

How to create your own Zoom seminar in these days of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic

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In the days B.C. (before coronavirus), a group of friends would go downtown to attend an event or lecture. During breaks in the event, they could discuss what was heard. Afterwards they could go out to lunch and talk about the event. In the age of COVID-19 that option is no longer available.

The pandemic has eliminated some options but has opened new ones. Visual technologies like Zoom, Skype, etc. have given us more options for group interaction, along with YouTube and other free video media for presenting lectures and concerts. Many organizations have switched from live events to provide livestreamed events using high quality video and audio. Often these livestreamed events are saved in Internet-accessible archives.

This provides an alternative way for a group of friends to attend an event together – a kind of “watch party”. With the availability of these new technologies, they can watch together from around the country or around the world.

If you have the time and want to get together with a few friends, perhaps you can find a Web event that everyone might be interested in and hold your own personal Zoom meeting. For those who want to skip directly to how to go about it, go to **Appendices A, B and C**.

1. Creating your own personal Zoom session of an event during the pandemic

You can create your own personal Zoom session to watch a seminar, concert or other event with your friends during the pandemic. This can provide a great opportunity for friends to get together (virtually) since to attend events in person or dining with friends in restaurants is difficult or impossible.

The personal Zoom seminar is created by having one Zoom participant in your group share a screen window in order to show an event to the rest of the group. A “non-Zoom” event is any video or audio internet presentation that is not being presented with Zoom. Examples are YouTube, Vimeo, Webinar, Web browser videos, podcasts, etc.

If you are sharing the event within your personal Zoom session, you can discuss it using the Chat feature. After the event is finished you and your friends can further discuss the event, regardless of whether they watched it together or independently. This is discussed in more detail in **Appendices A and B**.

So, how do you do it? There are three ways (**I, II, III**) you might share an event using Zoom, as described here.

- I.** Watch the event independently - then create your own Zoom discussion.
- II.** Watch the event simultaneously using the Zoom meeting link provided.
- III.** Watch a “non-Zoom” event within your own personal Zoom meeting.

The detailed instructions for method **III** for the person who will share their screen are described in the **Appendix B**.

2. Where can you find events on the Internet?

There is a wealth of (mostly free) livestream or archived events available on the Internet. A short list of free ongoing future livestream events with links to the Internet is available in **Appendix C**. These include discussions on current topics as well as on past events which have been given at various think tanks and other interesting venues. Livestream events may include webinars, lectures, free concerts, and podcasts, either live or archived. Note that many organizations generally archive past events so people can view them at a later time. Of course, there are other free events, not just those being held in the U.S., but also in other parts of the world.

[Search](#) for free on-line events near your Zip code or city and ye shall find them.

3. On the ethics of sharing material from a paid event site

It must be stressed that because many organizations and artists are struggling during the pandemic, sharing one ticketed event with a group is not ethical. **Don't do it!** There are many free events available, so just search for them. Another option is for everyone to buy a ticket or make a contribution for the ticketed events in order to continue supporting those institutions and artists.

4. What do you do if the event itself is a Zoom presentation?

If the event you want to watch is itself a Zoom presentation, then everyone should simply join that presentation. After that presentation, you can create a *new* personal Zoom meeting with your friends to discuss it (see **Appendix A**). (Note: Zoom does not permit running two different Zoom meetings on the same computer at the same time.)

5. A problem with Zoom's time limit and two solutions

A problem you will encounter is that the free Zoom account limits the session time to 40 minutes. There are two solutions to this problem. (1) When the 40-minute Zoom session times out, quickly start a new personal Zoom meeting, invite the same participants, and then share the screen of the presentation you have been viewing again. This will take about a minute and give you an additional 40-minutes. (2) Upgrade your [Zoom account to a paid license](#) where there is [there is no time limit](#).

[Thanks to a number of people who made great suggestions for improving this document.]

Appendix A.

Three ways to discuss or share an event presentation you will watch

There are three ways (**I, II, III**) to share and discuss an event presentation using Zoom.

I. Watch the event independently - then create your own Zoom discussion:

1. Pick an event topic of interest.
2. Arrange with a few friends to watch it, either independently or together on their own devices.
3. Afterwards, start your own personal Zoom meeting to have a discussion.

II. Watch the event simultaneously using the Zoom meeting link provided:

1. Since the event will take place on Zoom, everyone should get a Zoom link for the event and join that meeting.
2. The Zoom Chat function may or may not be enabled depending on the particular Zoom event. If the Chat function is enabled, participants can discuss the issues directly through the Chat function. However, if the Chat function is not enabled for private chats, your group discussion may have to wait until you are in your own subsequent Zoom meeting.
3. After the presentation is finished, if desired, you could start your own personal Zoom meeting to continue your discussion.

III. Watch a “non-Zoom” event within your own personal Zoom meeting:

(Note: more detailed instructions for method **III** are described in the **Appendix B** for the person who will share their screen.)

1. Start your group’s Zoom meeting.**
2. One of the members of the group may share a “non-Zoom” event within your personal Zoom meeting.
3. This member adjusts their Zoom window (minimize it or make it smaller) and sets the Zoom computer Audio setting to “Same as System”. They then start the “non-Zoom” event and return to their Zoom window. After which they do a Zoom “Share” of the event window they wish to share. They could maximize the event window size to make it easier for everyone’s viewing.
4. If the group is watching a video or listening to a podcast that is archived, the person sharing the “non-Zoom” event can pause it and then let the group members discuss it using their unmuted microphones. Typically, people would speak, raise their hands, or type a message into the Chat window to gain the attention of the person sharing the screen. Then the person sharing their screen may continue the livestream in the shared window after that discussion.

** Use of the Chat function during Screen sharing: If you want the group to be able to chat during the event, then the person sharing their screen should open up the Zoom Chat window and move it to the side of the screen (out of the way). The Chat option will be visible to the rest of the participants.

Appendix B.

Detailed instructions for the person sharing a non-Zoom event in Method III

1. Start your group's Zoom meeting. Alternatively, if another person is acting as host, then have the host give you the Share Screen capability after you have joined their meeting.
2. If you will be using the Chat function during the Zoom session, then you should open up the Zoom Chat window and select the Pop Out option and move it to the side of the screen so it is out of the way.
3. Make sure you have previously set your Zoom computer Audio device in **Audio Settings** to the "**Same as System**" option.
4. Then minimize your Zoom window (or make it smaller) to facilitate starting the event in a separate application window.
5. Then start the event in a new application window while keeping that window visible.
6. If the event window displays a mute button for your microphone, make sure it is muted. Otherwise, any conversation will feed back into the event. (Note: the event mute button is not the same as your personal Zoom meeting mute button.)
7. Then return to your personal Zoom window to access the controls.
8. Now do a **Share** of the particular event application window you wish to share. (Press the green Zoom Share button. In the popup window, select the icon for the application window and then press the blue Share button).
9. Adjust the event volume so it's not too loud. If your group wants to talk during the event, maybe lower the event volume a little.
10. Maximize the event application window size to make it easier for everyone to see.
11. If the group is watching an event that is archived, the person sharing the event can pause it to allow for discussion. To get your attention, people might speak into their microphones, raise their hands, or type into their Chat windows. Then you may continue the livestream in the shared window following the discussion.

Appendix C.

A partial list of free ongoing livestream and archived events

Here is a short partial list of free, ongoing events for various topics, both livestreamed and archived. These events include webinars, lectures, free concerts, etc. Note that many organizations generally archive past events so viewing them in real time is not necessary. Of course, there are many other free events available, not only from in the U.S. but from all around the world.

[Search](#) for free on-line events near your Zip code or city and ye shall find them.

C.1 Mostly non-partisan think tanks* events:

- Brookings Institution <https://www.brookings.edu/events/>
- The Aspen Institute <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/events/>
- Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) <https://www.csis.org/events>
- Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) <https://cdt.org/events/>
- Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) <https://www.cfr.org/event>
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CIEP)
<https://carnegieendowment.org/events>
- Economic Policy Institute (EPI) <https://www.epi.org/multimedia/>
- Center for American Progress (CAP)
https://www.americanprogress.org/?post_type=event
- ...

* [List of think tanks in the United States - Wikipedia](#)

C.2 More conservative think tanks* events:

- American Enterprise Institute <https://www.aei.org/events/>
- Heritage Foundation <https://www.heritage.org/events>
- Hudson Institute <https://www.hudson.org/events>
- Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) <https://www.piie.com/events>
- (Libertarian) Cato Institute <https://www.cato.org/events>
- ...

C.3 Other free events economics, politics, science, etc.

- Washington Post Live events <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-live/>
- NIH Videocast events <https://videocast.nih.gov/>
- Science Magazine Webinars <https://www.sciencemag.org/custom-publishing/webinars>
- Nature Magazine Webinars <https://www.nature.com/search?q=webinars>
- ACM Tech Talks <https://learning.acm.org/techtalks>
- IEEE Webinars <https://innovate.ieee.org/free-webinars-from-ieee/>
- SmithsonianX Free online courses <https://www.edx.org/school/smithsonianx>
- Carnegie Institute upcoming events <https://carnegiescience.edu/events>
- TED talks <https://www.ted.com/talks>
- ...

C.4 Free Courses in many subjects

- Coursera Massive Online Open Courseware <https://www.coursera.org/>
- EdX Massive Online Open Courseware <https://www.edx.org/>
- Road Scholar <https://www.roadscholar.org/virtualllearning>
- The Great Courses <https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/free-video-lectures-from-the-great-courses/>
- NOTE: many universities are also offering free webinars. Do a search.
- ...

C.5 Concerts, museums, streaming free and ticketed**

(** Check the sites for *free* events unless everyone buys a ticket or makes a contribution for the ticketed events to continue helping support those institutions and artists. Concerts could also be cast to “smart” TVs if available.)

- Kennedy Center <https://www.kennedy-center.org/digital-stage>
- Strathmore <https://www.strathmore.org/events-and-tickets/upcoming-events>
- Institute of Musical Traditions <https://youtube.com/IMTfolk> free every other Tuesday (live & archived). Also see IMT's lists of other concerts <https://imtfolk.org/>
- Wolftrap music venue <https://www.wolftrap.org/>
- Taylor Guitar artists <https://blog.taylorguitars.com/taylor-guitars-live-from-home-digest>
- Acoustic Guitar free concerts <https://acousticguitar.com/livestream-acoustic-guitar-online-events-calendar-for-virtual-gathering-while-social-distancing-2/>
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art <https://www.metmuseum.org/events/programs/met-speaks/free-lectures>
- 12 World-Class Museums You Can Visit Online <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/75809/12-world-class-museums-you-can-visit-online>
- Virtual Museum Tours, Performances, and Tutorials to Keep You (and Your Kids) Entertained at Home <https://www.afar.com/magazine/virtual-museum-tours-live-performances-and-classes-to-enjoy-during-self-quarantine>
- ...

C.6 Interesting podcasts for personal finance, psychology, politics and more

- Ritholtz's Masters In Business podcasts https://www.bloomberg.com/podcasts/masters_in_business
- Bogleheads on Investing podcasts <https://bogleheads.podbean.com/>
- Morningstar podcasts <https://www.morningstar.com/podcasts>
- Farnam Street 'Knowledge Project' podcasts <https://fs.blog/knowledge-project/>
- NY Times The Daily podcasts <https://www.nytimes.com/column/the-daily>
- NY Times Kara Swisher's Sway podcasts <https://www.nytimes.com/column/sway>
- WAMU Diane Rehm On My Mind podcasts <https://dianerehm.org>
- Listen Notes podcast provider with hundreds of podcasts on a variety of subjects <https://www.listennotes.com/best-podcasts/>
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