Preparing for an online event

Make sure you know your platform
The platform you use really impacts the preparation you do as an organizer. Make sure you know if you need a meeting ID and passcode, or a waiting room, to get into your meeting. If you share the account with others, make sure you schedule the event ahead of time to minimize schedule conflicts.

Set up the call so that everyone is muted when they come in
This allows for a little more control for you as the host. While scheduling the event, you have the option of using computer audio only (i.e., everyone needs to be on a computer, tablet, or phone) or allowing participants to call in using a landline or cell phone. If you will be showing slides and videos, it is recommended that you offer the computer audio only option.

As host, **you have the option of limiting webcam use to presenters and turning off annotating/scribbling when you share your screen**. You can disable the participant cameras as they enter the room.

Prepare your extra features
This includes slides, polls, small groups, videos, and any other logistics of your presentation ahead of time. **Practice on your platform** so you know which buttons to push and you can save time during your event.

Ensure your microphone and video are hooked up properly so participants can hear and see you. The microphone and speakers of your computer will not deliver the best audio and video for the participants. It is recommended that you at least use earbuds/headphones. To enhance the quality further, consider using a standalone webcam and microphone.

Whenever possible, **use a wired internet connection** instead of Wi-Fi for the presenters.

Prepare your background space and ensure that lighting is good (so your whole face isn't backlit or in shadow). Some platforms allow the use of virtual backgrounds.

Determine who needs to have "hosting" capabilities ahead of time (for example, if your event will have a guest speaker or facilitators, consider making them co-hosts or so they can manage the slides, participants, etc.).

Decide who the facilitator of the event will be - they will act as emcee, gatekeeper (if you are using a waiting room feature), timekeeper, and they will give introductions of any other speakers you have on the call. The facilitator can also field the questions from the chat window so that the presenters do not need to read through the conversations. It is best if the facilitator is also not the presenter.

Decide if you will be recording the session to share with those who are unable to attend. This is a double-edged sword because if participants know beforehand that

the session will be recorded, they may not show up during the actual time of the event. Also, be sure the presenters have given permission to be recorded.

When sending the meeting link to participants, **consider including instructions** to prepare them for how you would like them to participate, such as:

> *Upon entering the room, please rename yourself in the Participant Window with your FIRST and LAST NAME, and keep your mic MUTED.*
>
> *To reduce bandwidth, use the CHAT feature to ask questions anytime during the session. We will have an opportunity to activate our mics and cameras later on during the training.*
>
> *We highly recommend using earbuds or a headset to minimize feedback echo from your computer speakers.*
>
> *Whenever possible, attend the session from a PC/Mac instead of a smartphone, tablet, or Chromebook (since these devices have some feature limitations), and use the Zoom Meeting Client instead of just your web browser. Download the official Zoom Client for Meetings at this link [INSERT LINK HERE]. As of the sending of this message, the most current version is [INSERT VERSION HERE].*

Whenever possible, **it is ideal if event organizers can rehearse** in front of a sample audience or with the team. A dry run could help rule out a lot of preventable tech/organizational mishaps.

- *For events where there is only one speaker/host*, get a couple of people together to get familiar with the platform and make sure basic things are functional (e.g. make sure your internet connection is stable, mic levels are good, practice sharing your slide deck and computer audio, check out your lighting, etc.).
- *For events that have multiple speakers/presenters*, schedule a dry run with them to make sure they know how to use the platform and that they are running the show at a level that is acceptable for our standards. This is also a good opportunity for them to make sure that everything is functional on their end (e.g., internet connection, audio levels, screen sharing, audio sharing, etc.).