

# The Ultimate Guide to listening during a Zoom Meeting

**Host Edition**

**2022**

**Get more from  
every participant**

**Oscar Trimboli**



**Active listeners notice what's said.**

**Deep listeners explore what isn't said.**

# What others say about the guide

<b>Kevin</b>	<b>What an amazing resource!</b> The Guide focuses on practical ways that a Host can increase the effectiveness and impact of Zoom meetings. I like the list of questions that a host can use to increase engagement, especially the specificity of timing in the meeting flow.
<b>Leanne</b>	There is lots of amazing information here. <b>I really like the reference to the intimate, interactive, and broadcast.</b> It helps me finesse my listening depending on what kind of meeting I'm hosting
<b>Rachel</b>	<b>More than a guide to listening - It covers the full cycle of meeting planning, execution, and follow-up.</b> It is not only beneficial for online meetings via Zoom, but it is also for offline meetings.
<b>Ammara</b>	<b>A must-read pre-Zoom meeting guide - clear and informative.</b>
<b>Brendon</b>	This guide gives me ways to listen and aids group members by <b>creating an environment to listen to each other.</b>
<b>Natasha</b>	It's an awesome guide - <b>really detailed and comprehensive. Very thought-provoking too!</b>
<b>Craig</b>	<b>It is a very comprehensive guide.</b> The 'Cost of Not Listening' highlights virtual meetings' toll and why we need to be more conscious.
<b>Sharee</b>	<b>This is an expert system</b> for improving listening in virtual settings
<b>Barbara</b>	This is fantastic! Great information, very useful for my work. <b>Everything you wanted to know about listening during Zoom meetings (and things you didn't even know you need to know)</b>
<b>Lani</b>	<b>Design and deliver impactful and unmissable meetings</b>
<b>Lindsay</b>	Wow! Truly - this is an exceptional guide with SO MUCH insight, not just on how to listen and be an effective Zoom host, <b>even how to use Zoom as a listening tool.</b> It's insightful, practical, incredibly tactical, and easy to understand. Everything a guide should be...and then some!
<b>David</b>	A tool to ensure that your zoom meetings are efficient and effective. <b>I'm relieved that there is a resource to navigate the "new normal" of online meetings.</b> Excited to implement strategies to ensure meetings are a productive and effective use of time.
<b>George</b>	This guide has provided me an insight and details to have a more successful and engaging environment pre-during-post a video conference. <b>The details provided to help guide you through a Zoom video conference are like none I have seen before.</b>
<b>Jeff</b>	<b>Comprehensive, useful, and thought-provoking.</b> I liked the differences in how to do breakouts if the people know each other or not.
<b>Natasha</b>	This guide offers insight and frameworks about how (Zoom) hosts <b>can listen in the digital space, regardless of audience size, and why that is so important for the future of work.</b>

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# Welcome

This guide is a recipe for creating consistently powerful video conferencing experiences for you and your teams from the perspective of listening. It will provide practical and actionable tips and techniques to help you overcome internal and external distractions, design the ideal listening environment, and move from frustration to potent communications and results.

Zoom has moved from a noun to a verb in the workplace.

For a Zoom meeting Host, getting the most from you, the participants, the agenda, and the outcomes is a function of how well you create and curate an engaging environment for your participants.

Based on our research of meeting participants, there are many barriers to a productive and successful Zoom meeting, including distractions, internet bandwidth, a small percentage of participants dominating, poorly communicated and agreed agendas, and limited protocols about how the questions, conversations, and decisions should flow,

The number one reason participants do not engage or provide discretionary effort during Zoom Meetings is that they feel ignored or not listened to, or their opinion doesn't matter.

After multiple requests from Hosts, participants and organizations, we have created this guide to help you - the Host get the maximum impact from the most limited resource in your working life - Time.

By implementing the tips, techniques, strategies, and practices in this guide, you will get four hours a week back in your schedule.

**Before reading and implementing the guide, [take the 7-minute Listening Quiz](#) to understand the barriers to your listening.**

Thanks for Listening



PS - Something you don't know about me is that I've worked with technology and telecommunications for the past 30 years and have been helping organizations make the most of video conferencing since 1996. During the last two decades, he has seen video technology evolve from elites and expensive boardrooms for just a few people to something available everywhere on every device.

# Introduction

A video conference is a battle for attention. Whether the meeting is short or long, small or large, intimate or interactive, we come up against some natural barriers to listening.

We have gathered, connected, and cooperated for millennia — you have evolved for face-to-face interactions in real life rather than through a screen or the tiny black dot of a webcam.

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## Humans are social creatures

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The good news is humans can adapt. We can mold and evolve our thinking and habits while altering the technology to serve us better. Video conferences are now a necessary fixture of our working lives, so it is high time we started making them work better for us. As hosts, there is a great responsibility to create an environment where video conferences are productive and impactful.



Great video meeting hosts are great listeners. They listen to the words, the room, what's **not** being said, and the non-verbal cues. They listen to what people mean, rather than only what they say. They know that listening happens before, during, and after a meeting.

This guide is a recipe for creating consistently powerful video conferencing experiences for you and your teams from the perspective of listening. It will provide practical and actionable tips and techniques to help you overcome internal and external distractions, design the ideal listening environment, and move from frustration to potent communications and results.

When we don't listen during video conferences, we pay the price: unproductive meetings, wasted time, disconnection, confusion, conflict, misunderstandings, and people feeling unheard and undervalued.

**This is a VERY comprehensive guide; it will take time to learn, understand and practice the tips and techniques. It will be worth it. This guide will arm you with the tools you need to amplify your impact as a host and create spaces every participant listens to each other.**

**Please read the guide from start to finish before you jump into applying any new methods to the other participants.**

## Who Is This Guide For

This guide is for people who **host** video conferences in their workplace. It's about creating a great listening environment during a video conference.

**It's not a technology guide, although we will explain software-specific settings to enable another level of listening for you and the participants.**

The frantic pace many people perform at in the workplace creates a productivity paradox where they think more meetings, discussions, and debates lead to higher quality discussions, decisions, and impacts. The opposite is true – fewer but more focused meetings make a more significant impact.

Whether you are an executive, leader, manager, customer service representative, finance professional, human resources specialist, sales, or business owner – this guide will boost the impact of your next video conference for you and everyone else.

This framework for listening in a video conference will transform your meetings. They will be shorter, more people will engage and contribute, and the results you achieve will have a more significant impact with less miscommunication, frustration, re-work, and budget and timeline overruns.

[The Appendix](#) provides additional information about lightning, microphones, video, framing, and room acoustics.

This is not a guide about using Zoom meetings or webinars, although we provide specific tips to enhance the Host and Participants' listening experience with software-specific settings.

Our research from 1,410 workplace listeners shows you will get four hours a week back in your schedule using these techniques.

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## Who Is This Guide Not For

This guide is for Hosts using **Zoom Meetings or Zoom webinars**, NOT Cisco WebEx, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams.

**The listening techniques can be used in other video-conferencing software.** The specific references to menu options and screens are specifically for Zoom.

This guide is for **hosts** rather than participants. The knowledge of these techniques for the host will dramatically alter the participants' video-conference listening effectiveness.

**A good host will get the participants to listen to the active speaker.**

**A great host will get the participants to listen to each other.**



## How To Use This Guide

Before you start cooking, you need to know the ingredients and understand how all the flavors come together with a proven recipe. **This guide is the recipe.**

This guide begins by taking you through the menu items to help you understand how select the appropriate recipe:

- Why video conference listening is challenging
- The cost of not listening
- The valuable opportunity video conferencing creates
- Your listening patterns and habits

You'll get the recipe that will take you from going through the motions to making memorable and impactful meetings.

This guide explores in depth the three meeting types:



**Intimate meetings** are typically discussions involving two or three people.



**Interactive meetings** are dialogue around a project or Group between three to ten people.



**Broadcast meetings**, such as a training session, a town hall, or an organization-wide announcement. These typically involve 20+ people and the opportunity for engagement.

Keep an eye out for these icons throughout the guide, as they will provide context-specific tips and techniques. You can jump to the most relevant section for the next meeting you need to host. Stepping through the tips and techniques will help you and your participants get the most out of video meetings.

This guide explores listening - before, during, and after the video conference while it teaches you how to design a focused environment for listening.

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**Host Tip** Be thoughtful and deliberate about the use of video software. Workplace calendar software often defaults to automatically creating video meetings.

It can be tempting to video by default, **yet audio-only could be the most effective option.**

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Guides and recipes liberate your thinking rather than constraining it. Any time you create a new dish, you need all the ingredients and the recipe before commencing.

When you are starting something for the first time, checklists matter. [Listen to this 6-minute TED Talk about The Importance & Value of the Checklist by Dr. Atul Gawande](#) – the doctor makes a compelling case for the impact of checklists on making experts even better.

My wife Jennie reads the recipe completely every time she bakes.

If I cook a recipe for the first time, I will follow the recipe completely.

Yet when it's the 20th time, might adjust the recipe and ingredients and create something that honors the past while creating something new.

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**Read the guide thoroughly and entirely initially - from start to finish.**

When you understand the comprehensive range of meetings and techniques, use the **Quick Navigation** below to jump to the meeting format you need next.

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It will be the fastest and most effective way to create memorable video conference meetings.

You will get the most from this guide if you take what you learn across these pages and implement it in your video conferences.

Remember, a great host will help the participants listen to each other. Implementing multiple changes in how you host a meeting with a group of participants will create cognitive dissonance and confusion. It may make the opposite impact on what you were hoping to achieve.

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**Implement only one change for the next meeting and master that technique before you attempt the next one.**

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I am sure you can master many things simultaneously. The lesson for the Host is that it's all about your audience. A rapid change in your technique will confuse participants who are used to your specific style.

Thoughtful, thorough, and deliberate adjustments over time will create a sustainable change for the participants over 90 to 180 days.

The participants will notice your adjustment when you consistently integrate one change at a time. They will sometimes make subtle and significant changes in their energy and engagement during the video conference.

## Quick Navigation

After thoroughly reading **The Ultimate Guide to Listening in a Video Conference**, I recommend you return to this

**Quick Navigation** will allow you to select the meeting you will be hosting and let you jump directly to the part of the guide and improve.

The **Quick Navigation** will help you choose the type of meeting you are hosting – Intimate, Interactive, or Broadcast

Depending on when the session is taking place, you can quickly jump to the meeting timing that makes sense via the

Selecting the blue hyperlink takes you immediately to that section of the guide.



**Intimate** - discussions involving two or three people







**Interactive** - dialogue around a project, team, or group with three to ten people











**Broadcast** - 20+ people including announcements



When you want to return to **Quick Navigation** rapidly, click on this icon, which will bring you back to **Q**

	<b>Intimate - discussions involving two or three people</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Host</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Before</b> 	<a href="#">Decide</a> on which meeting format aligns with the purpose or outcome of the meeting.	<a href="#">Confirm</a> with the participant that the original intent of the meeting is still the intention.	Check that both of you are making <a href="#">progress</a> toward the agreed outcome. As the Host, you are responsible for checking the compass – remember the setting is mutually agreed.
<b>During</b> 	Together the participants should <a href="#">define</a> how they will use their time productively. The Host is responsible for the process of HOW to communicate during the meeting rather than WHAT is said.	<a href="#">Check</a> that WHAT and HOW it's communicated during the meeting aligns with the original purpose and process.	<a href="#">Validate</a> what has been said, NOT said and what other perspectives to explore.
<b>After</b> 	The difference between hearing and listening is <a href="#">action</a> . The Host is responsible for progress and action	Consistently <a href="#">communicate</a> progress rather than resolution or completed tasks.	Acknowledge and <a href="#">celebrate</a> progress toward the Outcome.

	<b>Interactive - dialogue around a project, team or group with three to ten people</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Host</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Group and Outcome</b>
<b>Before</b> 	<a href="#">Anticipate</a> the participants' mindset-what they are thinking, feeling, and doing about the purpose of the meeting.	Plan on how to regularly <a href="#">engage</a> participants utilizing tailored and spontaneous methods.	<a href="#">Understand</a> that the Group is more than the sum of all participants. Understand that the Outcome of the meeting may change from your preparation.
<b>During</b> 	<a href="#">Connect</a> continuously during the conversation with the participants, the meeting's timing, and progress towards an Outcome.	<a href="#">Notice</a> WHAT and HOW information is communicated by all Participants, especially the silent ones.	Notice the energy of the Group and consistently <a href="#">encourage</a> their engagement. Encourage the Group to notice little and significant progress towards their outcome.
<b>After</b> 	<a href="#">Confirm</a> the progress made during the meeting.	<a href="#">Monitor</a> the progress and completion to ensure they have the support required.	<a href="#">Communicate</a> regularly to the Group their progress towards their Outcome.

	<b>Broadcast - 20+ people including announcements</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Host</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Group or Outcome</b>
<b>Before</b> 	<a href="#">Ask</a> three questions of the audience to understand their current mindset.	Rather than treat the Group as one system, create a sub-set or cohort <a href="#">perspective</a> . This makes participants feel like an individual in an audience.	Deconstruct the audience input into digestible <a href="#">themes</a> . This will create the basis for attention-grabbing stories and statistics, creating relevance for them.
<b>During</b> 	<a href="#">Acknowledge</a> the themes in response to the three questions.	The best listening cultures are storytelling cultures. Use aligned stories to maintain their <a href="#">attention</a> .	<a href="#">Observe</a> the energy of the Group by regularly asking for their reactions via the software.
<b>After</b> 	<a href="#">Announce</a> what was heard during the broadcast and when you will communicate actions.	<a href="#">Acknowledge and appreciate</a> the audience and their interactions.	<a href="#">Collect</a> all questions, comments, and feedback. Summarize and communicate the themes to all people invited, rather than only attendees.

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