



With the rush by AA Groups to shift to Online Meetings, many of us in Alcoholics Anonymous did not take time to investigate what this meant to the spiritual foundation of our recovery – namely, anonymity. Trolls have also gathered to organize *Zoom bombing* campaigns against classrooms, businesses and AA Online Meetings in recent days including AA Online Meetings in New York City and California. Now that Online Meetings for AA are accessible, I wanted to pass on best practices for protecting anonymity.

These suggestions have been curated from the membership of AA and online resources.

The default Zoom settings run counter to AA's spiritual foundation of anonymity. The meetings are publicly accessible and full names and faces are often displayed. Additionally, by default all Zoom meetings are recorded locally and to the cloud. Turning that feature off is simple.

There are other settings in the Meeting subtab that can also be adjusted, such as disallowing remote control of devices, file transfer, data sharing with Zoom, and screen sharing.

Here are some suggested settings for hosts of your group's online meetings to use. If you don't host a meeting but only participate then there's nothing you need to do. Please note that most, if not all, of the settings below are not the Zoom default settings in your AA Group or Host's Zoom Account:

**In the Zoom Settings section, under the Meeting subtab the suggested settings are:**

- Require Encryption for Third Party Endpoints
- Disable Auto Saving Chats
- Disable File Transfer
- Disable Feedback to Zoom
- Disable Screen Sharing
- Disable Desktop/Screen Share for Users
- Disable Remote Control
- Disallow Virtual Background

**In the Zoom Settings Section, under the Recording Subtab:**

- Disable Local Recording
- Disable Cloud Recording
- Disable Automatic Recording

Here are some additional recommendations from a Zoom Blog Post regarding publicly accessible Online Meetings:

What's impressive is that many of us are learning to host these events on the fly! As more people use the Zoom platform and host their virtual Online Meetings using Zoom, I wanted to offer up tips to ensure everyone joining your Online Meeting does so with good intentions. Like most other public forums, it's possible to have a person (who may or may not be invited) disrupt an event that's meant to bring people together.

So, a couple of reminders on using Zoom to host public events:

When you share your meeting link on social media or other public forums, that makes your event - public. ANYONE with the link can join your meeting.

Avoid using your Personal Meeting ID to host public events. Each AA Group should have their own Zoom Account. Your Personal Meeting ID is basically one continuous meeting and you don't want random folks crashing your personal virtual space after the Online Meeting is over.

Familiarize yourself with Zoom's settings and features so you understand how to protect your virtual space when you need to. For example, the Waiting Room is an unbelievably helpful feature for hosts to control who comes and goes.

### **Manage Screen Sharing**

The first rule is don't give up control of your screen.

You do not want random people in your public event taking control of the screen and sharing unwanted content with the group. You can restrict this — before the meeting and during the meeting in the host control bar — so that you're the only one who can conduct a screen share.

To prevent participants from screen sharing during a call, using the host controls at the bottom, click the arrow next to Share Screen and then Advanced Sharing Options. Under "Who can share?" choose "Only Host" and close the window. You can also lock the Screen Share by default for all your meetings in your web settings.

### **Manage Your Participants**

Some of the other great features to host your group's Online Meeting include:

**Allow only signed-in users to join:** If someone tries to join your event and isn't logged into Zoom with the email they were invited through, they won't be able to join your Online Meeting.

**Authorized Attendees:** This is useful if you want to control your guest list and invite only those you want at your event.

**Lock the Meeting:** It's always smart to lock your front door, even when you're inside the house. When you lock a Zoom Meeting that's already started, no new participants can join, even if they have the meeting ID and password (if you have required one). In the meeting, click Participants at the bottom of your Zoom window. In the Participants pop-up, click the button that says Lock Meeting.

**Remove Unwanted or Disruptive Participants:** From that Participants menu, you can mouse over a participant's name, and several options will appear, including Remove. Click that to kick someone out of the meeting.

**Allow Removed Participants to Rejoin:** When you do remove someone, they can't rejoin the meeting. But you can toggle your settings to allow removed participants to rejoin, in case you boot the wrong person.

**Put Participants on Hold:** You can all Participants on hold, and the attendees' video and audio connections will be disabled momentarily. Click on someone's video thumbnail and select Start Attendee On Hold to activate this feature. Click Take Off Hold in the Participants list when you're ready to have them back.

**Disable Video:** Online Meeting Hosts can turn someone's video off. This will allow hosts to block unwanted, distracting, or inappropriate gestures on video.

**Mute Participants:** Hosts can mute/unmute individual participants or all Online Meeting participants at once. Hosts can block unwanted, distracting, or inappropriate noise from other participants. You can also enable Mute Upon Entry in your settings to keep the clamor at bay with your Online Meetings.

**Turn Off File Transfer:** In-meeting file transfer allows people to share files through the in-meeting chat. Toggle this off to keep the chat from getting bombarded with unsolicited pics, GIFs, memes, and other content.

**Turn Off Annotation:** You and your attendees can doodle and mark up content together using annotations during screen share. You can disable the annotation feature in your Zoom settings to prevent people from writing all over the screens.

**Disable private chat:** Zoom has in-meeting chat for everyone or participants can message each other privately. Restrict participants' ability to chat amongst one another while your event is going on and cut back on distractions. This is really to prevent anyone from getting unwanted messages during the meeting.

### **Try the Waiting Room**

One of the best ways to use Zoom for AA Online Meetings is to enable the Waiting Room feature. Just like it sounds, the Waiting Room is a virtual staging area that stops your guests from joining until you're ready for them. It's almost like the velvet rope outside a nightclub, with you as the bouncer carefully monitoring who gets let in.

Meeting hosts can customize Waiting Room settings for additional control, and you can even personalize the message people see when they hit the Waiting Room so they know they're in the right spot. This message is really a great spot to post any rules/guidelines for your event, like who it's intended for.

The Waiting Room is really a great way to screen who's trying to enter your event and keep unwanted guests out.

Zoom is a great way to stay connected right now, and we hope these tips will help you continue to host amazing Online AA Meetings!

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