Using Zoom on a computer

This tutorial will show you how to use Zoom on a desktop or laptop computer. The process is the same on either type of device. (It also doesn't matter if you are using Windows or a Mac computer.)

Getting Started

To use Zoom on a computer you will need Internet access and a webcam and microphone. If you are on a laptop the camera and microphone are usually built in. (Some business laptops don't have webcams and you will need to get an external webcam if using one of those.)

On a desktop computer you will need an external webcam and a microphone of some type. A lot of webcams have microphones built in. If you have one that doesn't, or if you want a better microphone you can get a separate external microphone that connects to the microphone port on the computer or use a headset with a microphone.

For most meetings you will receive an email with the information or use a meeting ID that was posted on a flyer.

A meeting ID looks like this: 610 584 0059.

If a passcode is needed it will be listed as well. It will be six numbers and look something like this: 488108.

This is what an emailed meeting invite looks like:

Topic: Seal Resident Council meeting
Time: Jan 19, 2021 04:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6105840059?pwd=VnNVYkEzd3JRSUxVdXo2VHhOU0taZz09

Meeting ID: 610 584 0059
Passcode: 481516
One tap mobile
+13126266799,,6105840059#,,,,*481516# US (Chicago)
+16465588656,,6105840059#,,,,*481516# US (New York)

Dial by your location
        +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
        +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
        +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)
   +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
        +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)
        +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
Find your local number: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kZNuMRAS4

You can click on the meeting link in the emailed invitation or enter the meeting ID into the Zoom app. If you don't have the app on your computer, clicking on the link will prompt you to download and install it. This only takes a couple minutes and then you will be taken right to the meeting.
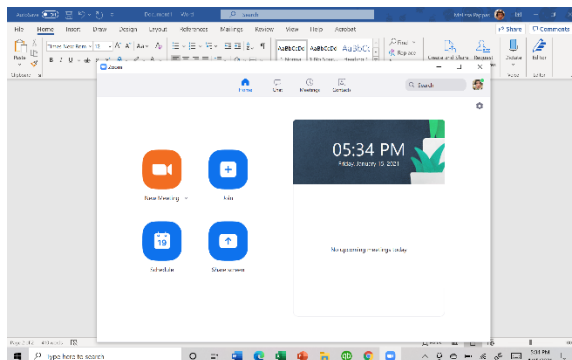
If you have the app installed you will get a prompt like this:
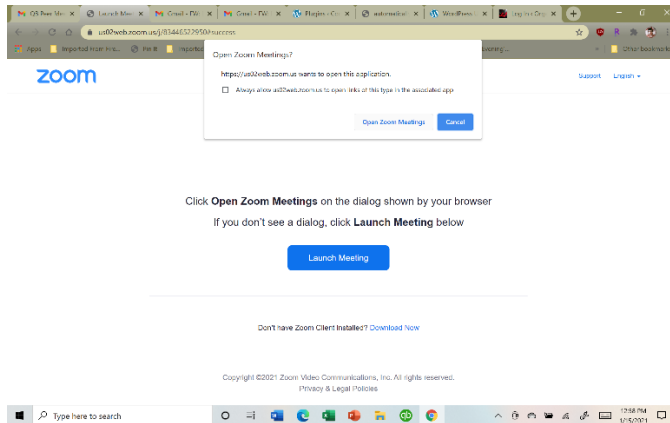
Click "Open Zoom Meetings" or click on the blue "Launch Meeting" button. (This is generally used if the popup box doesn't show for some reason.)
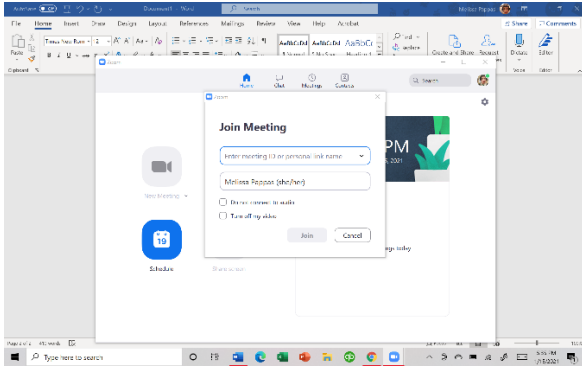
You also can open the Zoom app directly and enter the meeting ID.

This is the screen you get when you open the Zoom app.

Click on the blue "Join" button.

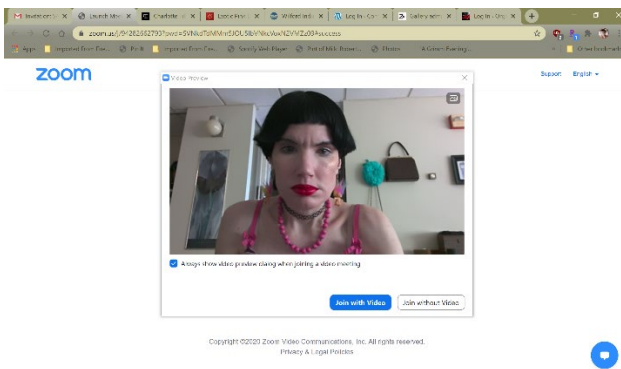A box will pop up, prompting you to enter the meeting ID.

 Type in the meeting ID. If you are not logged into a Zoom account you will also need to type in your name. (Or whatever you want your display name to be. It is usually helpful to use your real name.)

Click the "Join" button.

If a passcode is required you will be prompted to enter it now.

You will then be taken to the meeting.

 You will be given the option to join with or without video. (In most cases. On occasion a host will set it so all meeting attendees join with video off. You can turn your video on after you join in those cases.)

The last thing you need to do is set your audio option.
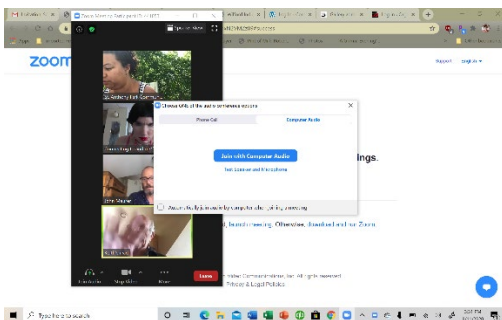
 Joining with computer audio is recommended. You can use video on your computer and also call into the meeting from a phone but it doesn't always work as well as computer audio. (It is a good option if you don't have a microphone though.)

You are now in the meeting.

On a computer you have two choices of view. Speaker view and gallery view. Speaker view makes the person speaking largest on the screen and minimizes the other meeting attendees. Gallery view shows everyone in equally sized boxes. It's up to you which you choose. I prefer gallery view when chairing a meeting because you can see all attendees at once and it makes it easier for things like taking a vote.

 This is speaker view. As you can see, non-speaking attendees are minimized along the top of the screen. (It also doesn't show all attendees if there are more than 6 or 7.)
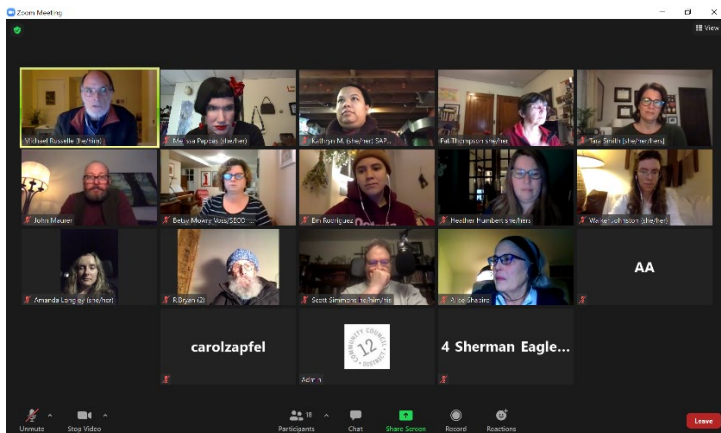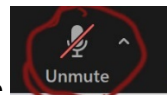
 This is gallery view. All attendees are visible. (If there are a large number of attendees some of them may not be visible on the first screen.)
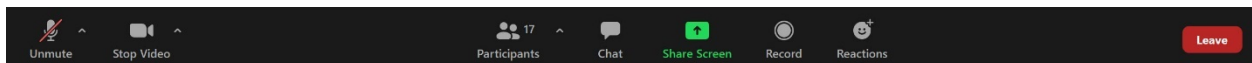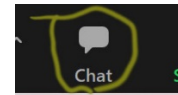

This is the Zoom toolbar. It usually appears at the bottom of the screen. If you don't see it there (generally because it disappears after a few moments), just move your mouse and it will come back.

The buttons you will be using most are **mute/unmute** and **chat**.

It is good practice to keep yourself muted in a meeting unless you are speaking. This minimized distractions from background noise. You just click on the mute button to turn off your microphone. When you do so it will change from "mute" to "unmute" as shown above. Click on it again and it will unmute you.

The chat button allows you to type comments or questions to others in the meeting.

This is what the chat window looks like.
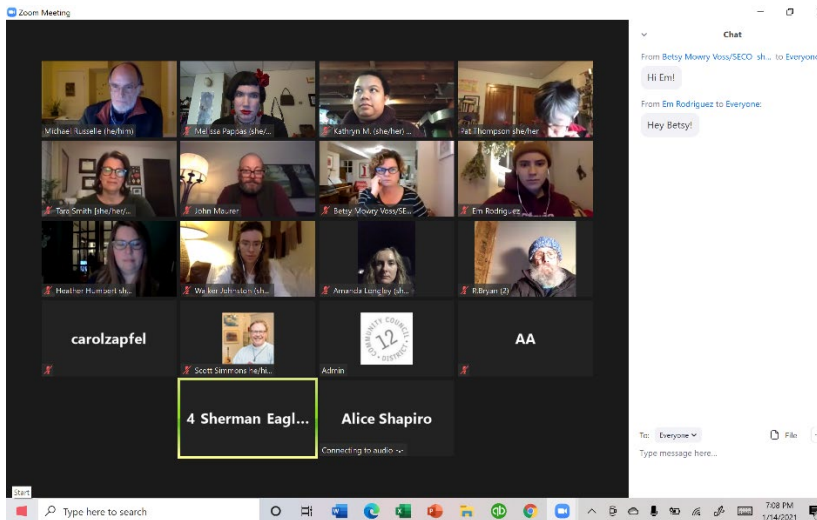
 It can be docked at one side of the screen or appear as a pop up box elsewhere. I prefer it docked because it doesn't block the view of the other participants or the screen if something is being shared.
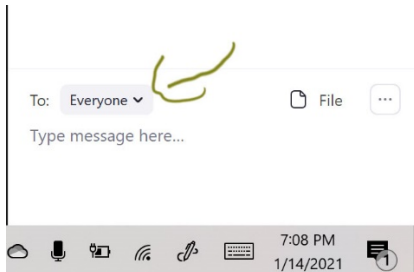
 This shows where you type your message. If you look at the arrow you will see a drop down menu. This lets you choose who you want to send the message to. You can send to everyone in the meeting or just to a particular person or several people.

Chat is handy if you have questions during a meeting. You can put your question out while it is fresh in your mind and without interrupting someone or disrupting the meeting. The questions can be answered at an appropriate time. (Or answered in chat as well.)
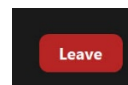
The other main button you will be using is the **leave** button. Click on this button to leave a meeting. You don't have to do this if the host ends the meeting for all participants. (This is common but doesn't happen all the time.)

Other useful things to know

Screen sharing:

There is the option to share your screen with all the meeting attendees. Generally this is turned off for participants by the host. (Usually to avoid someone sharing offensive content.) You likely won't be sharing your screen during a Residents Council meeting. You may see screens shared at other meetings though. (Presidents Council and RPC, for example.)

This is what a screen share looks like.

 The person sharing the screen controls the content. You are just able to view it.

Screen sharing is useful for things like showing documents to a group and watching a video together.

There also is the option to record Zoom meetings. This will usually be limited to the Secretary or another designated officer. Recordings are made to assist with minute taking.