



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Association des malentendants canadiens



VIRTUAL MEETING PLATFORM ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

The following guide is intended to enable people with hearing loss to better access virtual meeting platforms. Not all information regarding accessibility has been included, but the most relevant information has been summarized for easy access.

July 2021

CHHA.CA

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Introduction

This Virtual Meeting Platform Accessibility Guide will describe some of the most popular video conferencing software, how to use it for the general, personal user, and how to activate automatic closed captioning.








Therefore, this guide operates under the assumption that the *free or basic version* of each service is being used. This guide also assumes that the video call function is being used, rather than solely an audio call.

As can be seen in the comparison table, each platform has its own unique strengths and weaknesses. Virtual meeting platforms have differing rates of quality. It is important to note that this guide does not favour one platform over another. Different users may prefer certain platforms over others.

This guide is composed of three sections:

- 1. Instructions on accessing virtual meeting platforms, and their built-in automatic captioning capabilities, where available**
- 2. Tips for users to have the best video calling experience**
- 3. Tips for meeting hosts and advanced users**

Comparison Table

Service name	Best for	Downside	Free account meeting limits	Captions available?
 Microsoft Teams	Those that already use Office apps (such as Outlook)	Cannot easily adjust meeting layout	60 minutes, 100 people (raised to 24 hours, 300 people until further notice as of July 2021)	✓
 Zoom	Widespread use	Complicated to access captions	40 minutes, 100 people Unlimited time for 1:1 meetings	✓
 Google Meet	Those already using Gmail	Requires Google account for free version	60 minutes, 100 people 24 hours for 1:1 meetings	✓
 Webex Meetings	Large businesses requiring many people to be in a meeting	Reportedly poor audio quality, lag in captioning	50 minutes, 100 people	✓
 Skype	Widespread use	More limitations on use than competitors	4 hours per call, 10 hours per day, 100 hours per month, 50 people	✓
 Messenger	Personal calls and ease of use (can access Facebook friends)	Requires Facebook account, reports of poor audio quality	Unlimited, 8 people	✗
 FaceTime	Those already using iMessage / the Apple ecosystem	Requires iOS or Mac device	Unlimited, 32 people	✗

Microsoft Teams

<https://teams.com>

Best for: Those that already use Office apps (such as Outlook)

Downside: Cannot easily adjust meeting layout

Free account meeting limits: 60 minutes, 100 people (raised to 24 hours, 300 people until further notice)



How to use Microsoft Teams

The Microsoft Teams desktop app can be downloaded from teams.com. However, it is not required to have an account or download the desktop application in order to use Teams: it is also accessible as a guest on your browser.

To join a Teams meeting:

1. Click the link on your invitation.
2. A screen allowing you to adjust your audio and video settings before joining will appear.
3. Once you are ready to join, click the purple **Join now** button in the bottom right corner.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

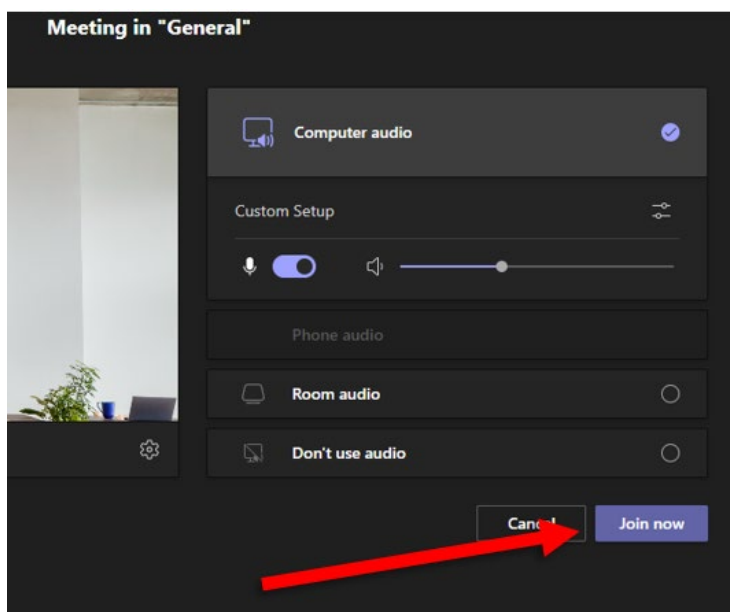
Or call in (audio only)

[+1 647-497-6301,,323992111#](#) Canada, Toronto

Phone Conference ID: 323 992 111#

[Find a local number](#) | [Reset PIN](#)

[Learn More](#) | [Meeting options](#)



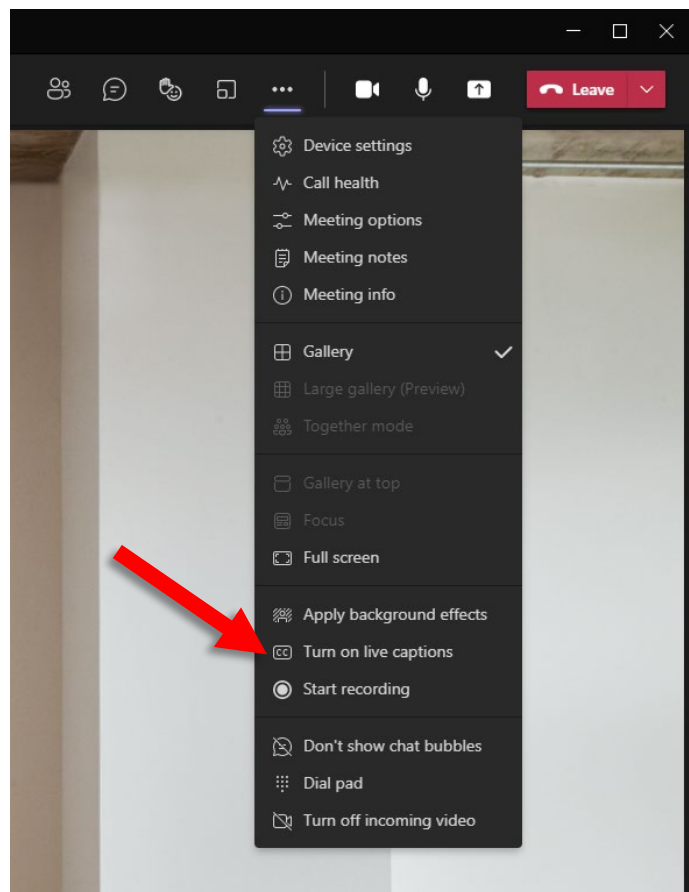
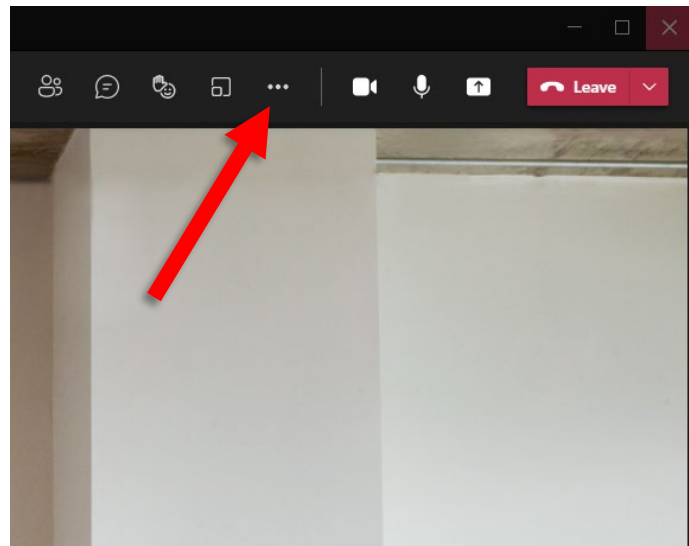
How to enable closed captions on Microsoft Teams

Teams uses the term *Live Captions* to mean automatic, computer-based closed captioning. This should be differentiated from live captioning involving a human captioner.

To enable Closed Captioning in Microsoft Teams:

1. Join a Teams meeting or a group call (audio or video).
2. Once in the group call, click on the *3 ellipses* button.
 - This can be found in the **top right** corner of your Teams window, near the red Leave button.
3. Click on **Turn on live captions** in the drop-down menu that follows, indicated with the CC icon.

You should now see live captions appear on the bottom center of your screen. To disable captions, go through steps 2-3 again and click *Turn off live captions*.



Note: Sometimes, if the MS Teams meeting is hosted by someone external to the organization, the host must enable captions for the option to be available to all participants.

For more information, or for questions about privacy and data collection, visit the [Microsoft captions guide](#).

Zoom

<https://zoom.com>

Best for: Those seeking to meet with many different people on different devices

Downside: Complicated to access captions

Free account meeting limits: 40 minutes, 100 people, Unlimited time for 1:1 meetings



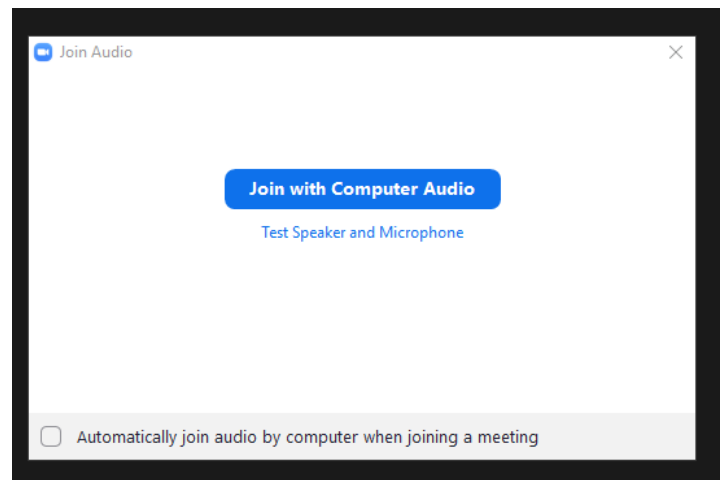
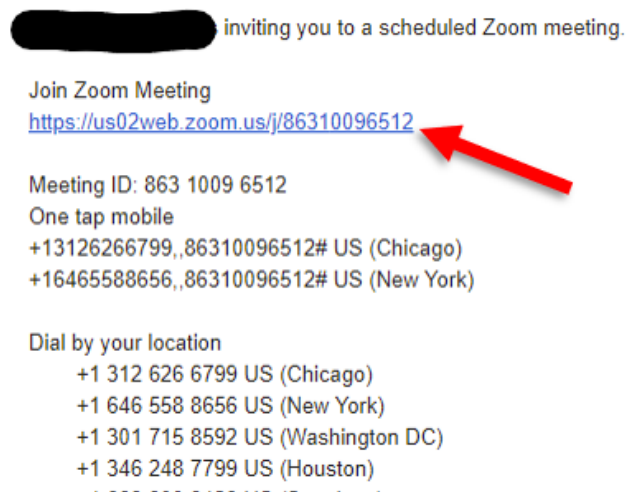
How to use Zoom

The Zoom desktop app can be downloaded from zoom.com.

However, it is not required to have an account or download the desktop application in order to use Zoom: it is accessible on your browser.

To join a Zoom meeting:

1. Click the link on your invitation.
2. A screen allowing you to test your audio settings before joining will appear.
3. Once you are ready to join, click the blue **“Join with Computer Audio”** button at the center of your screen.



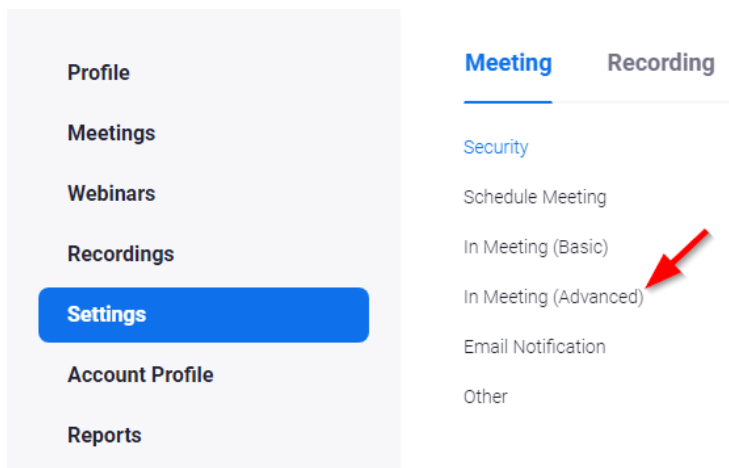
How to enable closed captions on Zoom

Note: Steps One and Two are for enabling captions in your own meeting. If you would like captions for a meeting you are participating in, you can ask the host to follow these instructions, and then you may proceed to Step Three.

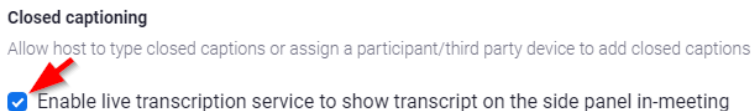
Zoom uses the term *Live Transcription* to mean automatic, computer-based closed captioning. This should be differentiated from live captioning involving a human captioner.

Step One: Enable Live Transcription in your Zoom account

1. Visit <https://zoom.us/profile/setting>
2. On the left sidebar, choose **Settings**, then click **In Meeting (Advanced)**



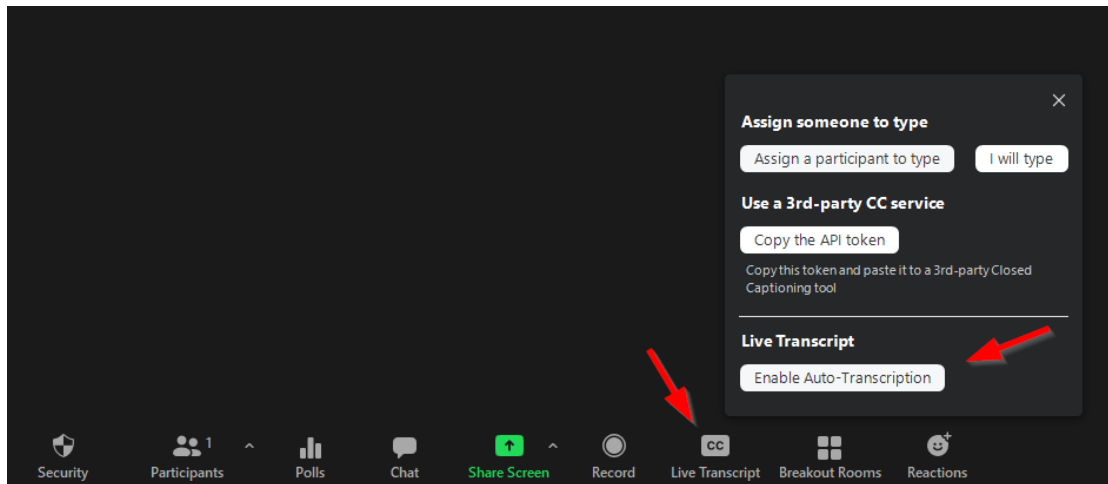
3. Find **Closed Captioning** and click on the blue toggle to enable
4. Check the box for Enable live transcription service to show transcript on the side panel in-meeting.



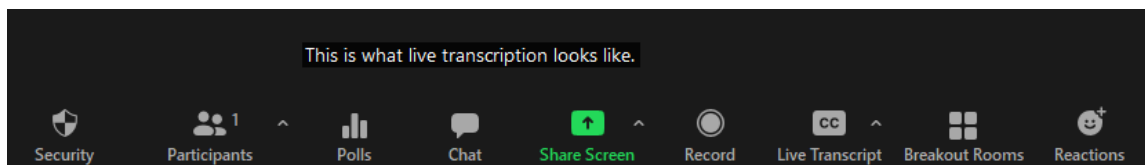
Step Two: Enable Live Transcription during your meeting

Note: Live Transcription must be enabled during each meeting in which you intend to use it.

1. Begin your meeting
2. At the bottom of the screen, select **Live Transcript**. If you don't see it, you might need to resize your window to be wider.



3. Click **Enable Auto-Transcription**. This button will turn blue, indicating that live transcription has begun
4. You will now see live transcription appear along the bottom of the screen. An example of what this looks like is below.



Note: Live Transcription, otherwise known as live automatic closed captioning (not involving humans), will be available for all Zoom users in Fall 2021. Until then, if your account is a Basic account, and you do not have access to the feature, you may request free live transcription to meeting hosts from Zoom. To sign up, enter your information in [this form](#).

If you do not want to use automatic transcription, you can also enable participant-created closed captions by clicking the **Live Transcript** button and clicking “Assign a participant to type” or “I will type.” You can also use a third-party CC service by copying the API token into your service of choice.

For more information, or for questions about privacy and data collection, visit the [Zoom captions guide](#).

Google Meet

<https://meet.google.com>

Best for: Those already using Gmail

Downside: Must have Google account for free version

Free account meeting limits: 60 minutes, 24 hours for 1:1 meetings, must have Google account



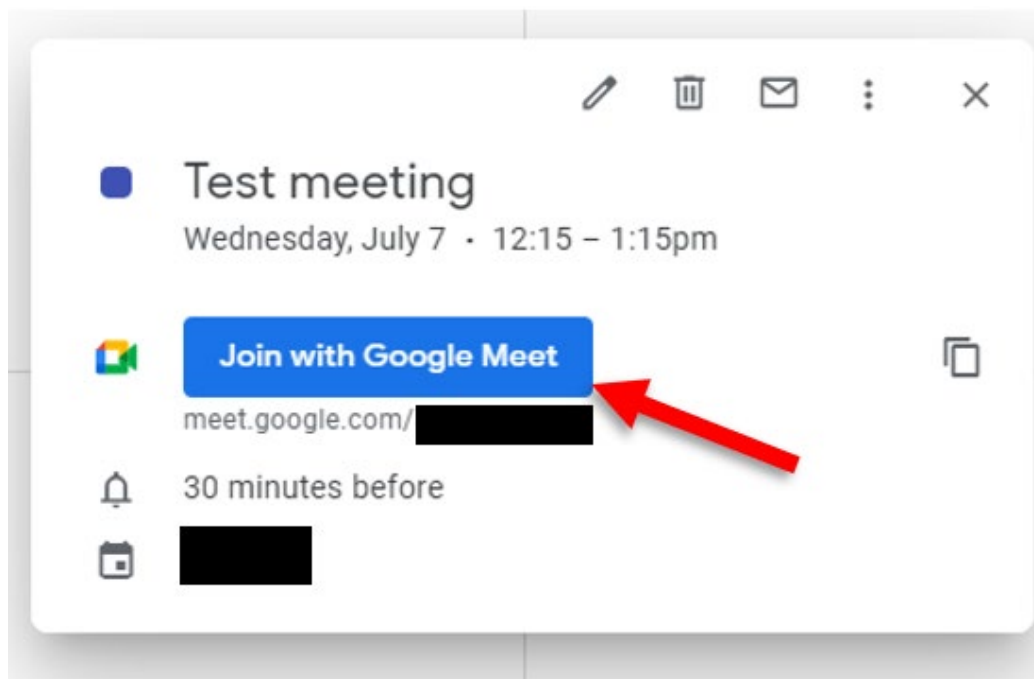
Google Meet

How to use Google Meet

Google Meet does not have to be downloaded on a computer and is browser-based. Those using mobile devices may download the Google Meet app.

However, you must have a Google account for the free version.

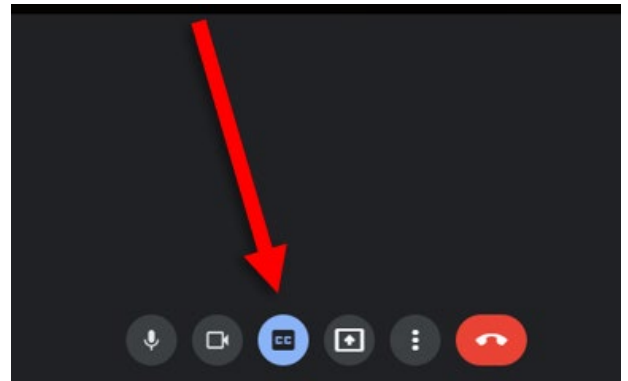
To join a Google Meet meeting, click the link on your invitation, or go to <https://meet.google.com> and enter the code or link. You will immediately enter the meeting. You may also go to [Google Calendar](#) and click the event, then click **“Join with Google Meet.”**



How to enable closed captions on Google Meet

Turn captions on or off

1. On your computer, go to [Google Meet](#).
2. Join a video call.
3. At the bottom centre of your screen, click the **Turn on captions** button, marked by the CC icon.



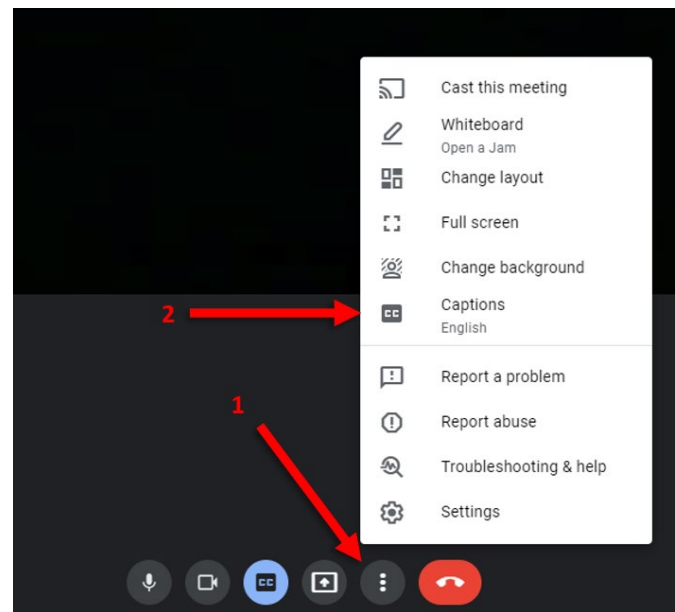
You should now see live captions appear on the bottom center of your screen. To disable captions, go through steps 2-3 again and click *Turn off captions*.

Note: If you record a call, captions will not appear on the recording.

Change the language

1. At the bottom of the video call screen, click Menu (the 3 ellipses button), then click **Captions**.
2. Choose a language, then click Apply.

Important: The language you select becomes the default until you change it.



For more information, or for questions about privacy and data collection, visit the [Google captions guide](#) or watch the [video tutorial](#).

Webex Meetings

<https://webex.com>

Best for: Businesses

Downside: Reportedly poor audio quality, lag in captioning

Free account meeting limits: 50 minutes, 100 people



Webex Meetings

How to use Webex Meetings

The Webex Meetings desktop app can be downloaded from <https://webex.com>. However, it is not required to have an account or download the desktop application in order to use Webex: it is also accessible as a guest on your browser.

To join a Webex meeting, click the link on your invitation.

Catherine Sinu invites you to join this Webex meeting.

Monday, November 30, 2020
10:30 am | (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada) | 30 mins

Join meeting

More ways to join:

Join from the meeting link
<https://example.webex.com/example/eg.php?MTID=m475eadb9eb9ebc48f669>

Join by meeting number
Meeting number (access code): 555 345 231
Meeting password: aQ34ijkC (55512345 from phones and video systems)

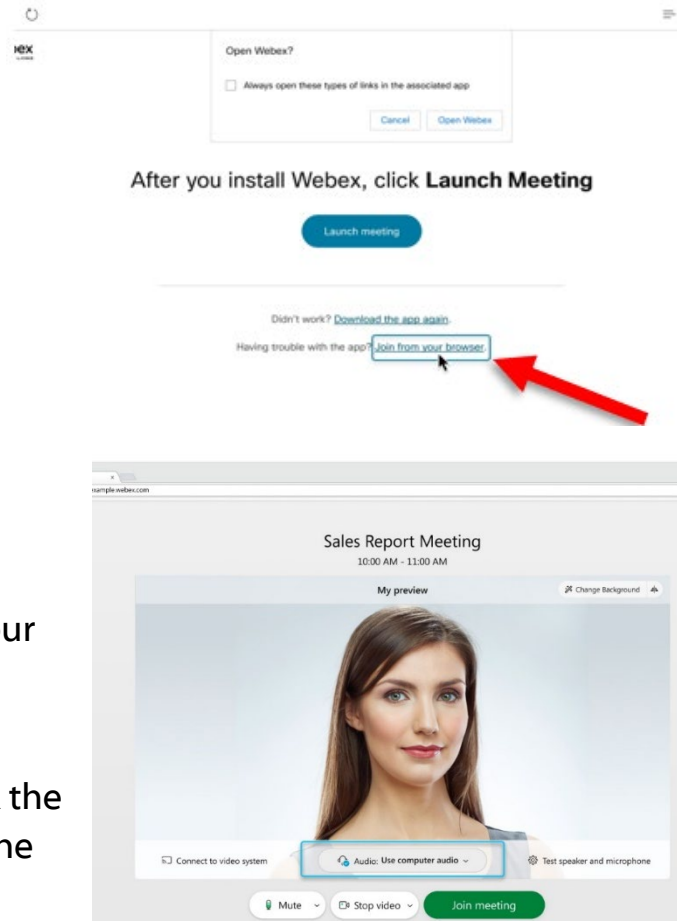
Tap to join from a mobile device (attendees only)
+1-555-123-1234,,*01*632819374##*01* (US Toll)
+1-555-123-1342,,*01*632819374##*01* (US Toll Free)
Some mobile devices may ask attendees to enter a numeric meeting password.

When joining from Windows or Mac, a new browser window opens, prompting you to launch the desktop app.

If you do not want to download the app, you can also **join from your browser** by clicking the link on the bottom.

A screen allowing you to test your audio and video settings before joining will appear.

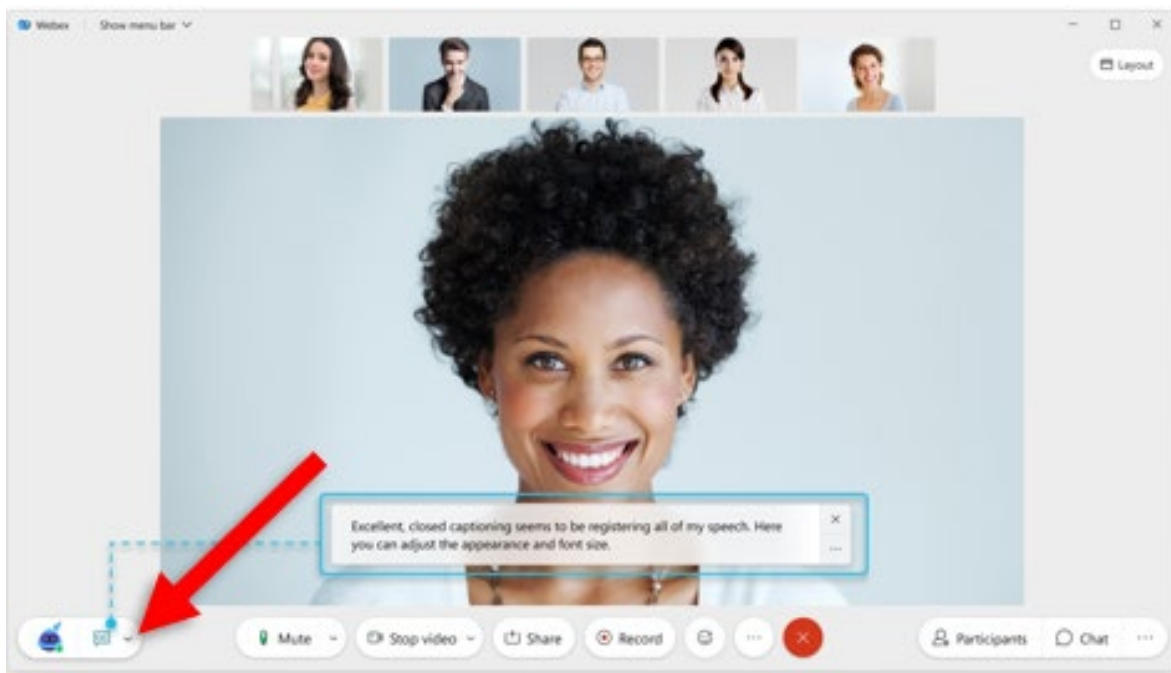
Once you are ready to join, click the green **Join Meeting** button in the bottom center.



How to enable closed captions on Webex Meetings

Note: These instructions are for enabling captions if you are hosting a meeting. If you would like captions for a meeting you are participating in, you can ask the host to follow these instructions.

To show captions, join your meeting. Then, select **Webex Assistant**  and then click **Show closed captions**  in the bottom left corner of the screen.



For more information, visit the [Webex captions guide](#).

Skype

<https://skype.com>



Best for: Widespread use

Downside: Limitations on use; requires account

Free account meeting limits: 4 hours per call, 10 hours per day, 100 hours per month, 50 people

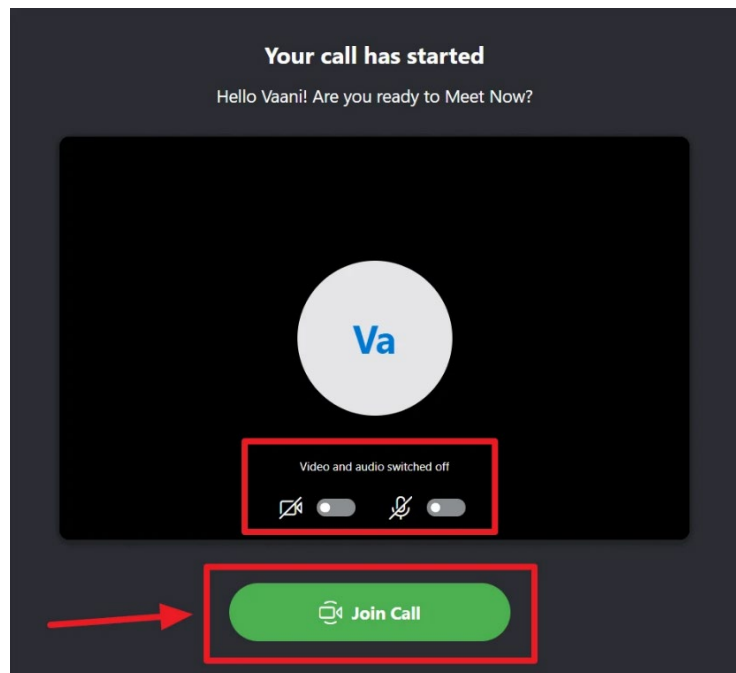
How to use Skype

The Skype desktop app can be downloaded from skype.com. However, it is not required to download the desktop application in order to use Skype: it is also accessible on your browser. You are also not required to have an account. However, while you may join a meeting without an account, you may not host a meeting.

To join a Skype meeting, click the link on your invitation.

A screen allowing you to test your audio and video settings before joining will appear.



Once you are ready to join, click the green **Join Now** button in the bottom center.

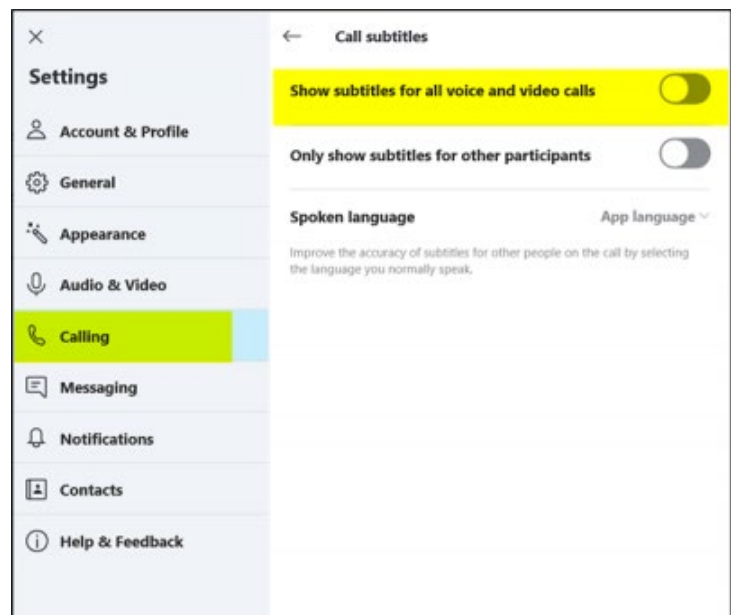


How to use closed captions on Skype

1. To show captions, join your meeting.
2. Then, select the **more** **•••** button and then Select **Turn subtitles on**.
3. To view your subtitle history during a call, select the chevron above where your subtitles are shown and a side panel on desktop or call history panel on mobile will open displaying your subtitle history for that call.

Turn on live captions & subtitles by default for all Skype calls

1. Select your **profile picture** in the top left.
2. Select  **Settings**.
3. Select  **Calling**.
4. Select **Call subtitles**.
5. Switch on **Show subtitles for all calls**. Switch **Only Show subtitles for other participants** on if you only want to see subtitles for other participants and not for yourself.



Note: When subtitles are enabled, touch tone will not work.

For more information, visit the [Skype captions guide](#).

Messenger

<https://messenger.com>





Best for: Personal calls and ease of use (can access Facebook friends)

Downside: Requires Facebook account, reports of poor audio quality

Free account meeting limits: Unlimited, 8 people

How to use Messenger

The Messenger desktop app can be downloaded from messenger.com. However, it is not required to download the desktop application in order to use Messenger: it is also accessible on your browser. You must have a Facebook account to use Messenger.

1. To join a Messenger call, Open a conversation with the person or people you want to voice call on messenger.com or facebook.com
2. Click  (Desktop App) or  (messenger.com).

Unfortunately, closed captioning is not available on Messenger.

For more information, visit the [Messenger help page](#).

FaceTime

<https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204380>

Best for: Those already using iMessage / the Apple ecosystem

Downside: Requires Apple device

Free account meeting limits: Requires iOS or Mac device

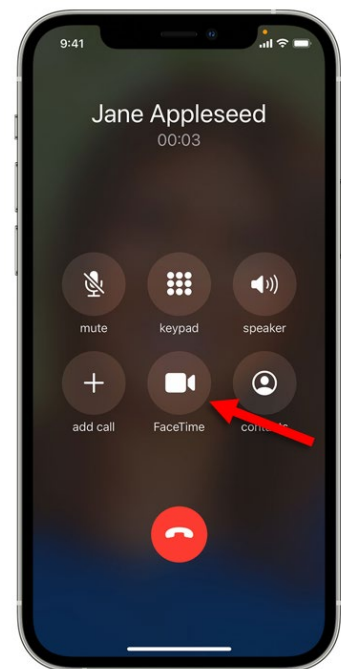


How to use FaceTime

FaceTime comes included with all iPhones, iPads and Mac devices. Unfortunately, it is not accessible on Windows computers.

To make a FaceTime call, you need the person's phone number or registered email address. There are a few ways to make a FaceTime call:

- In the FaceTime app, tap the plus button + and type the person's phone number or email address. Tap the number or address, then tap Audio 📞 or Video 📺.
- If you have the person's phone number or email address saved in your Contacts, you can start typing their name and tap the name when it appears. Then tap Audio 📞 or Video 📺.
- You can also start a FaceTime video call from your iPhone during a phone call. Tap the FaceTime icon in the Phone app to switch to FaceTime.



Unfortunately, closed captioning is not available on FaceTime.

For more information, visit the [FaceTime guide](#).

Tips for having the best video call experience

For people with hearing loss, video calls can be more difficult than speaking in person, as the video is not always clear, and there can also be internet issues that interfere with the quality of the call.

Here are some tips to take to your next video call!

Video Call Etiquette

1. Face the camera and ensure your face is well lit

By having your camera on and facing it, you can ensure that others can see you clearly, so that those rely on lip reading can do so with ease.

Good lighting, such as a lamp or bright overhead lighting, will ensure that others are able to see your expressions and can lip read as needed. Further, try to have front lighting, as being backlit can cast shadows and make it difficult to lipread.

2. Speak Loudly Enough and Clearly

When you speak, make sure to speak loudly enough and clearly and avoid mumbling so that everyone can hear you and understand what you say. Try to position yourself close to your microphone. Remember that microphones and speakers are of differing quality.

It is also important that all participants be patient and understanding and slow the conversation down so that it is inclusive of the person with hearing loss, who may be struggling to participate.

3. Raise Your Hand to Speak

By raising your hand for when you would like to speak, you will avoid interrupting others. Some platforms also offer a hand button on their toolbar that will raise a virtual hand.

4. Mute Yourself When Not Speaking

Be sure to avoid speaking when others are talking. All participants should mute their microphone when not speaking to reduce distracting background noise. This way, all participants can hear the speaker clearly and minimize any overlap.

5. Use the Chat Function Wisely

Typing in chat can potentially distract the person with hearing loss and cause additional strain by requiring them to follow an auditory conversation and the flow of the chat simultaneously.

Depending on the user's device (such as an iPhone), the chat message can cover the captions and can be very disruptive. Chats can exclude those who rely on captioning; be sure to ask the person with hearing loss their preferences.

Location

6. Call in a Quiet Place

If you can't control the background noise, such as construction or children, try closing the doors and windows to the room. Some of the best places for a video call can be your kitchen, living room, or bedroom.

7. Good Internet Connection

In addition to a quiet place, make sure that the location you are calling from has good internet access.

A good connection allows for uninterrupted video, audio, and captioning flow, keeping you in the conversation throughout.

Technology

8. Use Headphones with a Microphone

Oftentimes, built-in microphones on laptops or the small microphones on earbuds can have poor sound quality. If this is a problem, be sure to invest

into a pair of headphones that have a microphone to improve sound quality and reduce echoing.

9. Use Video Calling Services with Automatic Captioning

To ensure everyone can understand other, try to use a platform or service that offers free automatic captioning, like Google Meet or Microsoft Teams.

10. Transcribing

If built-in automatic captioning is not available, there are apps and websites that can offer transcription. For instance, both [Otter.ai](#) and [Live Transcribe](#), allow you to follow along with the call by reading what has been said.

11. Explore Options for Connectivity

Besides improving the technology already in use, there are other ways to improve the quality of the sound. Consider connecting your hearing aids or other hearing devices to Bluetooth, [Pockettalkers](#) and FM systems.

Tips for hosts and advanced users

1. Understanding the Dilemma of the Person with Hearing Loss

Hosts of meetings involving people with hearing loss should bear in mind the unique challenges that such a person could face in the virtual meeting environment. The person with hearing loss is continually multi-tasking, and videoconference calls require them to process multiple clues simultaneously: lipreading the speaker, reading captions, or reading additional contextual clues such as presentations.

2. Minimize Complex Presentations and Screens

Remember that complex presentations and screens can distract the person with hearing loss and fatigue them by requiring them to follow both voice communication and dense visual materials. If possible, other alternatives, such as text descriptions, are preferable.

3. Captions can be Helpful, but Not Perfect

For people with hearing loss especially, captioning is often an essential tool for having the highest-quality video call experience. Yet it is important to remember that the quality of automatic closed captioning is often speaker-dependent and is affected by how the users communicate.

4. Keep Length in Mind

As auto-captioning often has a high error rate and delayed delivery, the person with a hearing loss is trying to mentally reconstruct the conversation from error-filled captions (where they are available) while trying to "catch up" with the current stream of conversation. Generally, it is best not to have video conference calls of more than 1 hour to avoid fatigue.

Further advice

If the meeting is via MS Teams Live (for large online audiences), the captioning has to be enabled by the host when creating the event, not during the event.

Besides the transcribing options already described, other options include [Streamtext](#), which benefits from offering 10-12 lines of text, enabling the user to grasp the key points quickly, or to check back if something has been missed.

Credits and Sources

All logos taken from their respective websites or Google Images. Some instructions and illustrations have been adapted from the developer's website.

Illustrations on front cover taken from:

https://www.stockunlimited.com/image/businesswoman-wearing-telephone-headset-portrait_1896041.html

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/people-on-a-video-call-4226122/>

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-using-macbook-4064176/>

Microsoft Teams:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/use-live-captions-in-a-teams-meeting-4be2d304-f675-4b57-8347-cbd000a21260>

Zoom:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207279736-Closed-captioning-and-live-transcription>

Google Meet:

<https://support.google.com/meet/answer/9300310>

Webex:

<https://help.webex.com/en-us/lzi8h2/Show-or-Hide-Closed-Captions-During-a-Webex-Meeting-or-Event>

Skype:

<https://www.skype.com/en/features/group-video-chat/>

<https://www.thewindowsclub.com/enable-live-captions-subtitles-skype-calls>

Messenger:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/messenger-app>

FaceTime:

<https://support.apple.com/en-ca/HT204380#make-call>

Introduction and guidelines – Jason Lee, Program Assistant

Tips for having the best video call experience - Catherine Dumé, Media Relations Officer

Tips for hosts – Jason Lee, Program Assistant and various CHHA contributors

Thank you to all the CHHA members and volunteers who provided feedback on this guide!