

## Setting up and running online Sacramental Preparation Sessions

Online meetings have fast become the norm during the Pandemic, and it is a great way for people to gather and feel connected to other people, whilst being isolated at home.

For people to have online meetings, you need to have a stable internet connection, a computer or tablet/mobile device and finally, the use of an “online platform”. An online platform is a computer or mobile device programme, which makes it easy for many people to see and speak with each other, together in an online meeting. You can download these programmes either by going to their websites on a computer or using the app store on your mobile device.

You may have heard of “online platforms” such as **Zoom** or **Microsoft Teams**.

Before we look the practical aspects of gathering people together online, let’s look at the equipment you might need to use.

- First, make sure you know where your camera is on your device. Almost all laptops or mobile devices like smart phones or tablets/iPads have a camera on the top of the screen, facing you as well as a built-in microphone. If you don’t have a camera (you may have a personal computer at a desk, for example) you may need to purchase a “USB camera with a built-in microphone”. You can purchase these easily at places like Argos for around £14.99. They simply plug into your computer and enable you to be seen and heard in an online meeting. But all laptops and mobile devices these days come equipped with a front-facing camera and built in microphone.
- Next, download your online platform programme. As mentioned, most people use Zoom or Microsoft Teams these days. We will use Zoom as an example. Simply type into your search engine (Google) “Zoom Download” and click on the first result. You will see a blue “Download” button. Click that and follow the on-screen instructions to download the Zoom programme.
- Once you have downloaded the Zoom programme, it is strongly recommended having a look at the basic guides on how to use Zoom and operate the basic functions such as turning your microphone on, screen sharing and selecting hosts. Please have a look at the following web address for support around all these aspects and more  
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/201137166>

## Practical aspects of getting people together for an online meeting

- Inform anyone you wish to attend the online meeting, of the date and time with plenty of notice. This will give anyone who does not have an online platform, the opportunity to download it and learn the basics of the programme.
- A Consent Form will need to be used for any meeting involving children: <https://www.csas.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-VIDEO-CONFERENCING-CONSENT-FORM.doc> Please note the points on page 2 of the document that highlight what must be done to ensure a safe online meeting. Particularly that at least two adult leaders must be present throughout the session until all the participants have logged off. Further Safeguarding guidance is available here: <https://www.csas.uk.net/safeguarding-resources/>
- Prepare your meeting resources as you usually would. Make sure if you are using a video or a PowerPoint Presentation, you have a look at it before the meeting so you are happy with the content you will be providing.
- Identify one or two Catechists or people who can help during the online meeting. It is good practice to have a person who leads the meeting vocally, but also have another person who can be the “online host”. An online host is someone who can make sure the online platform runs smoothly. Sorting out any technical issues or if people are having difficulty being able to connect to the online platform. This enables the “vocal host” to carry on undisturbed leading the meeting.
- Set an agenda so your meeting runs on time. Online meetings can be difficult for many people to maintain focus, for long periods of time, whilst they are at home. It can be surprising how many small distractions you have in your own home, such as someone knocking on the door, energy from other members of the household or even pets.
- Have a think about how you wish the actual meeting to play out. Do you want it to be a big group discussion from the beginning? Or do you want it to be more structured in an informative way, like showing the attendees information with little input from the group until some questions near the end? Deciding on these aspects will help the meeting to run smoothly and also help the leaders stay focused on the topic rather than getting distracted trying to get the meeting back on track.

## Further assistance

Finally, if you do have any questions of a technical nature please don't hesitate to get in touch via [formation@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:formation@rcaol.org.uk). If we can't answer your query ourselves, we can put you in touch with someone who can.