

SPEEDY GUIDE TO ZOOM!

There can't be many people who haven't heard of Zoom. Since COVID-19 took life by the scruff of the neck earlier this year, everybody has heard of or seen someone using Zoom for "Very Important Business Meetings" or keeping in touch with distant loved ones.

But what's all the fuss? Especially when we can see people on Skype, or share photos or videos on What's App (other video-chat and photo-sharing software is available)? The answer is basically that (behind the scenes) someone has control over what can and can't, should and shouldn't happen within the chatrooms. They also predetermine the length of sessions – so there's no staying online when your parents have gone to bed!

HOW DO I ACCESS ZOOM?

You can use Zoom on a smartphone, tablet (not the edible type), laptop or desktop computer. Before you start a meeting or class, you will have a meeting code (generally ten numbers long) and a password (typically six or seven random numbers and letters – and it's important that you enter the capital letters as capital letters and small ones small!). The easiest way is to install Zoom on your chosen device(s) – you can have it on more than one (and do silly things like look at yourself from different angles!); in fact, this might be the best thing to try before you start classes so you can work out which way works for you. As Zoom's "best practice" to ensure online safety advises that users should all have Zoom accounts, we ask you to sign up for one: visit this website zoom.us/signin and click on the orange button top right. Go through the simple stages – and it's free!

FIRST CLASS

Armed with your Meeting ID and Password, sign into Zoom on your chosen device(s). You should then see yourself on video. You may receive a message about connecting to audio; if you do, click the positive response (they vary, depending on the device used). You may initially just have black rectangle with a stylised person icon – this just means that you have not Started Video. On tablets and phones, touching the screen gives you access to lots of options. Do so now and you'll see an icon somewhere on the screen that looks like a video recorder with a red cross through it. Click that and you should see yourself.

Now for one reason or another, you may not want to share your video. This should not be a problem if you are learning Spanish, but may not be very practical if you're halfway through a Pilates move and get stuck... The choice is ultimately yours and we always advise learners in our more physical classes always to work within what they know to be their own limits, but our tutors can only prevent you being silly if they can see how well you are mimicking their moves and following their instructions!

You may then receive another message saying that the host is not ready to allow you to join chat. Don't worry, all is well – some hosts (maybe including your tutor) choose to wait until everyone is present before starting, and you'll be admitted automatically when they click a button at their end to do that.

Once the host has allowed access, your screen will fill with video images of the host (your tutor) and your fellow classmates. If you are using a laptop, you can see lots of people, but on a smartphone you will see fewer. You may also see people at that stage connecting to Audio and Video.

And that's really all there is to it. Once everyone is in the room, the class can start.

Have fun.