

UJAMAA GRANDMAS Virtual Meetings Tips for Facilitators, Attendees and other Folks

Welcome to the world of virtual meetings for UJAMAA GRANDMAS (UG)!

Video meetings, like any in-person meetings, are best when the participants practice good group discussion skills. Video meetings, because of the nature of the technology, demand a higher level of adherence to these practices, forcing more formality. This means that meeting organizers need to carefully assess what can be accomplished with the expected size and nature of the group. Generally, on video conferences, smaller sized groups can be the most effective in addressing complex issues and/or achieving more open-ended free flowing dialogue.

This document is meant for both the person new to virtual meetings as well as for those familiar with online meetings who are seeking some additional tips.

Tips for Participants

Lighting

- Natural or warm lighting works best.
- Avoid back-lit situations such as a bright light or window behind you. Have a light source (such as a lamp or window) in front of you, ideally just behind your camera.

Position (you and your camera)

- Position your computer camera at eye level. This may require using a few books or a small box to raise your whole computer.
- Sit a comfortable distance away from the camera. We should be able to see your whole head and shoulders.
- When speaking, look directly into the camera as much as you can, so it looks like you are speaking directly to the other participants.
- A simple background is best to keep the attention on you.

Sound

- Find a quiet spot away from distracting noises.
- If you are a speaker, external headphones or a microphone can help ensure that your voice is clearly broadcast. These are not necessary if they are not available.
- Close any programs running in the background on your computer to avoid any unexpected chimes and alerts
- Depending on the size of the group, you may wish to mute yourself whenever you are not speaking (top corner of your picture or down at the bottom left on the main screen). However, for small informal meetings,

muting may merely interrupt conversation flow with people saying “Judy, you are muted”.

During the Meeting

- During the meeting, you can hide your view of yourself if you wish. Others will still be able to see you.
- To determine how many people you see at once, click on the 3 dots (...) at the top of your screen to switch between speaker or gallery view.
- If you are using a generic name for your computer (e.g., “my office computer”), change your name for the duration of the call. Zoom has options to change your name, background, etc.
- **Chat feature:** you can chat with the entire group or you can target your comment to a specific panelist or attendee (use the small arrow to access the drop-down menu of names).
- **Reaction option:** There is a reaction icon on the toolbar where you can add a “thumbs up” or “clap” beside your image to communicate your approval or appreciation. (It will stay in the corner of your photo for a few seconds and then automatically disappear).
- If someone is sharing their screen with you, you can change the size by clicking “View options” at the top of their screen. In the drop-down menu, click “Change Zoom Ratio” and select a size that works for you. You will be able to move the page around without altering what others see.

First time tips

Before you begin the first time, test your computer:

- Test your lighting by using the camera on your computer (you can find a camera app on your computer or in the settings of your Zoom app)
- Test your appearance and position by using the camera, as above.
- Ensure that your sound is working using the test feature provided.
- If you are unfamiliar with Zoom here’s a fun, little document to help become comfortable in using Zoom. Click [here](#)

Tips for Facilitators and Hosts

Booking meetings

- **Check the schedule:** When you schedule a meeting, there's a tab in the Zoom account called "My Meetings" that lists all the meetings currently scheduled.
- **Meeting Name:** If you have several people using the same online licence, include the Committee name and/or organizing person's name in the meeting name. Then if there are conflicting meetings, everyone will know who to call to sort it out.
- **Allow a time buffer:** Because online meetings tend to naturally extend past the booked time, allow at least one hour between online meetings to allow the previous meeting to go a bit longer before the next meeting begins. This also allows time the host/organizer of the next meeting to login early to ensure the set-up is working appropriately.
- **Recurring meetings:** It saves time to use the recurring booking feature. Then you can send invitations to the whole series with one email.

Inviting participants

- **Meeting Access code:** Once you have the meeting booked, your meeting will have its own unique access code and password. Share the meeting information with those who you expect to attend the meeting.
- **Reminders:** Consider sending a reminder to attendees with the Zoom information within 24 hours of the meeting.
- **Social Media--Important!** Do **not** share any meeting access information on social media or on any website. The last thing we need is for any meeting to be "bombed" by someone with a malicious intent or a practical joker who somehow has access to the meeting information. Take care in using e-News letters when sharing meeting access information.

Online Meeting Etiquette and Defaults

Some meeting defaults are in place on our account. You can change any of these defaults for your meeting. Some defaults to consider:

- **Password:** Require a password to join a meeting
- **Waiting Room:** Consider using the "waiting room" feature. Anyone who wants to join the meeting will wait to be admitted by the host.
- If your meetings are with close colleagues, you may want to allow your colleagues to join the meeting without waiting and perhaps prior to the host joining the meeting.
- **Audio and video:** Do you want these turned on when people enter the meeting? You may want these features turned off or on depending on the group preference or the type of meeting. You can customize these settings for your meeting.
- **Chat:** Do you want to enable chat? You may wish to encourage people to use the chat feature.
- **Non-verbal feedback:** can be fun and useful. They can be used for informal voting.

Facilitating and Hosting

- **Share Screen:** Depending on the type of meeting, you can allow anyone to share their screen with pertinent documents or you can restrict this to the host only.
- **Understand your audience.** Be aware of the constraints of the participants before you announce ground rules that could cause embarrassment. Are some participants unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the technology? Is it impossible for some people to find a quiet space? Do some have poor internet connections or unreliable computers? Are some calling from a phone? Are there any hearing or speaking difficulties?
- **Agenda:** Create and share the meeting agenda, preferably prior to the meeting.
- **Co-hosts** can be helpful in facilitating good meeting flow particularly with a large group. It's difficult to facilitate the discussion while paying attention to the technical aspects. Your co-host can handle any technical questions, admit people, monitor the chat room for questions, take notes and can take turns with the host in facilitating topics.
- Breakout rooms, a pre-assigned recorder and worksheets handouts distributed ahead of time work well to keep people engaged. Use your creativity to create an ice-breaker to begin the meeting and set the tone
- Some participants might be hesitant and unsure if their points are valid. In an in-person meeting, there are various ways for people to check in with each other to compose their ideas and for the facilitator to recognize from body language that someone has something to say. With the limits of technology, be aware that some might be waiting for a pause in the conversation to add their points. Often the agenda shifts to the next topic, silencing those who still wish to speak.
- A caution: Some of the most spontaneous conversations occur without structure "the more structure, the less dialogue".
- Consider facilitating smaller and shorter meetings so people can develop ideas between sessions. Many smaller sessions take more time but can yield better results.
- Video meetings are more tiring than in-person meetings. Good self-care would suggest limiting the amount of time one spends each day on video conferences.
- Include lots of breaks and different activities to keep people engaged. For example, consider voice-only group calls as a break. Some suggest that voice alone can be a more effective communication channel than video.

Hosting Large Meetings (10 people or more)

- **Participant Expectations:** Send out Zoom protocols in advance or discuss these at the start of the meeting - how to ask questions, etc.
- **Speaker:** if you are the main speaker/presenter/chair, invite someone else to be the Zoom co-host.
- **Spotlight Function:** If you have a speaker, consider using the Spotlight function to highlight the speaker(s). This prevents anyone who makes a small comment like "good point" from taking over the speaker view.

Some Tech tips

- **Chat comments:** Use the chat box for questions and quick messages to the whole group. The co-host can monitor the chat and bring important points to the main speaker's attention. You can also use the chat function to share a document in real time.
- **Video options:**
 - With a panel or speaker and a large audience, consider turning the video off for everyone except the panel or speakers. Then the speakers will appear at the top of everyone's screens.
 - For a large group, turning off the video may be needed if bandwidth is limited.
- **Recording meetings:** Recordings can be beneficial for the person taking notes and for including those who could not attend the main meeting. Inform your audience before you begin to record in case anyone has any objections. Consider mentioning the plans to record in the agenda.
- **Screen names and renaming:**
 - Encourage people to rename themselves with their real name on their screen name, so that anyone who is new can be comfortable. You might need to remind participants how to do that. Let them know that the name change is temporary for this meeting only.
 - The meeting host should also rename themselves if they are using a generic account.
 - Hint: To change your screen name, click on the three dots next to your picture and select "Rename". The host can rename anyone (similar to mute).
- You can use the rename function to keep some people at the top of the participants list, to identify speakers or any other special persons by putting an asterisk in front of their name – e.g., “*Jane Doe”.
- **Tips on Muting participants:**
 - As the meeting host, you can mute everyone to improve the sound quality. It is courteous to inform them that you are doing so.
 - If you have more than about a dozen people attending your meeting, consider asking participants to mute themselves unless they are speaking. This improves the sound quality for everyone.
 - If appropriate, set the meeting to "mute all on entry" when creating the meeting.
 - The host can mute anyone in the call. Some people forget to re-mute themselves after speaking, and/or opening their mic to ask a question. The ambient noise builds with too many mic's open. Consider assigning the “mute” role to a co-host to mute people who forget to turn off their microphone.
- **Screen Sharing:**
 - Click on which window you would like to share (full screen, just a window, whiteboard, etc.).
 - Limit the number of tabs open during your share screen.
 - ** NOTE: If you want to share a video to others, click “share computer sound”. If not, there will be major reverb.

- You may want to restrict the Sharing Screen option or you may want to open it widely, depending on the type of meeting.
- If you are seeking informal visual sharing (e.g., hand-made diagrams or handcrafts), ask people to send their pictures or presentation in advance so the facilitator can arrange a seamless sharing option (e.g., PowerPoint or Google Slides). Trying to hold items up to a camera is not a good option.
- **Breakout Rooms:** This is a useful feature for engagement and conversation. If your meeting lends itself to breakout discussions.
- **Polling:**
 - You can set the poll questions (in Zoom) prior to the meeting. You can launch the poll any time in the meeting. You can share the results or keep them for yourself.
 - The host or co-host can create a poll “on the fly” during the meeting through the host’s navigation bar, although this can be time consuming.
- **Whiteboard**
 - Click Share Screen and select the “Whiteboard” screen option.
 - The annotation tools will appear automatically. You can press the Whiteboard option in the meeting controls to show or hide them.
 - Use the page controls in the bottom-right corner of the whiteboard to create new pages and switch between pages.
 - Note: Only the participant or host that started sharing the whiteboard has access to create and switch pages.
- **Testing the tools:** If your audience is unfamiliar with the technology, consider offering a no-agenda Zoom practice sessions, where people could try out features and figure how they want to use the technology.
- When exploring various features, it’s fun to test them in advance with a friendly group.

More resources and video tutorials can be found at the Zoom Help Center:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

Limitations of your account

UJAMAA GRANDMAS has an online Zoom account with full features. The UG account allows for 24-hour meetings with up to 100 participants. If you have a large meeting, consider whether a webinar might work better for your meeting. If you are using a different platform or program, your app might have different features and capabilities.

Need help or have suggestions?

Above all, relax and enjoy this opportunity to meet with colleagues and contacts. We are all learning this together! If you have any additional ideas to include in these guidelines, please contact message@ujamaagrاندmas.com with your suggestions or to request assistance.

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