



THE 33RD
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VIRTUAL

ZOOM INTERACTIVE FEATURES

Let's start from the very beginning of your session. You might need a couple of minutes to finish your setup or to wait for everyone to join. What you want to avoid is an awkward moment of silence and waiting. A good thing to do here is to activate chat. So go ahead and start a chat conversation. You can even start with something off topic to **break the ice**, such as asking participants what Netflix series they are watching at the moment.

During your presentation, there are two main options for enabling participants to take part in a discussion: **chat** and **raise hand function**. Participants can send their questions or they can comment on what you are saying in **chat**, and you can decide whether you react to them immediately or after your presentation.

Raise hand function is handy to use when a participant wants to get a turn to speak without interrupting anyone. In that case the host will see a raised hand icon next to a participant's name in the list and can give him or her a turn to speak.

You can also ask a question and wait for participants to response either in chat or through raise hand function.

A great way to enable **group work** in Zoom is **breakout rooms**. You can assign several separate sessions for participants where they will be able to interact only with the members of their group. Breakout rooms work well for collaborating and discussing a specific topic. After a discussion in a breakout room, for example, one member of a group can share the group's findings or ideas with everyone else.

When people are attending online sessions, there are many possible distractions and it is not always easy to stay focused during the teaching session. Especially if you are having a lecture or a presentation that lasts more than 15 minutes, you need to break it down and give everyone a chance to participate. On top of discussion tools, in Zoom you can make your sessions more dynamic and activate participants with the help

of **polls**. Allocate a couple of minutes to a poll to find out participants' opinions or to check their comprehension. That will also give everyone, including you, a mini-break and an opportunity to refocus.

If you want to enable yourself or the meeting's participants to point to something or to collaborate simultaneously on a shared screen, **annotation and whiteboarding** are tools for that. The **annotation** feature allows you to doodle, spotlight and insert text on whatever is on a shared screen (a slide, document, website, etc). It is very useful for drawing attention to a particular concept or for commenting on a slide. Another similar feature for annotating on a screen is **whiteboard**. The difference between these two tools is that annotation lets you draw on a shared screen while whiteboard lets you draw on a blank white screen. Both features allow simultaneous collaboration.

If you want to make sure your students are actually paying attention to your lecture and not just having Zoom on while browsing something else on the Internet, you might want to use the **attendee attention tracking** feature. After the session, you will be able to generate reports with participants' "attention score". You can let students know about this.

GENERAL TIPS FOR MORE ENGAGING SESSIONS

At the start of a session, especially if it is your first zoom meeting or teaching, **let your participants know how they can interact with you**. Will you be checking the chat window? Should they raise a hand if they have something to say?

To maintain eye contact with the audience and create a more personal connection with them, remember to **look at the webcam** instead of looking down at your slides. Imagine if you were in a traditional classroom and you would not look at your audience during your teaching. Other non-verbal communication skills such as **gestures, intonation and facial expressions**, will make your presentation more engaging.

If the network connection allows, ask your participants to **have video on**. That will help you to have a two-way communication with them, see who is present and spot their immediate reactions. Audio, however, should be muted for everyone, except for the person speaking, in order to avoid background noise.

Remember that it is hard to stay focused for the whole session. For longer online sessions, **deliver your content in smaller sections**. Make sure to activate your audience after 10-15 minutes of presentation.

I highly recommend to **test the features** you are going to use, e.g. with your colleagues, in a test session prior to the actual online session. Don't try new tools for the first time in a live session. You can also have another person **co-host a session** with you. Co-hosting means that two or more people can control the session. In this case you can divide responsibilities. One person could be in charge of content

delivery while the other can take care of the administrative side of things such as managing participants.

It takes time to adapt to the current challenges we are facing. But the situation is definitely also an opportunity to develop your teaching, learn new tools (which we luckily have available), experiment with your methods or try something you have been postponing to try. And maybe eventually this will lead to making teaching and learning more effective.