

Nine methods to privatize Zoom Class Sessions to prevent unwanted attendees

Zoom has seen a flood of activity recently, as people across the world shifted to remote work and schooling. More activity means bad actors looking for vulnerabilities and other ways to exploit the app. That's how the term Zoom-bombing; Also known as, unwanted people jumping into open Zoom class sessions.

In a few instances of Zoom-bombing, according to a report from Inside Higher Education, students exploited a screen sharing feature that hadn't been locked by the instructor to put up inappropriate content for everyone on the call to see.

The best way to stop potential Zoom-bombing is to privatize the sessions through any or all of the simple methods listed below.

1. Use a Unique Meeting ID Class Sessions

When your Zoom account was created, the app assigns you a Personal Meeting ID (PMI). It's a numeric code that you can give out to people when you want to meet with them. You can use it over and over; it doesn't expire. For standing meetings with a team or a weekly check-in, using the same code makes sense because people can join without having to hunt down this week's login number. It's always the same.

Recommendation: Zoom gives you the option to not use your PMI for a meeting and instead generate a unique code. When you schedule a Zoom meeting, look for the Meeting ID options as shown in diagram 1 and choose ***Generate Automatically***. Doing this one step is the quickest and surest way to prevent Zoom-bombers.

Schedule Meeting

Topic
Jill Duffy's Zoom Chat

Date
3/28/2020 9:00 PM to 3/28/2020 9:30 PM
☐ Recurring meeting Time Zone: Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Meeting ID
☒ Generate Automatically ☐ Personal Meeting ID 808 808 808

Password
☒ Require meeting password 08 808 808

Video
 Host ☐ On ☒ Off Participants ☐ On ☒ Off

Audio
☐ Telephone ☐ Computer Audio ☒ Telephone and Computer Audio
 Dial in from United States [Edit](#)

Calendar
☐ iCal ☒ Google Calendar ☐ Other Calendars

Advanced Options

[Cancel](#) [Schedule](#)

Diagram 1 – Generate a random meeting ID

2. Require a Meeting Password

Let's say you publicly invite people to join a meeting, but you require an RSVP and are vetting the list of respondents. One way to protect the meeting is to require a password. That way, you can give the password out only to those who have replied and seem credible.

To password-protect a meeting, start by scheduling a meeting and checking the box next to 'require meeting password'. You'll see a numeric password, which will work for everyone who has it.

You can add a password to your Personal Meeting ID as well. Select 'Meetings > Personal Meeting Room' in the web portal. At the bottom of the page, click on 'Edit this Meeting'. Check the box next to 'Require meeting password'. This will generate a random numeric password. You can also type in your own password here. Be sure to click on 'Save' at the bottom of the screen.


3. Create a Waiting Room

A Zoom call can start one of two ways. It can start the moment the first person logs onto the call, or it can start when the host says it should start. For small groups of people who know each other, it's common for people to log in and make small talk while waiting for everyone else to join. Sometimes you want to let them chit-chat. For other calls, however, you might not want participants to chat with each other or even let the call officially start until you, the host, have signed in and are ready.

In that second case, the solution is to create a Zoom Waiting Room. When participants log into the call, they see a Waiting Room screen that you can customize, and they aren't let into the call until you, the host, lets them in. You can let people in all at once or one at a time, which means if you see names you don't recognize in the Waiting Room, you don't have to let them in at all.

Meeting Options

☐ Enable join before host

☒ Mute participants upon entry 

☒ Enable waiting room

4. Make Sure Only the Hosts Can Share Their Screen

Don't let anyone hijack the screen during a Zoom call. To prevent it, make sure your settings indicate that the only people allowed to share their screens are hosts.

You can enable this setting in advance as well as during a call.

In advance, go to the Zoom web portal (not the desktop app) and in the settings navigate to Personal > Settings > In Meeting (Basic) and look for Screen sharing. Check the option that only the host can share.

Schedule Meeting

In Meeting (Basic)

In Meeting (Advanced)

Email Notification

Other

Screen sharing

Allow host and participants to share their screen or content during meetings



Who can share?

☒ Host Only ☐ All Participants 

Who can start sharing when someone else is sharing?

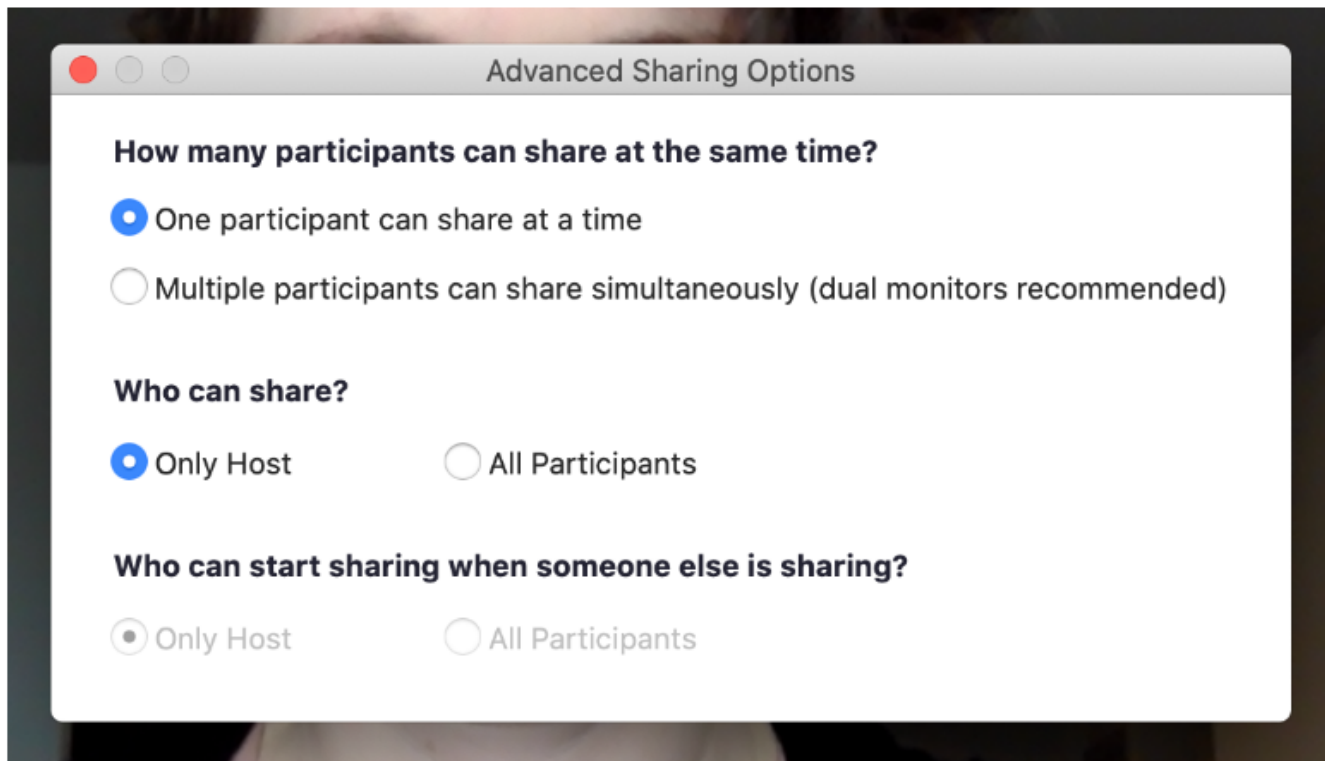
☒ Host Only ☐ All Participants 

Save

Cancel

During a call, you can prevent others from sharing their screens by, using the host controls at the bottom. Click the up-facing carrot next to Share Screen. Choose Advanced Sharing Options and choose to only let the host

While sharing your screen or an image, Zoom has a great feature that lets participants annotate what they see. For visual collaboration, it's amazing. For naughty participants, it might seem like an invitation to bomb your call. You can disable the annotation feature in the In Meeting (Basics) section of your web account.



5. Lock a Meeting Once It Starts

If you start a meeting and everyone you expect to join has, you can lock the meeting from new participants. While the meeting is running, navigate to the bottom of the screen and click Manage Participants. The Participants panel will open. At the bottom, choose More > Lock Meeting.

6. Kick Someone Out or Put Them on Hold

Sometimes an unruly participant manages to slip through the cracks. As the meeting host, you do have the power to kick someone out of a call or put them on hold.

To kick someone out: During the call, go to the participants pane on the right. Hover over the name of the person you want to boot and when options appear, choose Remove.

By default, an ousted guest cannot rejoin. What to do if you make a mistake? You can allow a booted party to rejoin. Enable this feature by going to the web portal and navigating to Settings > Meeting > In-Meeting (Basic). Toggle on the setting called Allow removed participants to rejoin.

To put someone on hold: During the call, find the video thumbnail of the person you want to put on hold. I like to think of it as putting someone in a time-out. Click on their video image and select Start Attendee On Hold. Once they've learned their lesson, you can press Take Off Hold in the Participants panel.

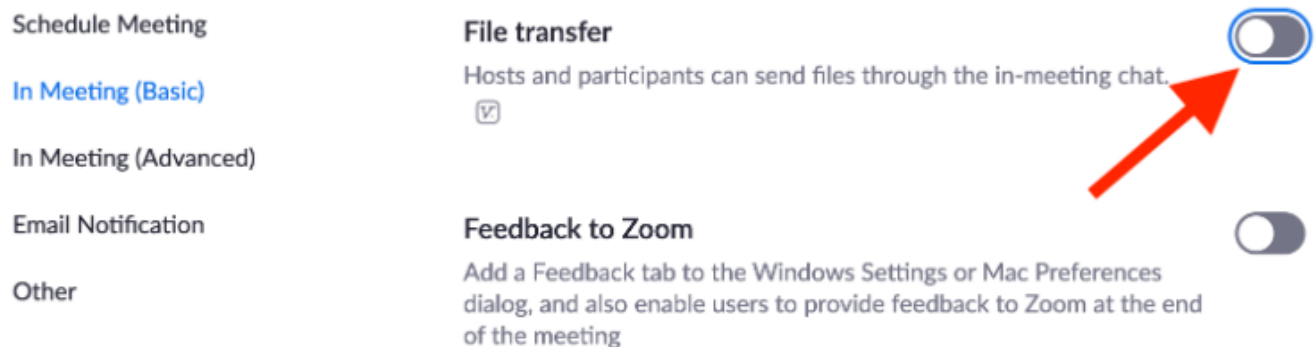
7. Disable Someone's Camera

Hosts can turn off any participant's camera. If someone is being rude or inappropriate on video, or their video has some technical problem, the host can open the Participants panel and click on the video camera icon next to the person's name.

8. Prevent Animated GIFs and Other Files in the Chat

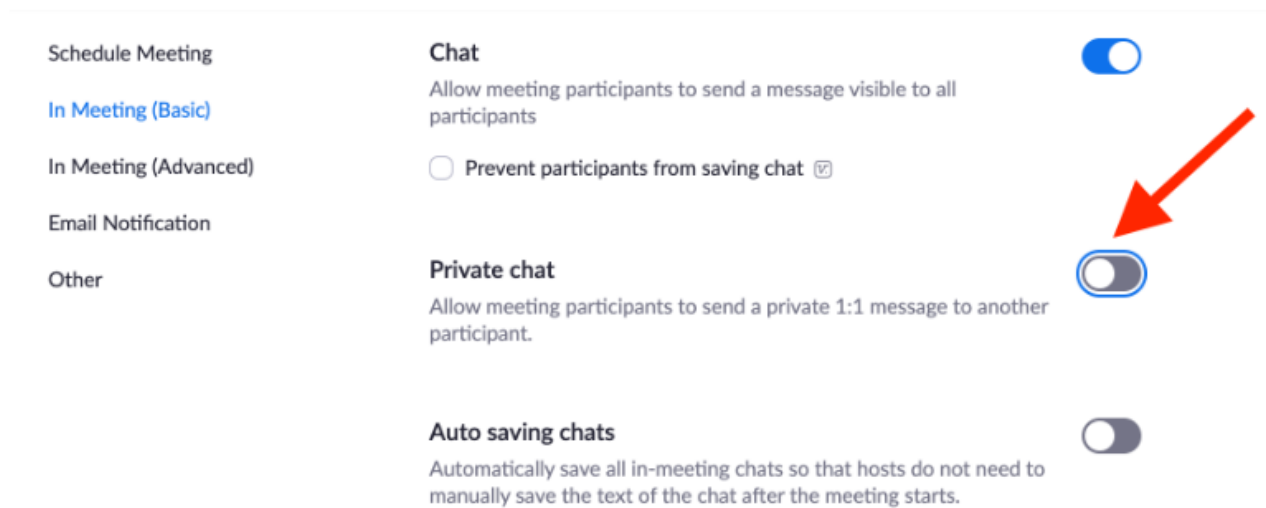
In the chat area of a Zoom meeting, participants can share files, including images and animated GIFs—if you let them. If you'd rather not, then be sure to disable file transfer. It's on by default, so you have to actively disable it.

For your own meetings, open Settings in the Zoom web app (it's not in the desktop app). On the left side, go to Personal > Settings. Then click In Meeting (Basic). Scroll down a little farther until you see File Transfer. That's where you can disable it.



9. Disable Private Chat

If you're hosting a Zoom call and have invited strangers to join, someone in your crowd could harass another participant by sending them private messages. Or people could start talking behind your back. You can prevent this by disabling private chat. When you disable private chat, it doesn't affect the public chat, which everyone on the call can see and participate in.

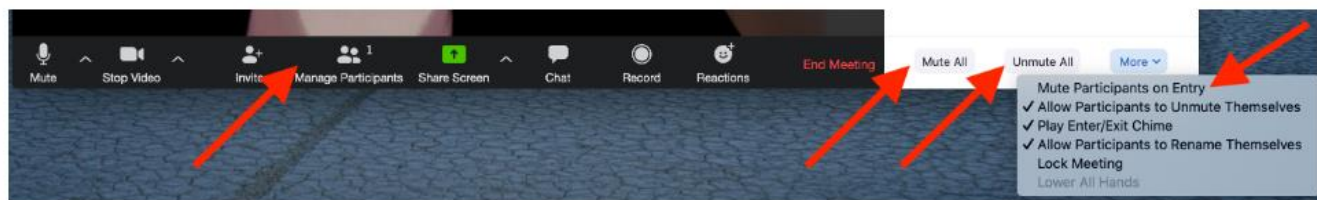


Open Settings in the Zoom web app (it's not in the desktop app). On the left side, go to Personal > Settings. Then click In Meeting (Basic). Scroll until you see Private chat. When the button is gray, it's disabled.

Use These Additional Settings for Large Meetings

Not all Zoom disruptors are bad actors. Sometimes participants make mistakes and don't realize that a yapping dog or crying child is causing a disturbance for everyone else. Or someone might accidentally upload a file they didn't mean to. Any time you host a meeting of more than one or two people, there are some settings in Zoom you should review and familiarize yourself with before the call.

Mute participants. Did you know the host can mute and unmute an individual or everyone on a call? While the call is ongoing, click Manage Participants at the bottom of the Zoom window. The participants panel opens, and you can individually mute people and disable their cameras by clicking the microphone or camera icon next to their name. The option to mute everyone at once is at the bottom of this pane.



Mute upon entry. You can also mute everyone automatically when they join a call. Before the call starts, go to the web portal and navigate to Settings > Meetings and choose the meeting. At the bottom of the screen, click to Edit the meeting. Look for Meeting Options and check the box next to Mute participants upon entry.

If you didn't set it up ahead of time, you can still mute people upon entry when you start the meeting. In the same panel shown above, look for the More option. Click it and choose Mute participants upon entry. You'll also see here an option to let participants unmute themselves. That's a useful setting if you want people to be able to speak up or ask questions at an appropriate time.