

Basic Precautions to Guard against Zoom Bombers

With the sudden proliferation of the online conference platform Zoom to keep our world moving with some level of normalcy, some people have decided to take advantage of this platform to break in meetings and cause chaos, particularly by flooding the meeting with obscenities. These individuals have been termed Zoom bombers. It is also possible that people could break in and listen in on meetings where private information is shared. So in light of these realities, Zoom is taking some precautions, and we are making some recommendations for you to keep your meetings on track. Zoom's precautions go into effect Monday, April 5, and will impact meetings you have already had scheduled moving forward.

Changes Zoom has made:

1. Zoom has enabled passwords for meetings. If you are joining by clicking on a meeting link, there will be no change to your process. However, if you are calling in you will need a meeting password in addition to the meeting ID. If you have already scheduled meetings where you know people are calling in or typing in the meeting ID, you need to resend your invitation so that they have the password. Meetings scheduled moving forward will automatically include these passwords in the invitation.
2. Zoom has enabled waiting room as default. If the waiting room has been enabled, then as the host, you will need to allow participants to join. To do so, choose participants in the menu, and then you will have the choice of allowing all participants to join or you can allow them in on an individual level.
3. You still have the ability to override the default settings by changing it in your settings in your account.

Recommendations for managing meetings:

1. Meeting invitations that are shared in house should be relatively protected. These "attacks" are primarily happening in meetings that are advertised on social media, etc. Email invites that you have sent to your people most likely will not encounter these issues.
2. If someone joins you with just a phone number and does not speak, ask them to identify themselves. If you are uncomfortable about an unnamed presence joining the meeting, you can remove that person. Give them an opportunity before you remove them (they will not be allowed back in if you follow other recommendations) to drop out and call you and identify themselves and then rejoin the meeting.
3. You might consider disabling the option to join before host. This will automatically happen if you have the waiting room option marked. But if you don't want to leave waiting rooms in place, then make it so that people cannot join before you. However, if you are setting up meetings as a host but not planning to join those meetings, you want

to keep join before host enabled. Do be aware that no one will have the ability to remove participants if there is no host.

4. In settings, do not enable "Allow removed participants to rejoin meetings." Then a host can remove a participant and not rejoin.
5. If you know you are having a meeting where only the host will be sharing their screen, then choose in settings only host can share their screen.
6. If someone comes in and keeps joining using different IDs, then you can always assign everyone to go into breakout rooms. Manually assign, and put the Zoom bomber in their own room, put everyone else in their own breakout room, and then as the host, you join the breakout room with your people. Most likely the Zoom bomber will then get bored. It is possible the Zoom bomber will continue to send you as the host messages, but feel free to ignore those.
7. You can always stop the meeting and start a new one, sending new invites out to your people.
8. Finally, if someone does join you in this way, and you and your participants are of a mind to do so, you could always halt the meeting and collectively pray for the person. The bomber may continue their barrage of obscenities, but as the host you can mute and as everyone is praying they will likely have their eyes closed, so it will have minimal effect. But some will still get through. It is still an opportunity to share God's love with someone who is lost and seeking attention in ways that do not bring life. We may have an opportunity to share a different vision with that person in that moment. But again, decide on your group's comfort level with such things.

There will always be those who take advantage of services that encourage connection by seeking to divide. We are the people of the Body of Christ, though. We can choose to stay connected to each other even in the midst of such attempts to parse us up and disrupt. Take precautions, but don't let such brokenness overwhelm the good work you are doing for Jesus Christ.