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How to use Zoom like a pro: 15 video chat tips and tricks to try today

Alison DeNisco Rayome

10-12 minutes



Sarah Tew/CNET

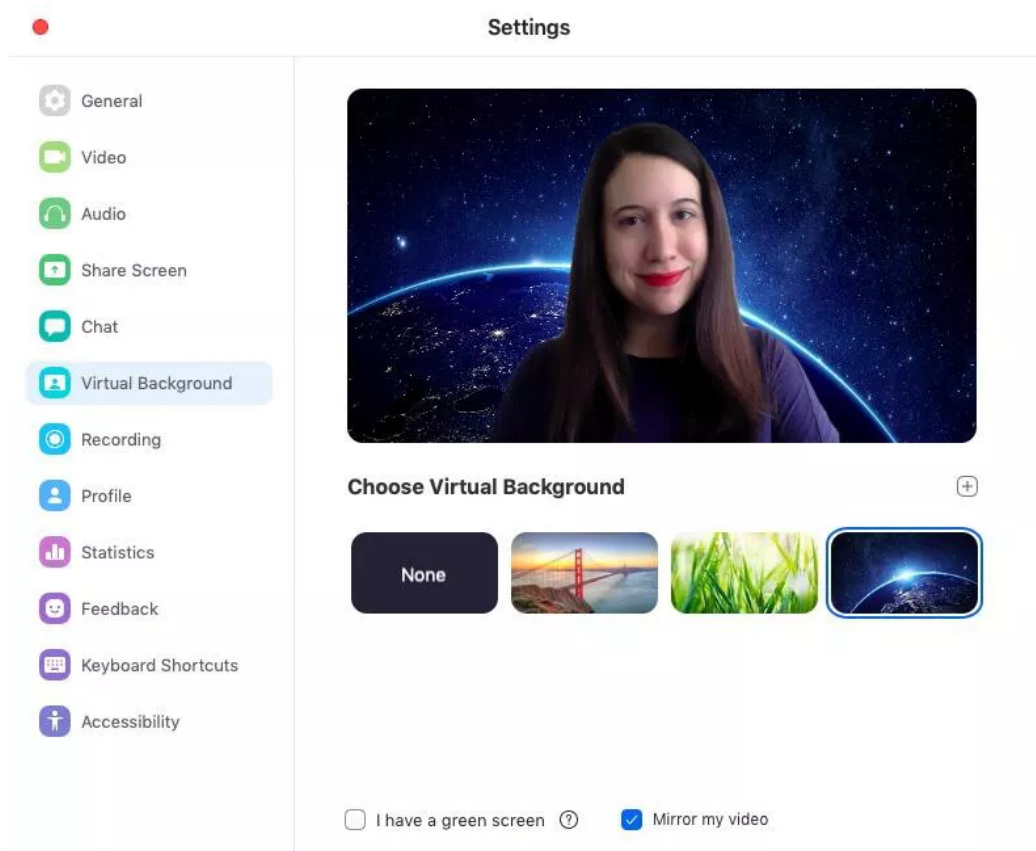
The [Zoom video meeting](#) and [chat app](#) has become the [wildly popular](#) host to millions of people [working](#) and [studying](#) from home during the [coronavirus](#) pandemic. Despite a [number of privacy and security issues](#) that arose alongside the platform's rapid growth, it now features [end-to-end encryption](#) and other ways to [protect your account and your chats from Zoombombing](#) and other privacy flaws. The platform also recently added a [marketplace for virtual events](#), and is testing app integrations such as Slack and Dropbox.

Whether you've been using Zoom for years or have only just signed up in 2020, there are a number of helpful and fun tips, tricks and hidden features you can find to upgrade your video chatting experience and [make your video meetings a little less weird](#).

Here are 15 ways to become a Zoom master.

Read more: [Ultimate webcam tips: How to look and sound great online](#)

1. Change your background



Change your Zoom background to space, or a custom photo.

Screenshot by Alison DeNisco Rayome/CNET

Virtually transport yourself to the beach, outer space or anywhere else you can imagine by customizing your background while on Zoom calls -- everyone's doing it these days. You can read our [step-by-step guide to changing your Zoom background](#) on the [desktop](#) and [mobile](#) app, but basically you go to **Settings > Virtual Background** and select or upload the image you want from there. However, you do have to make sure that your system [meets all of the requirements](#) to do so.

Read more: [10 free Zoom alternative apps for video chats](#)

2. Mute your audio and turn off your camera by default

Diving for the mute audio and camera buttons as soon as you enter a meeting can get old. Keep your coworkers from seeing your bedhead or hearing your cat screeching by turning those off by default. To do it, go to **Settings > Audio > Mute microphone when joining a meeting**, and then **Settings > Video > Turn off my video when joining a meeting**.

Keep track of the coronavirus pandemic.

3. Mute and unmute with the space bar

When you are called on to speak, stop scrambling to click the microphone button. You can press and hold the spacebar to quickly mute and unmute your mic, right from your keyboard.

Read more: [Zoom, Skype, FaceTime: 11 tips for your video chat apps](#)

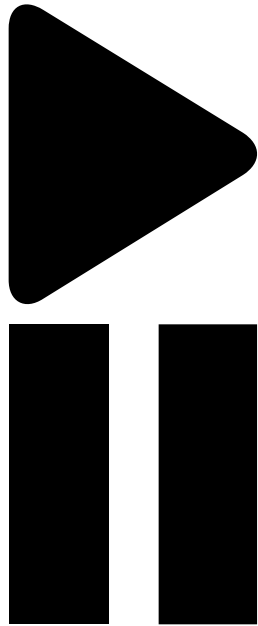
4. Turn on the beauty filter

At this point, if you know all of the [work from home advice](#) about getting dressed and ready like it's a regular work day, but still don't think you're looking your best, Zoom's Touch Up My Appearance feature may be for you. The filter aims to smooth over your appearance, making you look dewy and well-rested. If you've ever used beauty mode on your phone's selfie camera, you know what you're getting.

To turn it on, click the **up arrow** next to Start Video. Click **Video Settings**, and under My Video, check the box for **Touch Up My Appearance**.

5. Set up a waiting room for added privacy

You've probably heard about [Zoombombing](#) -- when uninvited guests crash your Zoom meeting and disrupt it. One way to help prevent this from happening is by enabling the Waiting Room feature, so you can see who's attempting to join the meeting before allowing them access. To do so, go to **Account Management > Account Settings**. Click on **Meeting**, then click **Waiting Room** to enable the setting. (We've got more tips on [how to prevent Zoombombing in your meetings](#) here.)



Now playing: Watch this: Weekend Zoom calls have exploded. Here's how the company...



20:59

6. Create breakout rooms for smaller group discussion

Split your big Zoom meeting into up to 50 separate smaller sessions with breakout rooms. The meeting host can choose to split meeting participants into separate sessions automatically or manually, or can let participants select and enter any breakout session they like. The host can switch between sessions at any point.

To start a breakout room as the host, go to **Account Management > Account Settings**. Under the **Meeting tab**, go to **Breakout Room**, and make sure the setting is toggled on. You'll also see the option to allow meeting hosts to preassign participants to breakout rooms. (If the Breakout Room option is grayed out, that means it's been locked, and you need to contact your Zoom administrator.)

7. Share your screen

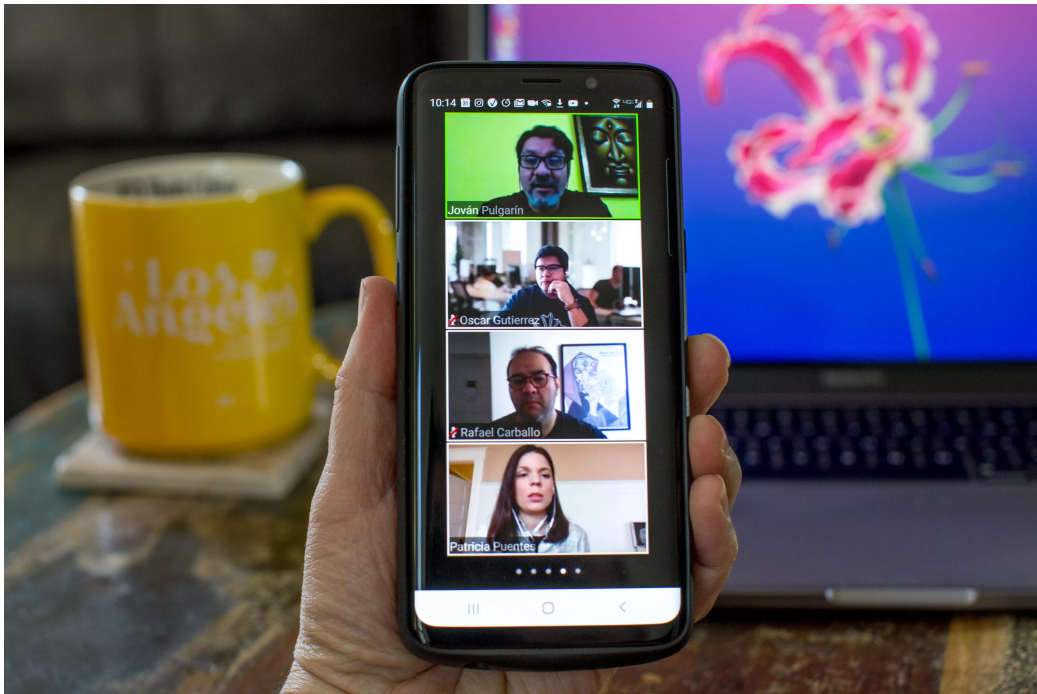
Share your screen for a Zoom meeting (or to watch a movie or play a game) with other participants by clicking the **Share screen icon** on the toolbar at the bottom of the meeting screen. You'll have the option to share your entire desktop, or just one of the windows you have open. Click the red **Stop Share** button at the top of the screen to go back to being a normal participant in the meeting.

8. React with emoji on screen

If you're muted in a meeting, you can still let the hosts know your thoughts with emoji reactions. Send a thumbs up or a clapping emoji to communicate without interrupting the meeting (by default, those reactions have a yellow skin tone, but you can customize that on the Zoom desktop app).

To react during a meeting, click the Reactions tab at the bottom of the meeting screen (it's in the same panel as mute audio and video, to the right) and choose the one you want. Emoji will disappear after 5 seconds.

If the meeting organizer enables the nonverbal feedback feature, participants can place an icon such as a raised hand next to their name to communicate. Every participant will be able to see each other's feedback.



Use Zoom on your phone or computer.

Angela Lang/CNET

9. Learn handy keyboard shortcuts

For those who don't like clicking around their screen, Zoom has a ton of helpful keyboard shortcuts to help you navigate the app on your desktop without using your mouse. Find commands to join a meeting, start or stop recording, enter full screen and share your screen (more on that below). Check out [Zoom's full list of hot keys and keyboard shortcuts](#).

10. Turn on gallery view

Gallery view lets you see everyone in the meeting at once, instead of just the person speaking. To turn that on, click the tab that says "Gallery view" in the top right corner. If the meeting has 49 or fewer attendees, you'll see all of their screens displayed on one page. If there are more, you'll have the option to move between multiple pages. Change it back by clicking "Speaker view" in that same top right corner.

11. Hide nonvideo participants

On a larger call, your screen can get cluttered with participants, which can be distracting, especially if some don't have their cameras on. Hide the participants who aren't using video by going to **Settings > Video > Meetings**, and check **Hide nonvideo participants**. Now you'll only be distracted by [your co-workers' pets and children](#) who appear on video.

12. Record the meeting to your computer

Both free and paid Zoom subscribers can record their meeting to their laptop or computer using the desktop app (you can't record on mobile at the moment, unless you have a paid account -- keep reading for more on that). Those recorded files can then be uploaded to a [file storage service](#) such as [Google Drive](#) or [Dropbox](#), or a video streaming service such as YouTube or Vimeo.

To enable local recording, go to **Settings > Recording**, and toggle it on. When you're hosting a Zoom meeting, click the **Record** icon on the bottom toolbar.



Zoom lets you keep your camera and mic muted automatically when you join a meeting, if you want to.

Angela Lang/CNET

13. Record a meeting to the cloud

If you have one of Zoom's paid plans (which [start at \\$15 a month](#)), you can take a recording that will save directly to the cloud (or to your computer if you prefer). Tap the record button on the bottom toolbar, and you'll have the option to make it either local or in the cloud. You can do this on either desktop or mobile.

14. Host a group meeting longer than 40 minutes

On Zoom's free basic tier, group meetings can only last up to 40 minutes (though one-on-one meetings are unlimited in time). To get unlimited group time, upgrade to a paid account. (However, for Thanksgiving, [Zoom has removed the 40 minute time limit](#) for free accounts, so your virtual family gatherings won't be cut short.)

15. Host more than 100 people

If you have a group of more than 100 people to host for work or school, you have to upgrade to a paid professional account. If you upgrade to the highest tier (Enterprise Plus), you can host up to 1,000 participants.

For more tips to help get you through [social distancing and self-quarantine](#), check out whether you should [use Zoom or Skype for working from home](#), our [guide to everything you need to stay healthy and entertained while practicing social distancing](#), and [all of the practical tips to help avoid coronavirus when you leave the house](#).

Watch our video on how to make your webcam video look and sound great online and make sure to subscribe to the [How To Do It All channel](#) on YouTube for more how to videos.



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