Recommendations for working from home
How to make the most of virtual meetings (host)

Virtual meetings are different from face-to-face meetings. Yet working together successfully and efficiently is also possible in the digital space. By following some of the best practices for virtual meetings held via conference systems such as Zoom you may increase the success of the virtual exchange. Let’s take a look at them:

At the start of the meeting

• **Clarify and communicate the reason/goal/agenda** prior to the meeting (circular the agenda via e-mail beforehand or compile/display it on a shared whiteboard during the meeting)

• **Technical preparations and support offers**: Start the meeting room five to ten minutes earlier to ensure a prompt start.

• **Welcome and check-in**: Welcome your participants and start the conversation by asking a question which all of them can briefly answer (check-in).

• **Provide a brief overview**: Clearly state the reason/goal, agenda and duration of the meeting at the beginning. Go over the different functions of the online tool (video, mute, chat, view, screensharing) to the extent the participants may require.

• **Assign roles for the meeting**: Assign roles such as “technical support”, “minute-taker” and “time-keeper” to assist the host/presenter in bigger meetings.

• **Explain collaboration etiquette**: Agree on collaboration ground rules for the meeting (e.g. see hand signals for speaking request or votes/polls, conduct in case of technical interruption, etc.).

During the meeting

• **Keep an eye on progress and agenda**: Provide a brief summary at regular intervals. As a basic principle, virtual communication should be more explicit, i.e. ask participants to express agreement or disagreement via the relevant hand signals.

• **Facilitate a dialog**: Make sure that every participant feels included. Determine the order of speakers via chat and agree with participants to click “raise hand” to ensure every person gets the opportunity to speak.

• **Plan for breaks and a variety in activities**: Ensure to also have regular breaks (toilet, drinks, fresh air, etc.) and short break-ups (see ideas for mixing up) in virtual meetings.
At the end of the meeting

- **Round off and check-out:** Stick to the agreed time schedule and conclude the meeting with a short summary/take-aways or question which can be answered by everyone (check-out). Let the participants know when you will circulate the minutes or where the recap of results can be found.

### Hand signals for requesting to speak

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General request to speak</th>
<th>Direct contribution to current topic of discussion</th>
<th>Veto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hand signals for votes/polls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ideas to mix things up and refresh

- 5-10 minutes active break/fresh air (after 30, 45, 60 or 90 minutes of meeting)
- 5-10 minutes exercises (see Healthy Campus Bonn poster and video)
- 30 seconds drawing contest (e.g. favorite corona leisure activity)
- Icebreaker: Make two statements which are true and one which is false—and guess which is the false one
- Brief vote/ranking on a poll
- Breakout rooms: Split participants into small groups to work on specific points
- Virtual walk: two participants go for a walk while discussing a specific question over the phone. Rejoin the meeting after X minutes.