The Innovative Instructor

Technology

Zoom
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Center for
Educational Resources

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What it is
Zoom is a cloud based platform for collaborating, conferencing, and meeting online. Zoom is easy to use and has a modern design with extensive mobile compatibility. Users can share presentations and the contents of their screens as well as view multiple simultaneous audio and video streams of meeting participants.

Who produced it
Zoom was founded in 2011 with the intent to create a "frictionless environment" for video communication online. Since then, Zoom has become one of the leading online conferencing platforms for businesses and organizations. Johns Hopkins University entered into an enterprise license agreement with Zoom in 2019.

Why it matters
Zoom helps to minimize the logistical and geographical barriers to collaboration—research partners, colleagues, and students can work together and communicate from anywhere in the world.

Zoom improves on the collaboration tools previously made available to JHU users through Adobe Connect. When compared to Adobe Connect, Zoom is easier to use, has a streamlined interface, and is fully compatible with modern browsers and mobile devices. As of now, meetings can no longer be held using JHU's access to Adobe Connect. In December, 2019 Adobe Connect will be retired completely from JHU's collaboration platform offerings.

How it can be used
Zoom's simplified approach to online collaboration lends itself to a variety of use cases for faculty. Some of the most common scenarios for using Zoom at JHU include the following:

Online office hours: You can set up a recurring meeting to replace or augment in-person office hours, and you can record and share those meetings with the entire class. Students can participate without creating an account.

Online course synchronous meetings: When teaching an online class, you can have your students view or participate in an online meeting you are hosting. You can also record and archive this type of synchronous session.

Remote teaching: You can conduct your class even while away at a conference or any other commitment that would normally force you to cancel it.

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Collaboration with fellow researchers: Host a research meeting and share files or screens among collaborators whether affiliated with JHU or not.

Interviews: It is often difficult to find a time when everyone in your lab or department can get together for interviews. Conduct an online interview to simplify the scheduling process and minimize the need to travel.

Remote work accommodation: Every year, the number of JHU employees who have flexible work schedules, work-at-home, or work remotely increases. Interacting with remote employees using Zoom simplifies scheduling and provides a consistent workspace for meetings.

How to get started

If you are using Zoom as a meeting participant, getting started is easy. Each Zoom meeting has a Meeting ID (9, 10, or 11 digit number). Zoom meeting invitations usually include a link in the notification email, but you can also select "Join Meeting" from http://jh.zoom.us and enter the Meeting ID. On mobile, simply start the app, enter the meeting ID to join. Meeting participants do not need a paid account to use Zoom.

Zoom does offer free accounts that allow hosting, but those accounts are limited in meeting duration and features. If you are hosting meetings, you should sign up for a Pro Account from JHU's Zoom license (http://t.jh.edu/ZoomSignUp). A Pro account allows you to host meetings with nearly unlimited duration, up to 300 people, full recording capabilities, and custom meeting URLs. A Pro account has a monthly expense that can be funded through SAP. If you decide to get a Pro account, you should use the JHU Pro account, and not sign up for one independently. The JHU Pro account is integrated with your JHED ID, has more features, and costs less than a normal pro account.

After you've signed up for a Pro account and logged in, you can get started with one click using your Personal Meeting ID, which can be customized. You can also pre-schedule meetings either as a one-time or recurring meeting. Either the Personal Meeting ID or a pre-scheduled meeting allows you to publish a persistent Meeting ID and link, making it easy for your participants to join your meeting.

When you host a meeting with your Pro account, you have control over many aspects of the experience. Some of these optional controls allow you to:

- require a password to join the meeting.
- start/stop recording or set the meeting to record automatically.
- enable participants to enter a waiting room before the meeting starts.
- mute everyone on entry (for a more presentation-style meeting).
- invite or remove meeting participants.

Other Thoughts

Like most web-based collaboration tools, Zoom allows you to share audio and video from your computer or mobile device with others online. In addition, Zoom allows you to share:

- your entire desktop, part of your screen, or videos playing on your screen.
- your phone or tablet screen.
- a Powerpoint & Keynote presentations (Presenter View possible).
- multiple webcams connected to the host computer (such as, document cameras).
- a collaborative Whiteboard for visually working through ideas.

Zoom also allows for other forms of collaborative communication, such as:

- remotely controlling a shared desktop computer (to demonstrate software, for instance).
- writing within text chat window, with the ability to save chat histories.
- using simplified non-verbal feedback buttons (thumbs up/down, speaker faster/slower, etc.)
- providing simple polling questions for participants.
- creating breakout rooms for group work.
- recording meetings to a local file or online with captions to be shared after the meeting.

Additional Resources

- IT@JH Zoom Help: https://uis.jhu.edu/zoom
- Main JHU Zoom Site: https://jh.zoom.us
- Sign up for a Pro Account: http://t.jh.edu/ZoomSignUp
- Getting Started Guide: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-PC-and-Mac

Author's Background

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Brian Cole works in the Center for Educational Resources as a Sr. Systems Software Engineer. Brian provides support and training for Homewood faculty on a number of instructional technologies. His background is in liberal arts and enterprise IT.