

Speaker Guide



ADASS XXX

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<http://adass2020.es>

Astronomy Data Analysis Software and Systems

CyberSpace posing as Granada — Spain



This document is meant to provide an offline guide for speakers at on-line remote conference sessions in ADASS 2020. Our aim is to make the event very interactive, live and fun for everyone.

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Training sessions

Speakers must participate in training sessions for speakers and hosts that will be held before the conference. These sessions would take around 60 minutes. They are intended to make sure that everyone is familiar with the conference system setup, has the right tools installed and follows a minimum set of actions proposed.

The outline of training sessions will be as follows:

- Introduction to Discord and Zoom Webinar.
- Explain Discord UI.
- Register speakers on Discord.
- Explain Zoom Webinar UI.
- Run-through the presentation workflow defined in the guides.

Getting set up as a speaker

Some things to consider in preparation for the conference:

- Read the small [User guide](#) published in the ADASS 2020 website.
- Make sure your talk title and abstract are on the [schedule](#).
- Make sure you are the speaker of your talk and contact the LOC if needed.
- Check your profile (click on the speaker link on the talk page) and update it if needed using the [CfP platform](#) (changes will be usually reflected on the schedule the day after)
- Check your Internet connection and upload speed (should be at least 1Mbit/s)
- Download the [Discord client](#) for your platform. If you already have this, please make sure it is the latest available version.
- Register an account on [Discord](#), if you don't already have one
- Download the [Zoom client](#) for your platform. If you already have this, please make sure it is the latest available version.
- Register an account on [Zoom](#), if you don't already have one.
- Join one of the training sessions the ADASS 2020 organizers have arranged.
- Join ADASS 2020 Discord server (this is also done in the training sessions)
- We encourage you to upload your slides and/or backup video following the rules and files nomenclature described in the [Instructions for authors](#) section of the website. See this [video tutorial](#) we have prepared for you on how to self-record a backup presentation with Zoom.
- Take notes of any questions you may have and submit them to the LOC.

Technical Preparations

Internet connection

Use a good and stable Internet connection. For the live presentation, we will need to have a good and stable Internet connection with at least a few MB/s upstream bandwidth.

Use wired Internet

Please use a wired connection from your PC / laptop to your router to avoid Wi-Fi issues such as drops, latency and intermittent connectivity problems. This removes one failure mode from the setup.

Have an Internet connection backup plan

It is also a good idea to think about a backup in the form of a 4G mobile Internet connection. Practice switching quickly between your regular Wi-Fi / cabled internet and the mobile hotspot. If you are having bandwidth problems, consider turning off the webcam video feed, leaving only audio. See also "[What if having connection problems?](#)" section of this document below.

Webcam considerations

Please use a webcam which provides a reasonably good picture. It does not have to be a FullHD webcam. Any recent laptop camera will do just fine.

The webcam should be positioned at or slightly above eye level. Having it film from a lower angle doesn't create a good perspective - and we want you to look your best 😊

There is no need to stress over looking into the camera all the time - only every now and then is sufficient. We want you to focus on delivering your talk. If you need to look at your slides a lot, don't fret and just do it - it is only natural! Unless your webcam has known issues, it is generally a good idea to set the camera settings to automatic, so that white balance, brightness and focus will automatically adjust without you having to worry about them.

Some webcams have problems with the autofocus, which causes them to often try to refocus (the older MS webcams had this issue). If you have one of these cameras, please consider manually setting the focus and turning off autofocus.

Webcam background

Choose a relatively clean area as your background, for example, a wall or a bookcase instead of piles of laundry or bolts and nuts. You should also double check to make sure your background does not accidentally reveal any personal information, such as your home address or your cat's birthday via posts on a pinboard.

Virtual backgrounds

Zoom has a feature to add a virtual background. You may want to experiment with this. It can be used with or without a green screen backdrop.

Proper lighting

Try to find a place to run the presentation where you have good soft and indirect light from the front. You should try to eliminate or at least minimize all the other light sources in the room, especially from your back. If you wish to cover the window behind you, do not use venetian blinds for this, as they can seriously confuse your webcam.

Sitting in front of a bright window with the webcam facing towards the window, will cause the face to appear very dark. Using spotlights may create highlights which aren't ideal either.

Try not to wear anything too reflective, e.g. a dazzling necklace or a tinfoil hat (there are other opportunities to dress like a knight after your talk), as they'd act as reflectors and bounce light off you.

Audio considerations

Please use a headset, or earphones / headphones and a separate microphone to give your presentation. Do not use speakers, either those built into your computer or laptop or external. The reason to not use speakers is simple: if the sound is projected in the room, then the microphone will also capture it, and this will create echo or reverb.

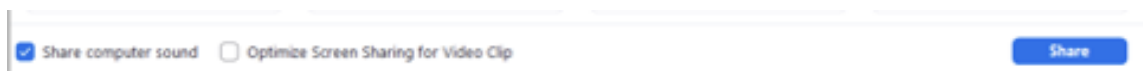
The reason to prefer a headset or separate a microphone is to have the microphone close to your mouth, ideally about 15 to 30 cm away for a separate microphone, or at the height of your chin for a headset. This way, your voice will sound clear and will not be easily obscured by other sounds, e.g. keyboard or mouse clicks. You do not want to get closer than that, or the microphone will also capture unwanted sounds - like your breath, lip-smacking or loud plosives. If your microphone falls around your neck area, it is advisable not to wear any dangling jewelry to avoid the rubbing sounds against the mic.

If you are still experiencing too much echo, you could try to move to a carpeted room, or simply add a rug or other fabric in the room to stop the sound from bouncing around too much. Make sure that you don't have a lot of background noise in the room when doing the presentation, since this reduces audio quality and can be quite disturbing for the attendees listening to the stream using headsets.

Zoom has built-in noise cancellation and volume leveling logic, so it'll take care to send good quality audio.

Sharing audio feeds in your presentation

If your presentation needs computer audio, please enable the "Share computer sound" option in Zoom:



This will then take the audio directly from your system feed and produce a good quality mix-in together with your microphone input.

Carefully manage your computer CPU load

Since Zoom will have to run encoding, screen grabbing and possibly virtual background detection all at the same time, it does consume some CPU power. Please keep this in mind when running demos or CPU heavy background tasks. Zoom should be given higher priority to make sure the stream doesn't die off or heavily degrade in quality. It is recommended that during the meeting, you close all the applications that you will not need for the talk.

Avoid using online IDEs or other Internet heavy tools

Unless you have a really good Internet connection with excellent upload bandwidth, please avoid using online IDEs, or other tools which take away upload bandwidth.

Chances are high that these will cause your screensharing or webcam video to become blurry and result in a rather poor attendee experience.

Avoid streaming to other platforms

Please avoid streaming your session to another streaming platform, in addition to Zoom. This often causes issues with applications fighting over webcam / microphone access, causes additional load on your CPU and removes Internet bandwidth, which can result in the Zoom stream to become jittery. We will take care of all the necessary streaming on our platform and make sure that the attendees can follow your presentation as best as possible.

What if having connection problems?

The online solution depends a lot on your Internet connection. If this goes down or lacks quality, the overall experience will be subpar.

Some possibilities to address these situations:

- Try to reconnect using your mobile via 4G.
- If you are having bandwidth problems, consider turning off the webcam video feed, leaving only audio .
- The room manager could ask you to dial-in with the Zoom telephone number of the session, so at least we will have the audio. In this case, the session chair will need to share the slides that you have previously uploaded.
- In the case you have also uploaded a pre-recorded backup version of your talk, the session chair could play this video in case the connection goes down. See this [video tutorial](#) we have prepared for you on how to self-record a backup presentation with Zoom.
- We encourage you to upload these support and backup files, and follow the rules and files nomenclature described in the [Instructions for authors](#) section of the website.

Presenting at ADASS 2020

General advice

Unlike our in-person events, we will unfortunately not have the usual direct contact between the speakers and the audience. You won't be able to look at the people attending your session and get an idea of their excitement. On the plus side, this may actually take away some of the stress of presenting in front of a larger audience and make you feel better as a speaker.

To still make the presentation live in the sense of "this is happening right now", with the added feeling of "wow, this person is talking to me from a thousand kilometers / miles away", we would like the presentations to be given live at the scheduled time, in person, ideally with webcam on, instead of playing a recorded video.

Being on time

We understand juggling with time zones in an online event can be unpleasant. The [schedule](#) displays time in UTC so you would need to make the conversion to your own time zone. You may use <https://www.worldtimebuddy.com> to help you in this time zone conversion.

Presentation workflow

On the conference day your talk is scheduled

- Upload the latest version of your slides so that attendees can download them from there and also for the session chair could use them as a backup.
- Have all your devices connected to power (especially your laptop if you're using one for the presentation). Running presentations off of battery is usually not a good idea. Having a fully charged battery as backup is a good idea.
- Check your connectivity and set up your backup mobile hotspot if needed.
- Prepare your PC / laptop for the session and check your setup.
- Turn off background updates (especially Windows updates can be annoying).
- Turn off any notification mechanisms present in your PC / laptop.
- Check the Discord *#speakers* channel for any announcements or questions by the session chair or room manager.
- Put a glass or bottle of water near your desk.
- Turn your mobile silent and relax a bit before starting.

When your session slot starts

- Open the Zoom client and join the Zoom webinar with your real name using the link published on the Discord *#talks* channel.
- The room manager will ping you in Discord around 10 minutes before your talk starts and give you directions on how to board you in as speaker.
- **Please pay attention to the personal messages you receive in Discord.**
- "Raise Hand" in Zoom so the room manager can turn you into a panelist.
- Mute the microphone in Zoom application.

When your time slot arrives

- The session chair introduces the talk and speaker.
- Get called in by the session chair to start your webcam, remember to unmute.
- The session chair will ask to start the presentation.
- Start sharing your screen.

Present your talk

- The session chair will remind you of the time 5 and 1 minute left.
- After the presentation the Session chair then runs the applause sound.
- The session chair will host the live Q&A session, read out questions and have you answer them. Please keep the answers short. More context and explanations can be provided afterwards on the Discord *#talks* channel.
- The session chair reminds *#talks* channel on Discord for additional questions.
- A specific chat channel for your contribution may be created in Discord if the session chair considers it necessary.
- After the Q&A, the Session chair then runs the applause sound audio again.
- Finally, mute yourself, stop screen sharing, stop the webcam sharing.

After your talk

- You made it!
- Visit #talks channel on Discord to take additional questions from the audience.
- Enjoy the conference!

Considerations for presentations

Since we're running an online event using screen sharing for content delivery, there are a few limitations / advantages you should keep in mind.

Images are great, motion picture doesn't work well

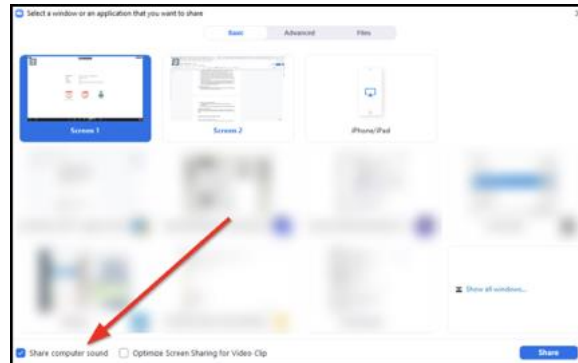
- Using images works great for online conferences.
- Using moving images or films does not work well, since the frame rate is very low and the attendees will only see jittery movement. See below for instructions on how to make this work for dedicated video sharing.

Presenting using screen sharing

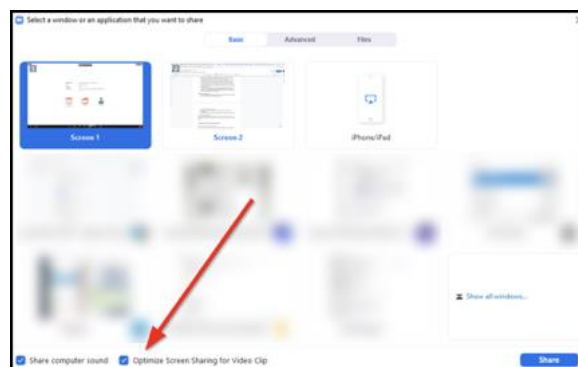
- All presentations are delivered using screen sharing, so you will have to have the application you're using for the presentation running (i.e. it's not possible to upload a PDF and present the PDF, as some conferences allow you to do).
- For screen sharing, please make sure you share an entire desktop and not only the application window. The latter often causes scaling problems and can also result in Zoom adding black / grey bars across the screen share to cover content from other windows.
- If you have a dual monitor setup to work with, you'll get best results if you run your presentation software on monitor 1 and the output on monitor 2. You can then share the monitor desktop in Zoom.
- Please set the resolution of your shared desktop to 1920x1080 (1080p). Using a higher resolution is not recommended, since this causes issues with the Zoom Webinar streams. Using lower resolution is also not recommended, since the Zoom stream may then put black bars around the shared screen.
- Fast slide switches may not necessarily work well when streaming. It is possible that the upload from your laptop / PC is not fast enough to update the stream completely and so the audience may not see what you wanted to show.
- Please check your Internet connection upload speed before the conference. Anything below about 1Mbit/s upload may cause Zoom to create a lag between the screen sharing and your audio, which will result in a very strange experience for the audience.

Using audio / video in your presentation

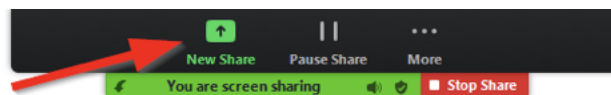
- If you need audio sharing in your presentation (i.e. you're playing a short film sequence or a synthesized sound), please use the special "Share computer audio" option in the Zoom sharing dialog.



- Sharing the audio via your microphone often results in artifacts due to the Zoom speech processing applied to the microphone input.
- If you want to show (full screen) video, you can temporarily switch to the optimization of video clips.



- This should only be done when sharing the video, since it greatly reduces the resolution of the streaming output.
- You can switch between the different modes by clicking on "New Share" in the sharing panel.



General speaker tips you probably already know

Practice!

This is the most important tip of all. The more practice you've had, the better your talk will be. Practice at home, practice saying it out loud, try to find some real people to try it out on friends, family, co-workers, in an online user group or a meetup.

And when you do it, get feedback, get a feeling for what works well and what doesn't, and make changes to improve your talk.

Less reading out bullet points, more excitement

While it is much more forgiving to read from your slides in the online setup, it is still good to look into the camera from time to time and remember the audience. Or if that is too weird, look at the host's video feed if you can, to get a bit of visual feedback. This can make you feel less nervous, talk more naturally and make the session more engaging.

Try to remember why you are interested in the topic in the first place, and channel that sense of wonder and excitement! And then imagine you are explaining that to an old friend so you can have fun together!

Tell a story

Read about The Hero with 1000 Faces. It might be a tech talk and full of facts, but every talk can be made into a story, into a journey. Put yourself in the audience's shoes. Take them on a journey.

Make it fun

Pictures instead of bullet points in slides. Pictures are great. Everyone loves cats. Throw in some jokes. Even bad jokes. Even a really bad pun.

Demos: always have a backup plan

Demos always go wrong. That said, it is probably less stressful to live-code in the online setup since it is a more controlled environment, and you are not physically seeing the burning anticipation of 500 people. And it is more interesting than bullet points. But you might still want to limit the amount, or to put it bluntly, limit how much can go wrong.

Apart from a lot of practice, have a backup plan! Can you prepare a version of the demo with screenshots instead? Or maybe record a live-coding / demo session in advance, so you can play the video if all hell breaks loose.

Keep the pace up

This is hard. Because I want to say “fast-paced talks are better”. But, when you're nervous, you tend to talk fast, and that's bad. Especially because a lot of people (even you!) might not be a native English speaker. So, force yourself to speak slowly and clearly. But! Don't let people get bored.

Instead, know your audience. Try and anticipate what they can guess, don't spend too long on things that are obvious (but remember that what's obvious to you may not be obvious to everyone). If it's obvious where you're going, then get there quickly! But when something is deep or not obvious or counter-intuitive, slow down. Pause. Give people time to realize it's true.

Final tip: relax!