yourself that will be uninterrupted during retreat time with as much silence as possible.
- As much as possible, try to fully immerse yourself in a contemplative space for the length of the meditation/retreat and commit to your practice as fully as possible. We want to develop continuity in practice, just as we would do during an in-person sit or retreat.
- We encourage as much separation as possible from the use of technology other than for the purposes of the retreat.
- Consider what is showing behind you. It's nice to have a neat, clean background, if possible, and good lighting so that others in the virtual meditation hall are able to see you. Try not to sit in front of a window or be back-lit, which makes your face dark and hard to see.
- Use a computer if you are able to. The phone interface looks odd to others—your image is narrow. And tablets tend not to sit at a good angle for your face to be seen.
- Sit up, rather than lying on your bed or the couch (if physically possible). It's like you were in the hall—use your cushion or a straight-backed chair.
- Plan out your meals for retreat in advance so you don't have to go to the grocery store during retreat. Pre-make some easy “on the go” meals during retreat, so you don't have to be interacting with other members of your household, and spending time preparing food. Also plan ahead a food to eat during eating meditations (raisins, chips, etc).
- Remove intoxicants, like alcohol or THC, from your space to avoid during retreat.
- Try not to multitask during a sit or while on retreat, which can be particularly challenging since you will be on your computer/phone/tablet. We recommend that you disable any popup notifications you may currently have enabled for email, text, whatsapp, etc. If you have a Mac, see instructions [here](#). If you have a PC, see instructions [here](#). It's also a good idea to turn on Do Not Disturb on your phone.

Joining the Zoom meeting

- If you haven't used zoom before, please **download the Zoom app** on your device ahead of time with one of the links below. While Zoom works on all devices, we recommend joining on a desktop or laptop, as they often have a stronger internet connection and an easier user interface.
 - To download Zoom:
 - Laptops & Desktops: [Download Zoom](#) and install.
 - Smartphones & Tablets: Get the Zoom App at the [iTunes Store](#) or [Google Play](#).
 - New to Zoom? [Click here](#) for a short video guide.

- Test Audio & Video: Follow [these instructions](#) to test your internet connection, audio and video
- **To join a Zoom meeting**, click on the link you received using a computer/smartphone/tablet.
 - If your device does not already have the Zoom app installed, it will automatically download (after you click to accept the download). Say “yes” to any prompts. The Zoom app does not require you to create an account, password, or give any personal information.
- If you received a password with the meeting link, you will be prompted to enter it.
- On the “video preview,” click to join with or without video. (Preferably “with”).
 - We recommend you **leave the camera on during all sits**, so that people see you there. After all, they could see you if you went to the hall in person. When people open their eyes briefly, they get a sense of sitting with real people, not just names on the screen.
- Click to **join with Computer Audio**.
- **Trouble joining audio or having internet connection issues?** You can join the video via your computer and the audio by phone. First join by video on your device. Then you’ll want to enter the Participant ID to bind your phone and device session together and show your video when you speak on the phone. To do this, click the little “i” in upper left to get info. This will show your participant ID. Call in to the zoom meeting by phone, enter the meeting ID when prompted, and then your participant ID.
 - **Check your bandwidth:** Zoom recommends upload/download speeds of 1.5Mbps. You can test your internet speeds [here](#) or [here](#). If your internet speeds are not sufficient, follow the instructions above to join by phone.
 - **Close all other applications**, especially ones that use the internet. This will maximize your bandwidth and create a more stable connection. (If possible, plug in to your internet with a hard-wired cable).

How to Use Zoom: The Basics

- Once in a Zoom meeting, move your mouse over the Zoom window and icons will appear at the top and bottom of the window. (If you are on a mobile device or tablet, tap the screen once and the icons should appear).
- The **Zoom menu bar** appears when you mouse over the screen. This is where you will find:
 - Microphone icon: click on it to mute and unmute yourself.
 - Video camera icon: click to turn on and off your video.
 - Chat icon: click to toggle on and off.
 - Participants icon: click to toggle on and off. This generates a list of participants and gives you the option to raise your hand, mute yourself, etc.
- **Please mute yourself during all general sessions.** **To mute yourself**, click the Mute button (microphone). A red slash will appear over the microphone icon indicating that your audio is now off. Click the microphone again or hold down the space bar to unmute yourself if you need to be heard during general sessions or workshops.
- **Please rename yourself with your name, if necessary.** **To change your name** after entering a Zoom meeting, click on the “Participants” button at the top of the Zoom window. Next, hover your mouse over your name in the “Participants” list on the right side of the Zoom window. Click on “Rename.” Enter your full name and click on “OK.”
- **To leave the meeting:** click “Leave meeting” in the lower-right corner of the Zoom menu bar.

How to Use Zoom: Additional Tips

- **Gallery and Speaker view** options are in the upper right corner. We recommend being in speaker view during all general session, during which the teacher will be spotlighted. To see everyone who is participating in a sit, click on gallery view.
- You have the option to enter **Full Screen view**. Exit full screen using “Esc.”
- **To hide self-view**, click anywhere on your video window (the one showing yourself), and then click on the three dots that appear in the upper right hand corner. Select "Hide Myself" from the menu that appears.
- If **dyads or small groups** are happening, this will occur via a feature called “breakout rooms.” Once the host/teacher opens the breakout rooms, just tap “join” on the popup that will appear on your screen to join your group. If you have trouble, see [these instructions](#) from Zoom.
- A host/teacher may ask you to **raise your hand** so they know if you want to speak or ask a question. To raise your hand during a meeting, click on the icon labeled “Participants” at the bottom center of your PC or Mac screen. At the bottom of the window on the right side of the screen, click the button labeled “Raise Hand.” Your digital hand is now raised.
- The **in-meeting chat** allows you to send chat messages to other users within a meeting. You can send a private message to an individual user or you can send a message to an entire group.
 - We ask that you only use the chat function when asked to do so during Q&A or when a teacher has shared a prompt and asked folks to respond in the chat.
 - We ask that participants not private chat with one another during a sit or retreat just like you would do in-person in a meditation hall.
 - If you are an adult sitting with teens, please do not private chat teen participants at any time unless you are explicitly invited to by the teen.
 - If sitting a retreat, please direct all question re: logistics, etc. via private message to the retreat manager and don’t send it via chat to everybody. We want to limit distraction as much as possible while we use technology for online retreats.
- Staring at a screen for much of the day can be hard on your eyes. With the camera on, you can still choose to **dim your screen partially or completely** to limit the amount of bright light that is coming from your computer throughout the day.

For more information and tips on how to use Zoom, visit the [Zoom Help Center](#).