![Cambridge Assessment English]

Quick-start guide to teaching English online

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Teaching English online

Teaching English online doesn't have to be very different from teaching English in a face-to-face classroom. This guide will help you choose a platform, show you how to get started with different platform features and think about how to adapt activities, strategies and resources for teaching in an online classroom.

SPEAKING

When you teach speaking online, you can listen and watch students, monitor their language, give feedback, and encourage participation and engagement – just as you do in a face-to-face classroom. As well as using your voice, you can use the chat box, the whiteboard or share a document on your screen to clarify questions and interact with students. You can delay your feedback until the end of a task, or you can give immediate feedback and support. One advantage of teaching speaking online is that you can record the class – you and your students can watch the lesson again to learn from good examples or focus on areas for improvement.

READING

When you teach reading online you need to think about replacing books and paper handouts with digital versions. Many videoconference platforms, such as Zoom and Skype, have a screen-sharing feature which you can use to display digital texts. Alternatively, you can take and share a screenshot of reading materials, copyright permitting. You and your students can also use the drawing tools on platforms like Zoom for highlighting text.

LISTENING

When you teach listening online it's crucial to use the right equipment. You need to check that students can listen to videos and audio files, as well as to you! On most platforms, you can share audio files, which will enable all students to hear tracks clearly on their own computers. Another option is to play the track on your computer, but this will result in a lower quality audio track for your students. Most listening tasks can be done online with the whole class using the whiteboard, chat box or screen-sharing features, including pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening tasks.

WRITING

Teaching writing online can be fun and enjoyable if you know what tools can help you. At lower levels, you can work at sentence level using the whiteboard or shared screen. At higher levels, you might focus your online classes on preparing students for writing. You can use breakout rooms for pair or group discussions to help students analyse a model text, come up with creative ideas and plan the language they will use. You may wish to set the actual writing work for independent study or set collaborative writing tasks, for example, in a shared Google Docs document, where each student is able to write at the same time on the same document.

GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

You can teach grammar and vocabulary online in a very similar way to how you would teach it in the face-to-face classroom: exploring the structures and items through reading and listening texts, presenting them or guiding discovery using the virtual whiteboard, and following up with practice tasks. However, the online environment also gives you the opportunity to use other digital tools in lessons and for independent study. Here are three popular digital tools you could use:

- Kahoot!
  Kahoot! provides game-based learning activities and can help you check understanding.

- [Quizlet](#)
  Quizlet can help learners memorise information, such as vocabulary items.

- [Quiz your English](#)
  Quiz your English is a language game where learners play against other users from around the world.

CLASS SIZES, GROUPING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Online teaching can be effective with larger classes as well as one-to-one classes or smaller groups, but you do need to be well prepared and organised. Think about the stages of the lesson in advance – what you can do as a whole class; when students can work in pairs and groups; how you will get them in and out of groups quickly and easily; how long activities and transitions will take; and how you are going to interact with and give feedback to students. Routines and timekeeping are really important, and so is ensuring that all the students log in on time and are ready to start promptly – especially if you're sharing a platform with other teachers.

- Instead of grouping students around different desks, in some online classrooms you can send students to different breakout rooms.
- You may be able to be flexible with class length and size, for example, instead of an hour with the whole class, you could set independent work and run three shorter 20-minute classes with smaller groups to differentiate learning.
- Students can use symbols in the chat to show they want to answer, or to show they are finished.
- Leave a bit longer for students to think and answer. Sometimes there's a delay in audio and it takes a while for everyone to get used to an online classroom.
- Take things step by step when you use a new platform – don't try out all the new features at once!

MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Motivating and engaging students in an online classroom is a different challenge from the one we face in the real-life classroom. The key is to help learners establish good rapport with each other and to grow their confidence by encouraging them to participate in lessons.
- Model good communication skills and behaviour to show the students how you want them to behave with each other.
- Increase engagement levels by including tasks that allow learners to personalise the topic or language of a lesson.
- Use breakout rooms to give students the opportunity to talk in pairs or groups.
- In whole class situations, use activities that encourage learners to ask each other questions.
- Use stickers or emojis to praise, encourage, and develop a positive learning atmosphere, especially if you're not using video and learners can't see you.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Finally, although many platforms only require a learner to enter their name and surname, if your learners are under the age of 16, you or your school should get permission from their parents before you ask them to sign up. It's also necessary to get permission from a young learner's parents before asking them to register with a tool or website outside of the normal learning platform. Remember that it is your responsibility or the responsibility of your school to look at the privacy policy of any tool or platform to understand how student data will be stored or used, and who can see that data.

When a platform uses email sign up, remember that most online services require users to be over 13 to be eligible to create an account. However, often younger users can sign up through family or school accounts. Just remember that these rules change from service to service and country to country, so please check.

Choosing an online platform

The platform that's best for you depends on your teaching context. An audio and/or video feed is probably essential, but the features you need depend on the students you teach and the kind of activities you want to do. With young learners, it's nice to be able to give stars and badges, but with older groups, you'll probably use the whiteboard or screen-share and breakout rooms more.
Here is a list of features to consider, and a comparison of three platforms:

Feature	Zoom	Google Hangouts	Microsoft Teams
Number of students (free)	100	10	250
Whiteboard	✓	✗	✓
Show slides	✓	✓	✓
Screen share	✓	✓	✓
Share materials and slides	✓	✓	✓
Hand-raising function	✓	✗	✓
Audio feed	✓	✓	✓
Video feed	✓	✓	✓
Group rooms	✓ breakout rooms	✗	✓ channels
Filters to add to faces	✗	✓	✗
Text chat box	✓	✓	✓
Give stars or badges	✗	✗	✓
Send emojis	✓	✓	✓
Record notes on platform	✓	✗	✓
Set and grade assignments	✗	✗	✓
View grades/progress	✗	✗	✓
Free subscription	✓	✓	✓
Premium subscription	✓	✓	✓

There are, however, many platforms available and you should find one that works best for you and your students. Here are some other popular options for you to consider:

Skype   Google Classroom   Blackboard   Whereby

Getting started with a platform

ZOOM

[Zoom](#) is a popular video-communications platform that is available on your desktop. It's popular because you can get large groups of people together on HD video – 100 video participants as standard – even in low-bandwidth environments. It's also very easy to use – start or join any meeting with just one click.

1. Opening Zoom
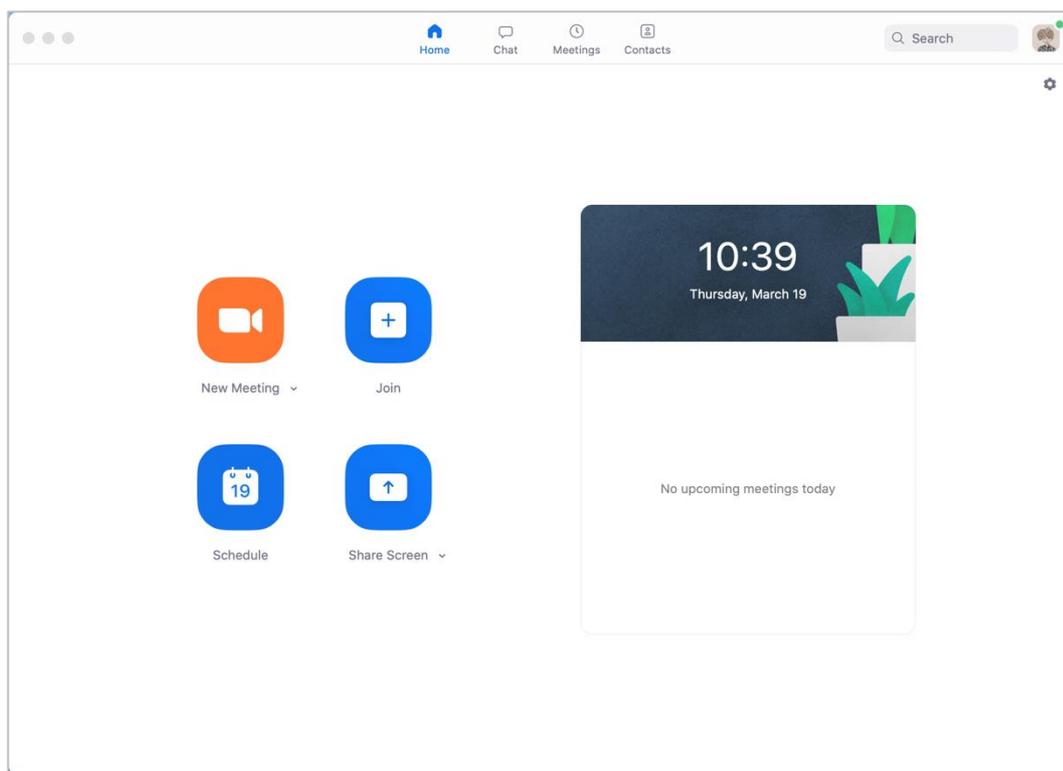
Screenshot from Zoom meeting https://zoom.us, last accessed 23.03.20

When you open Zoom, you will see a simple menu with four options:
- New Meeting
- Join
- Schedule
- Share Screen

2. New Meeting

Select the *New Meeting* button and you will arrive at the screen where you will spend most of your time.

From here, you can select the icons at the bottom of the screen to:
- invite participants
- manage participants
- share your screen
- open chat
- record the lesson
- assign breakout rooms.

Select *Invite* to add students to your lesson.

3. Inviting participants
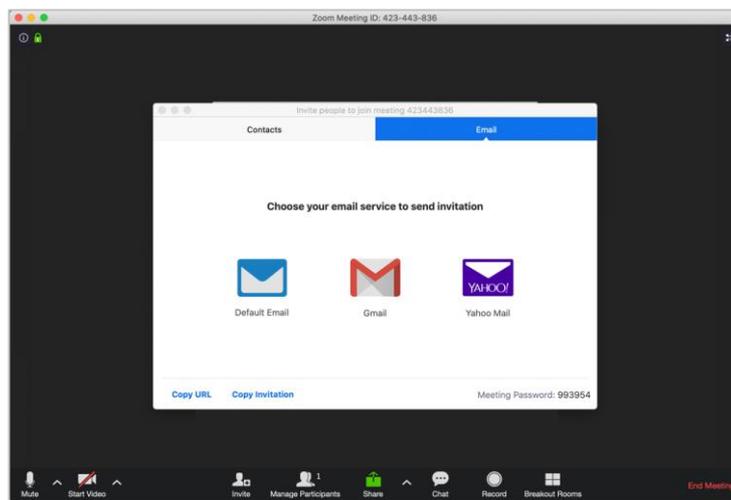
To join your lesson, your students will need to click on a link. You can create the link by clicking on *Invite* at the bottom of the main screen. Then, just click *Copy URL* and place it somewhere that your students can see. This could mean emailing the link to them, which you can do directly from Zoom, or placing it in a chat board that you may use with your students. After you have sent the link, you may also want to remind them of the class start time. Once

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your meeting is up and running, one of the most important buttons is S*hare*: this is the green square icon in the centre of the bottom of the screen with an 'up arrow'.

4. Share

When you click on the *Share* button you see a screen that gives you different sharing options.
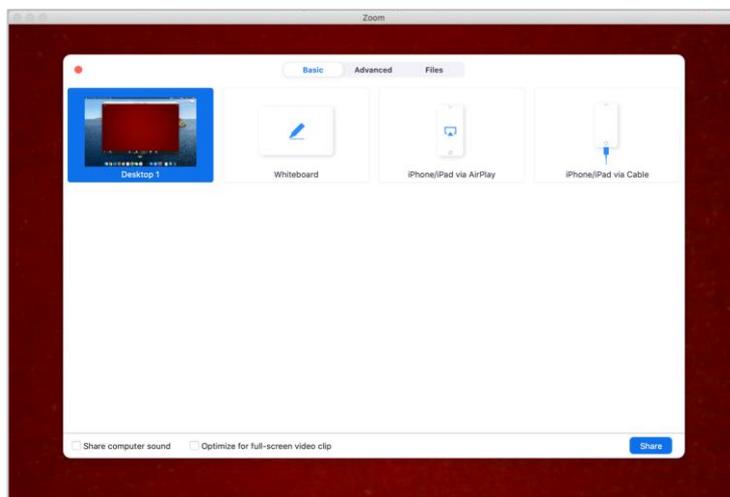
Screenshot from Zoom meeting https://zoom.us, last accessed 23.03.20

You can share your screen, a PowerPoint presentation, or any other document. Perhaps best of all though is the option to open the Whiteboard.

5. Whiteboard
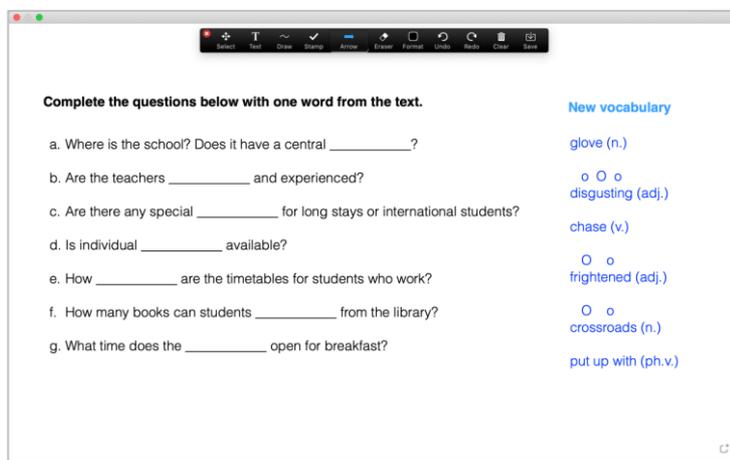
Screenshot from Zoom meeting https://zoom.us, last accessed 23.03.20

You can use Zoom's online whiteboard just like a real one. Here you can see a gapfill on the left and some new vocabulary that the teacher has recorded on the right. You can *Write*, *Draw*, *Spotlight*, and *Erase*. However, an advantage of a digital whiteboard is that you also have options to *undo*, *redo*, and *save*. You can also take screenshots of your whiteboard to share with your class.

6. Breakout rooms
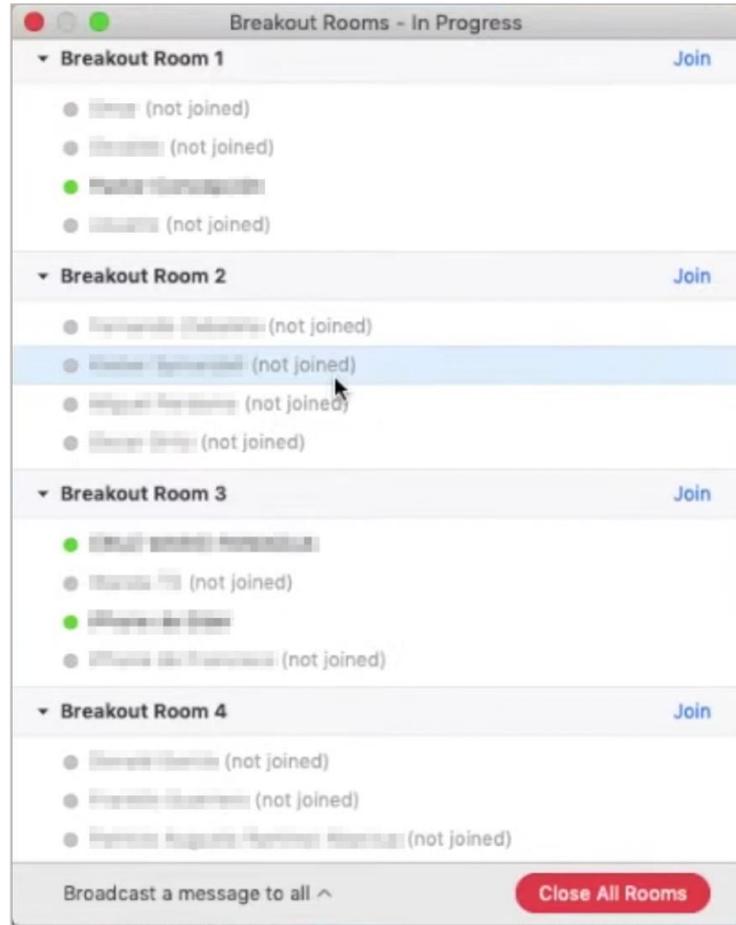
In class, we often want our students to work in small groups and this too is possible on Zoom. Just like opening the whiteboard, we can assign students to breakout rooms in just a few clicks. First, click the *breakout room* icon at the bottom-right of the meeting screen. Then you will have the option of assigning participants, or students, to different 'rooms'. You can choose how many students to put in each room (up to a maximum of 50 rooms) and you can decide on the groupings. Alternatively, you can let Zoom group your students for you. Once your students are working in their different breakout rooms, you can easily monitor them by joining a room and listening to their conversation. To move to the next group, just leave the room you're in and join the next.

7. Chat
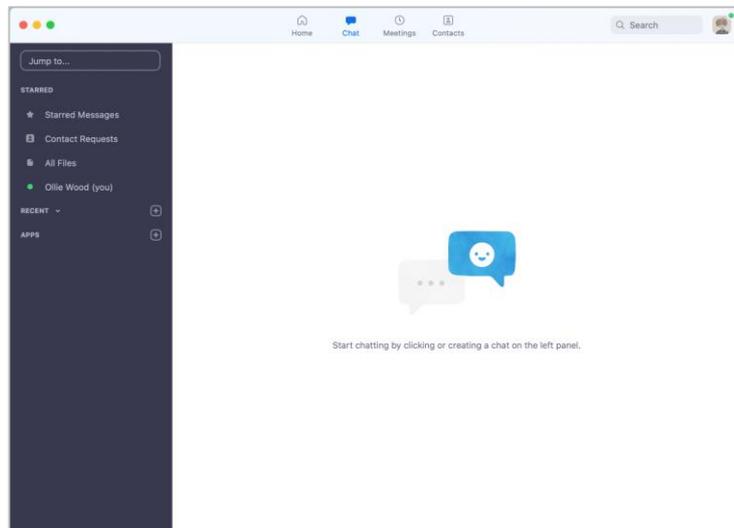
Screenshot from Zoom meeting https://zoom.us, last accessed 23.03.20

The last tool that you will want to use on Zoom is Chat. You can use this to give written instructions or, alternatively, you can use it to display errors and elicit corrections. You could even ask students to use the chat feature to present the results of their discussions in breakout rooms if this is more appropriate than reporting back orally. To open the chat menu, simply click the *chat* icon from the main meeting screen.

Example chat:

Teacher: Great work in the breakout rooms! I heard some really nice language, but I also heard some things I'm not too sure about! Have a look at these and see if you can correct them:
1. "She likes her job. She works for the same company for years."
2. "My brother fell off his bike, but he wasn't badly damaged."
3. "Technology is such important for us."

Arnau: I think the first is: She is working for the same company for years.
Maria: No. It's "She has worked for the same company for years".
Arnau: Yes. You are right!
Teacher: Good work, Maria! That's the one! What about the other two sentences?

8. Cost

The basic version of Zoom is free, but it does have some limitations, mainly that group meetings have a 40-minute time limit. To remove this limit and to get some additional features including User Management and Admin Feature Controls, there is a subscription fee.

9. Links to Zoom support

- Getting Started on Windows and Mac
- How do I invite others to join a meeting?
- Zoom pricing

GOOGLE HANGOUTS

Google Hangouts is Google's free video-conferencing tool that is available for teachers to use as part of Google Apps for Education. Up to 10 participants can join a Google Hangout at a time (more with a premium subscription). Google Hangouts is also seamlessly integrated into the other Google Apps (such as Drive), which means that other apps are already on hand and available for use.

1. Setting up a lesson
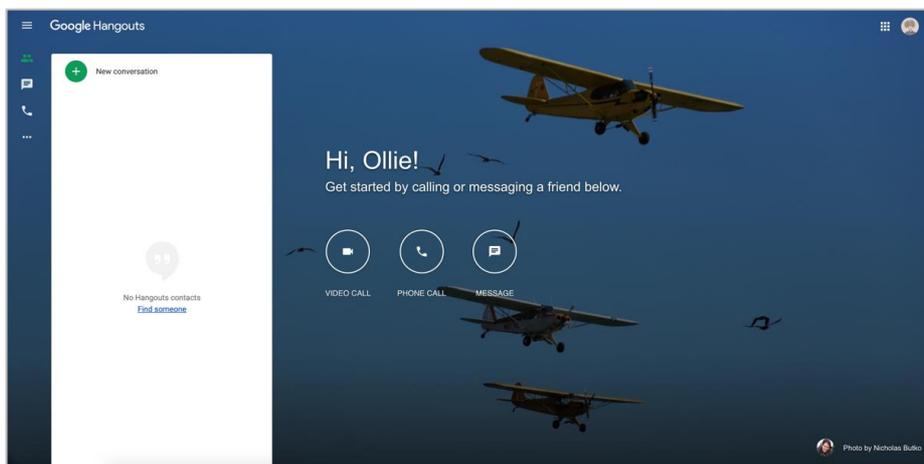
Screenshot of Google Hangouts, Last accessed 23.03.20.
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To add students to your lesson, simply click on one of the main buttons:
- Video Call
- Phone Call
- Message
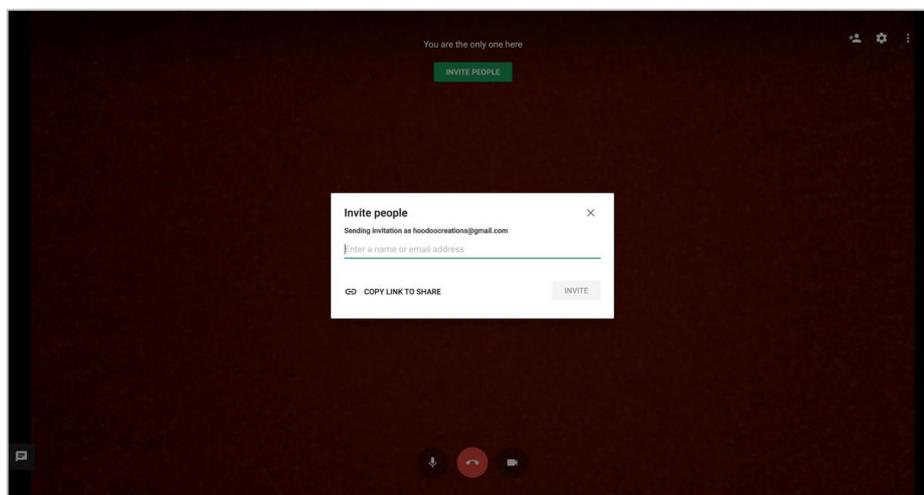
Screenshot of Google Hangouts, Last accessed 23.03.20.
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Select one of the buttons and you will be asked to invite people. Your first option is to type in your students email address and click *invite*. Your student will then receive an invitation to connect with you. Your second option is to click *copy link* and share that link with them. Clicking on that link will connect your student to the lesson.

2. Video calls

   Video is the main way that you will run your lessons, unless connectivity is a problem, and
   then you may wish to use audio instead. Once you have connected with your students, just
   click on their name and start the class by clicking on the *video call* icon below their name.

3. Using Message
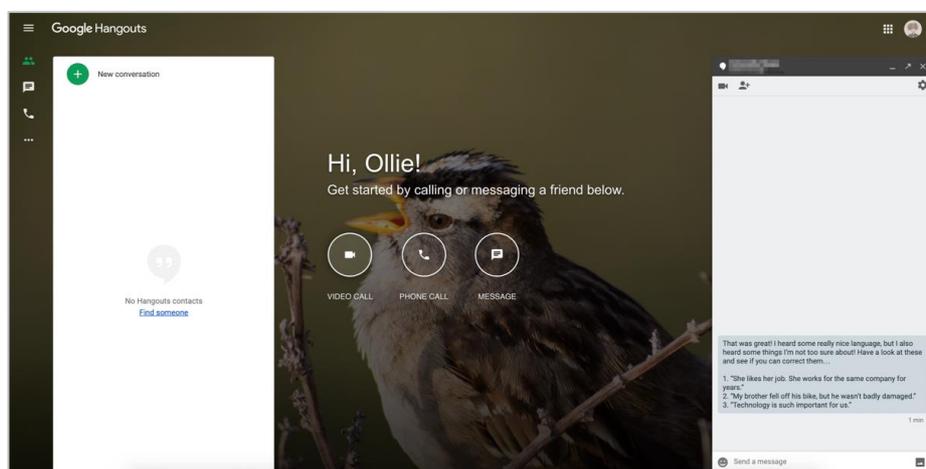
Screenshot of Google Hangouts, Last accessed 23.03.20.
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   You can use Message to give written instructions or alternatively, you can use it to display
   errors and elicit corrections. To open the message menu, simple click the *message* button
   from the main screen. You can see Message on the right of this screen.

4. Cost

   Google Hangouts is completely free. All that is required is for you and your students to have
   Google accounts – or at least an email address that is linked to a Google account. As
   mentioned above though, the free version is limited to just 10 participants, which is fine when
   working with individuals or small groups. However, if you would like to upgrade, there is a
   premium G-suite version available, which allows you to add more participants and has greater
   app integration.

5. Links to Google support

   - Get started with Hangouts
   - Start a group conversation
   - G Suite pricing plans

MICROSOFT TEAMS

Microsoft Teams is a digital hub that brings conversations, meetings, files and apps together in one place. With Microsoft Teams, your school or institution can create collaborative classrooms, connect through professional learning communities, communicate with school staff, co-ordinate research across institutions, or more easily facilitate student life like clubs or extracurricular activities – all from a single experience in Office 365 for Education. Once your school has signed up you can create a class team.

1. Class teams
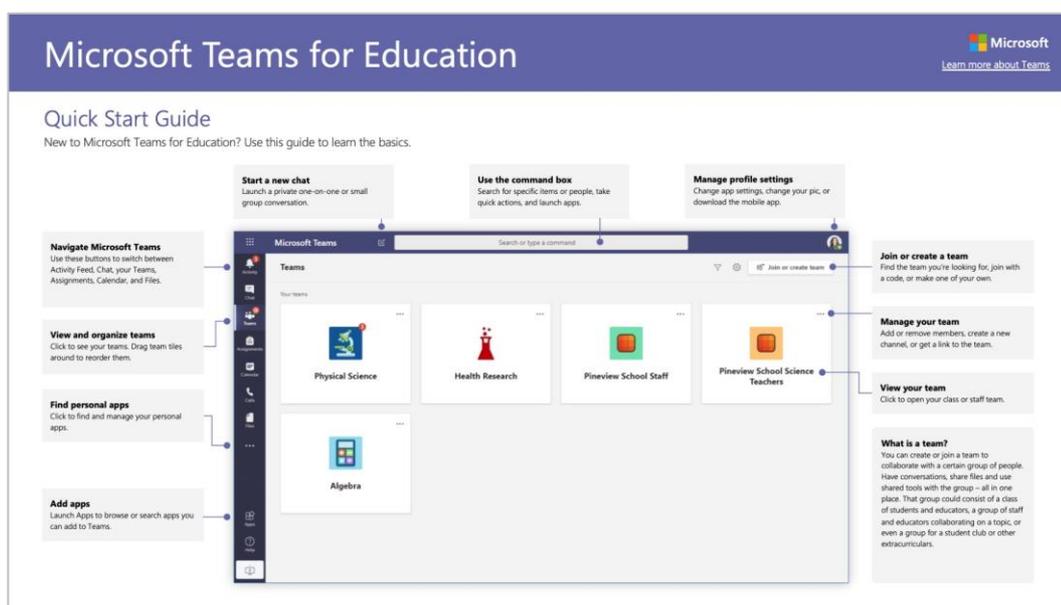
Excerpt, p1 of https://aka.ms/TeamsEDUQuickGuide, last accessed 23.03.20, Used with permission from Microsoft.

When you sign into Microsoft Teams, the first thing you will want to do is create a team – this is your class. You can create a team by clicking on the *Join or create team* button in the top-right of the application.

From now on, you will be able to access your team by clicking on the *Teams* button in the left-hand toolbar.

2. Schedule a meeting with your team or class

Start by clicking on the *Calendar* button on the left-hand toolbar. From here you can add a new lesson by clicking on the *New Meeting* button in the top-right of the application. From there you can complete all the details of your meeting and add your class.

3. Participate in a lesson

When you participate in a lesson, you can access various options from the toolbar in the centre of the screen when a call is open:
- Open video
- Mute microphone
- Share screen
- Access additional controls for recording the lesson
- Send chat messages
- Add participants to the lesson
- Leave the lesson

You'll probably use screen share and chat most often. Screen share is really useful for showing videos, texts and presentations, or when you're working together on a collaborative document such as a Google Doc. Chat is great for giving written instructions, receiving student questions, finding out when everyone's finished a task or alternatively, you can use it to display errors and elicit corrections.

4. Files

It's easy to share files with your students, something you'll probably want to do a lot so that they have access to reading and listening texts. To share files, just click on the *Team Channel* and drag the file into the text box. The students can open it from here and, more than that, they can also work on it together from here and leave their notes all in the same place.

5. Class Notebook

Class Notebook allows teachers to create a digital notebook for each class, group, term or project. You can create, manage and distribute content to entire classes or individual students. Class Notebook also includes a personal workspace for each student, a Content Library for shared information, and a Collaboration Space where student groups can work together. To access the Class Notebook, open your team channel and click *Class Notebook* in the tab at the top of the window.

6. Assignments

You can create assignments directly from Microsoft Teams. From the team channel, just click on the *Assignments* tab at the top of the window. After you have created and assigned the work, you can also use this tab to manage timelines, give additional instructions, and add other resources for your students to access.

7. Grades

Each of your classes also has a Grades tab where you can view assignments and track how individual students in your class are progressing. Use the Grades tab to get an overview of your class, access data quickly, open, and return student work. To open the Grades tab, navigate to the General channel of your desired class team and select *Grades*.

8. Cost

If your entire school signs up to Microsoft Teams then it is completely free. You need a school email address or a business account to sign up for Microsoft Teams.

9. Links to Microsoft Teams support

- Making the transition to remote learning
- Get started with Teams Quick Start
- Create an assignment
- Office 365 pricing