

So you've been hearing a lot about youth groups moving online but you have no idea how to do that? Well this is a great time to figure out how to reach your students in new ways. One way we have seen some success is through Zoom. So what would it look to get set up for Zoom TODAY?

The first thing you need to do is head over to zoom.us and set up an account and download the desktop app. It has way more features for you setting up the meetings. You'll want to decide on a pricing plan. There is a free version but once you add in multiple students you will be limited to 40 min at a time. The next plan up will cover up to 100 people and has up to 24 hour long meetings. We think this option will probably work for most people!

Once you've got that rolling let's get that meeting set up!

Open up the app and click on the plus sign to schedule a meeting. Here you'll want to select the date and time for your meeting. You can check the box marked recurring here if you plan on a meeting that will be weekly at the same time (like a weekly youth meeting!).

You can require a password if you'd like or you can set it to be open. Use caution when sharing the link publicly if you don't have a password set. You wouldn't want just anyone walking into your youth space so the same rule applies here!

There's a few other settings to look at here like if you want people to join with video automatically and if you want people to be able to call in from a phone (you probably don't for this sort of thing but that's totally up to you!) You can even have it sync to calendars like iCal and Google Calendar. Once you are done hit schedule and your meeting is set up!

Now that it's ready for people you'll need to invite them. You can hit the "Copy Invitation" button and it will give you everything you'd need to put in an email to send out. If you hit the "Show invitation" button you'll see a link under the heading "Join Zoom Meeting". You can also just copy that and text it out or drop it in a post on social media.

Okay! So now we are rolling and you are ready to get folks in there, but what can you even do with this handy new tool?

SHOWING VIDEOS

Want to show a hilarious video you found to lighten the mood? Want to play a lyric worship video during a time of reflection? Well you can do all that pretty easy with the "Screen Share" option. Once you click the share button a whole new world of possibilities will open up for you.

You will see a ton but let's focus on video since that can actually do a lot of heavy lifting for you. Make sure you have a video open somewhere on your computer. When we did this we had a folder on the desktop with every video we wanted to use nothing can be seen until you share it so you can open them "behind the scenes". Click on the video from the list of options and then hit share (make sure you click share computer audio!). Then hit play and your students will see and hear the video.

USING GAMES THROUGH DYM SIDEKICK

If you have the DYM Sidekick app it works pretty flawlessly for this type of thing. In practice it works about the same as video—you just want to tell Zoom to grab the Preview window of the Sidekick app. We actually used this for games AND a countdown as our students were logging in!

HELP EVERYONE IS TALKING OVER EACH OTHER!

This is pretty common when people aren't used to this sort of program. Typically the rule is only one person is speaking at a time. We know those are typically the rules in real life too but it's harder to manage online. You can start off by teaching students to mute until prompted or ask them to click the "Raise Hand" button that's found in the Participants list. You could also just allow everyone to stay unmuted but we will tell you this will get hectic real fast!

HOW DO WE DO SMALL GROUPS?

Good question! of course there are tons of ways for folks to meet up digitally but if you'd like to do it all in Zoom you can! If you are the administrator of your Zoom account log in on the web and go to your account settings and check "Breakout Rooms" under advanced settings. Once you are in a Zoom meeting you can click breakout rooms and tell the app how many people you want in each room and then assign them automatically if you are just grouping them randomly for discussion or manually if you'd like to. Once you click "Open Meeting Rooms" your students will be whisked away to their Breakout rooms where you can drop in as the host into any of them and even pull all the users back to the main meeting room when it's time to dismiss.

We are learning all this right along with you but these are just some of the ways we are using Zoom right now to reach students in this new (at least to us) way! Hopefully if you were a little overwhelmed this will help you get it started and as you use it we know you will come up with even more new ways to use this awesome software!