



# Running a Successful Online Club Meeting

Learn how your club can find success while hosting virtual club meetings.

For nearly 100 years, in-person meetings have been at the heart of Toastmasters. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many clubs have been unable to continue with in-person meetings. In this document, you will find helpful advice to ensure your club is equipped to hold successful online meetings.

## Meeting platform

Before running an online club meeting, your club must decide on what meeting platform to use. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Hangout are a few options to explore. Please note that each platform is different. Here are a few things to consider when choosing what online meeting service will best fit your club:

- Cost – for most clubs, this will be the biggest deciding factor. Buying licenses or upgrading from the free version can be expensive
- Limitations – some platforms will have a free version to use, but they may come with time or capacity limits
- Features – different platforms may offer different features. It is important to remember that too many features may confuse members or guests, which may require more training or support

It is a good idea to look to your club members for feedback before making a final decision on your platform choice. You may find that your members have strong preferences, and those should be taken into account. For your consideration, we have put together an **Online Club Meeting Software Comparison**.

## Test, Test, and Re-test

Even at the best of times, technology can be fickle. It's a good idea to hold a test meeting to ensure club officers are comfortable with the process and are prepared to help troubleshoot problems should they arise. Running a test meeting isn't the only testing that may be required for online meetings. Club officers should set a good example by joining the meeting early to test their equipment. Encourage all club members, especially those with a meeting role, to log on early to test equipment as well. By ensuring all technology is working beforehand, your club meetings will run smoother and with fewer interruptions.

## Make Adjustments

You may find that your club needs to adjust their practices to adopt to an online meeting format. For example, **this video** outlines how some meeting roles may change when being filled virtually. You might also find the need for a new role, including one to monitor chat and help solve any technology-related problems.

The adjustments don't have to stop there. As club officers, you may want to consider:

- Setting time aside before or after the meeting for members and guests to connect
  - Remember that during the pandemic, people may be feeling isolated. Helping members feel connected will keep them engaged and can help ensure they remain active within the club
- Gathering feedback more often than normal
  - Set up online surveys and email them to members. Find out what your club is doing well, where your areas of improvement are, and what your club members would like to see moving forward

- Addressing technology issues early
  - This applies not only to technology issues around running your club meetings, but for club members as well. If a member's microphone constantly picks up feedback or faces other issues, work with them to find a solution as quickly as possible
- Reviewing club rules and guidelines
  - It can be harder to read if a person is trying to speak during an online meeting compared to an in-person one. Consider putting rules and guidelines in place to use chat or the raise hand feature before speaking to avoid multiple people speaking at the same time
- Designating a member or club officer to monitor chat
  - Some clubs have made this a permanent role in meetings moving forward. This person should ensure all members and guests are engaged during the meeting
- Monitoring the performance of the online meeting platform
  - If the meeting experiences lag or delay, you may need to ask attendees to turn off their webcams when not speaking
- Ensuring microphones are muted when not in use
  - If possible, attempt to reach out to individuals who do not mute their microphones directly to avoid making them feel embarrassed. Some online meeting platforms also allow the host to mute participants
- Determining how to count votes for any awards your club hands out
  - Your club may want to use online voting platforms or create their own voting form that is distributed at the beginning of the meeting
- Establishing a procedure for how to choose participants in Table Topics®
  - The Topicsmaster should work to ensure procedure is in place so that members and guests know how to participate in the Table Topics section of the meeting

Remember to work as a team and, if needed, reach out to other clubs to find tips to run successful online club meetings. Please visit the **Online Meetings webpage** to find helpful resources, including Zoom virtual backgrounds, instructional videos, and insightful articles from the *Toastmaster* magazine. Don't forget to share the webpage with the members of your club. Keep up with the **Leader Letter**, which is emailed to all club officers monthly, for the latest news and online meeting resources!