

A Complete Guide to

Alpha Online

Prepared by Alpha Canada



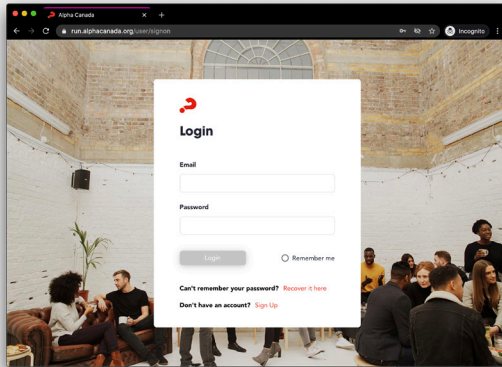
“Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. **Be alert** servants of the Master, **cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit** in hard times; **pray** all the harder. Help needy Christians; **be inventive** in hospitality.”

Romans 12:11-13 (The Message)

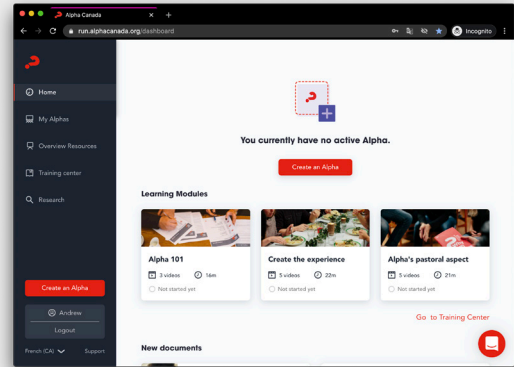
Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 Prepare | 4 |
| 1.1 MyAlpha | 5 |
| 1.2 Access the videos | 6 |
| 1.3 Zoom | 8 |
| 1.4 Registration Form | 9 |
| 1.5 Choose and train your team | 11 |
| 2 Invite | 12 |
| 2.1 Digital Invitation | 13 |
| 3 Host | 14 |
| 3.1 Welcome | 15 |
| 3.2 Zoom Etiquette | 15 |
| 3.3 Handy Zoom Checklist | 16 |
| 3.4 Online Hospitality | 17 |
| 3.5 Breakout Rooms | 18 |
| 3.6 Virtual Alpha Retreat | 19 |
| 3.7 Prayer Ministry | 21 |
| 3.8 Icebreakers | 22 |
| 3.9 Games | 22 |
| 4 Get Creative | 23 |

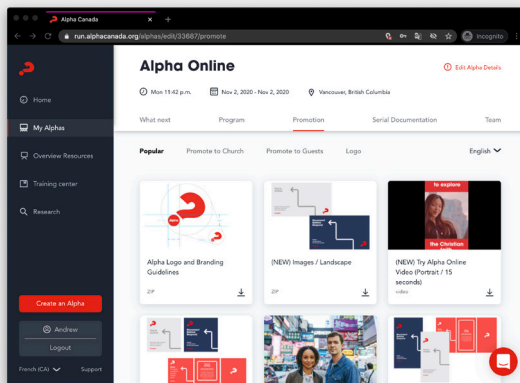
1.1 MyAlpha



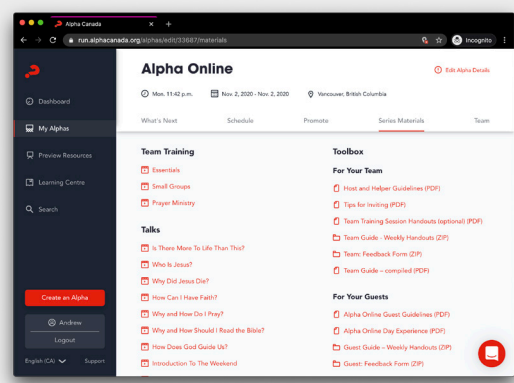
1. Create or login to your MyAlpha account at <https://run.alphaCanada.org>



2. Register your Alpha. Make sure you tick 'This is an Online Alpha' in Step 2 of registration.



3. Explore the invitational resources under Promote. Also, have a look at our 5 Tips for Inviting Guests to Alpha.



4. Also look through the resources in the Toolbox under Series Materials. Here you will find PDF files of the Team Guide as well as many other helpful resources.



1.2 Access the Video

Option One

Sharing the video through Zoom's Share Screen Function

Download the weekly sessions from MyAlpha.

The screenshot shows the Alpha Online web application. A modal window titled "Video download options" is open. The modal contains the following elements:

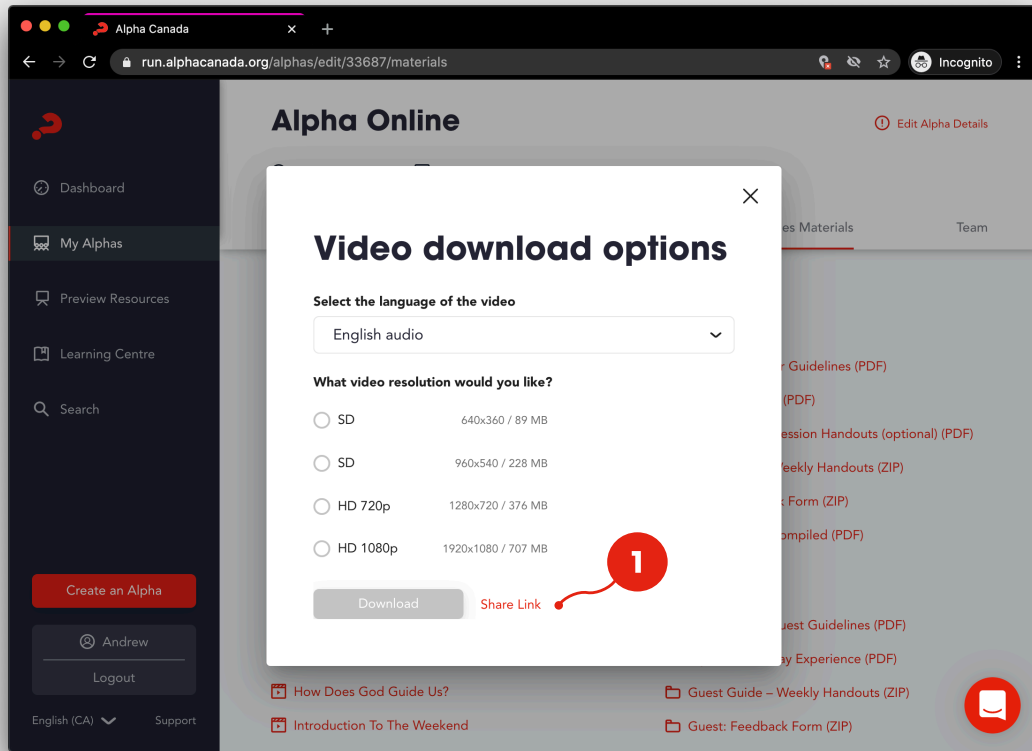
- A dropdown menu labeled "Select the language of the video" with "English audio" selected. A red circle with the number "1" points to this dropdown.
- A section titled "What video resolution would you like?" with four radio button options:
 - SD (640x360 / 89 MB)
 - SD (960x540 / 228 MB)
 - HD 720p (1280x720 / 376 MB)
 - HD 1080p (1920x1080 / 707 MB)A red circle with the number "2" points to the "SD" option.
- Two buttons at the bottom: "Download" and "Share Link".

The background interface shows a sidebar with "My Alphas", "Preview Resources", and "Learning Centre". The main content area lists various materials like "Guidelines (PDF)", "Session Handouts (optional) (PDF)", and "Weekly Handouts (ZIP)".

Option Two

Give your guests a link to watch the video in their own browsers.

In the 'Series Materials', click on each episode, then click 'share link' and copy and paste the link into a Google Doc or Word Doc ready to paste into the chat window at the appropriate time.



• Prepare • Prepare

1.3 Zoom

Create or login to your [Zoom Account](#).

Select "My Account"

Select "Schedule a Meeting"

The screenshot shows the Zoom 'Schedule a Meeting' form. The form is titled 'Schedule a Meeting - Zoom' and is located at 'zoom.us/meeti...'. The form includes the following sections and fields:

- Topic:** Alpha Online
- Description (Optional):** Alpha is an 11-week course that creates a space, online or in person, where people are excited to bring their friends for a conversation about life, faith and Jesus.
- When:** 01/01/2021, 7:00 PM
- Duration:** 1 hr, 0 min
- Time Zone:** (GMT-8:00) Vancouver
- Recurring meeting:** Recurring meeting: Every week on Fri, 9 occurrence(s)
 - Recurrence: Weekly
 - Repeat every: 1 week
 - Occurs on: Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat
 - End date: By 02/12/2021 After 9 occurrences
- Registration:** Required
 - Attendees register once and can attend any of the occurrences
 - Attendees need to register for each occurrence to attend
 - Attendees register once and can choose one or more occurrences to attend
- Security:** Passcode Waiting Room
- Video:** Host: on off; Participant: on off
- Audio:** Telephone Computer Audio Both
- Meeting Options:** Allow participants to join anytime; Mute participants upon entry; Require authentication to join; Automatically record meeting on the local computer
- Alternative Hosts:** Example: mary@company.com, peter@school.edu

At the bottom of the form are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

Meeting Name

Meeting Description

Schedule Meeting

(choose recurring meeting option and select amount of occurrences or end date)

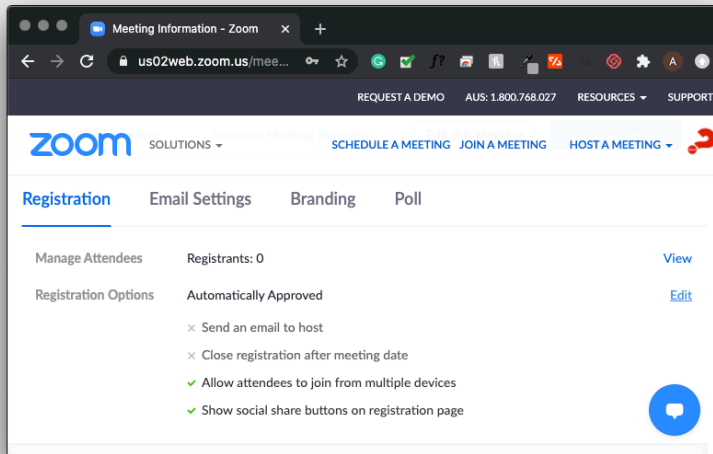
Select 'Registration Required'

Turn on 'Waiting Room'

Add emails for hosts and helpers

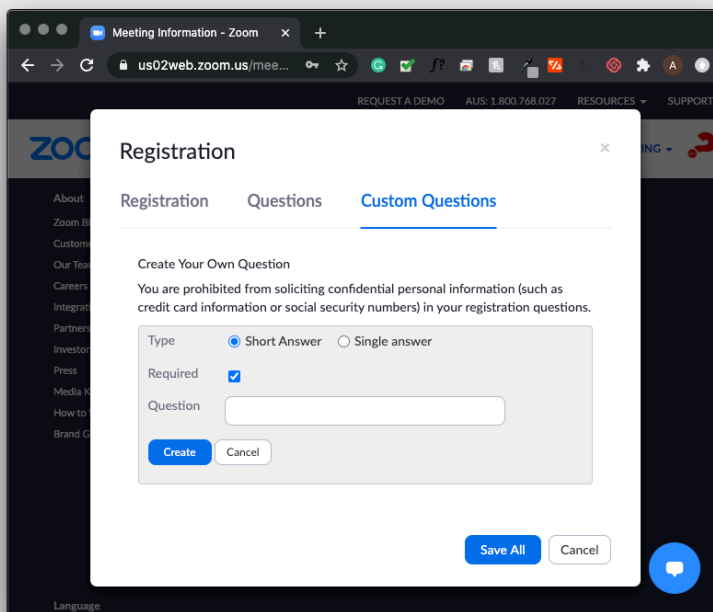
Prepare • Prepare

1.4 Customizing your Registration Form



Create meeting

Scroll to the bottom of the page and click 'Edit' under the Registration tab



Click 'Custom Questions'

Click 'New Question'

Enter your question and click 'Create'

You will then be given the option to create a new question.

NOTE: Choose 'Short Answer' if you require the registrant to enter an answer.

Choose 'Single Answer' if you want to set up multiple choice questions.

Sample Guest Registration Form

First Name:

Last Name:

Email Address:

*Groups are arranged to include the best mix of people so if you feel comfortable please complete the following questions.

Age:

Gender: Male Female

Is this your first time at Alpha? Yes No

Which of the following best describes your spirituality? (please only select one)

- Atheist
- Open to all Religions
- Seeking
- Seasoned Christian
- New(ish) Christian
- Agnostic
- Other _____

I heard about Alpha through (please only select one):

- A Friend
- Church
- The Alpha Website
- <Name of church> website
- The Press
- Social Media
- Other _____

Please list any friends you would like to be in a group with:

1.5 Choose and train your team

Alpha Host

May also host a small group but primary purpose is to welcome guests and make them feel comfortable

Technical Support

Admits guests at the beginning of the session, shares the video and assigns people to breakout rooms.

Does not have any other responsibilities as it's better for them to be free to troubleshoot any problems.

Small Group Hosts and Helpers

The role of the host and helper during online Alpha doesn't change much.

The group host may need to be a bit more energetic and dynamic than they are in person to help maintain energy within the group. They will also need to keep an eye on the chat window for any comments, etc., that come in that way. This platform may help those who are more reserved or a bit quieter to actually speak up and participate in discussion.

Helpers can also moderate the chat window for those who may choose to participate that way. Some churches find that guests participating in online Alpha are willing to be more vulnerable and groups may delve into deeper conversation more quickly than they are otherwise used to.

Be Aware

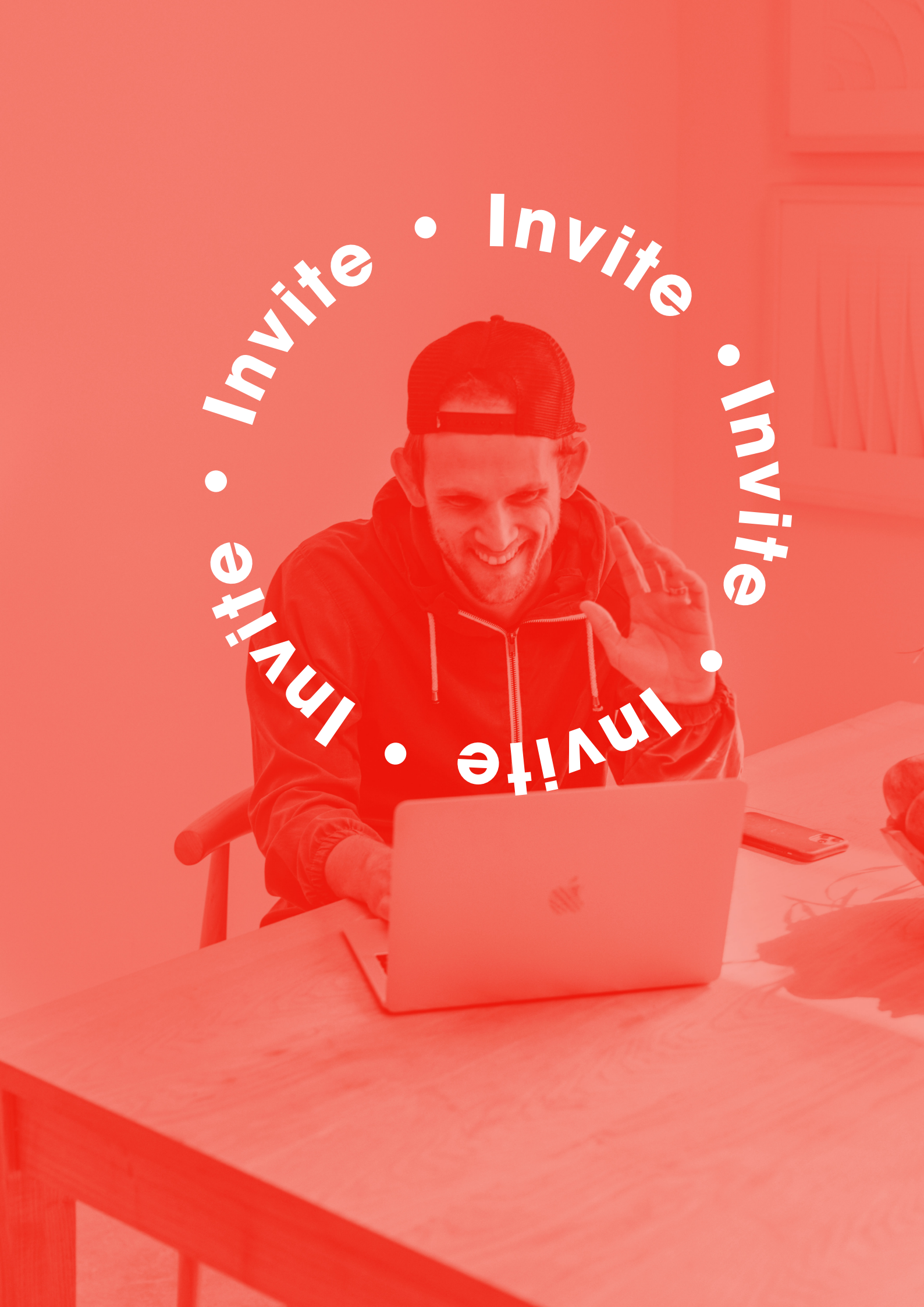
Some churches have found that guests tend to feel more vulnerable online than in person. Prepare your hosts so they can expect this.

Group Size

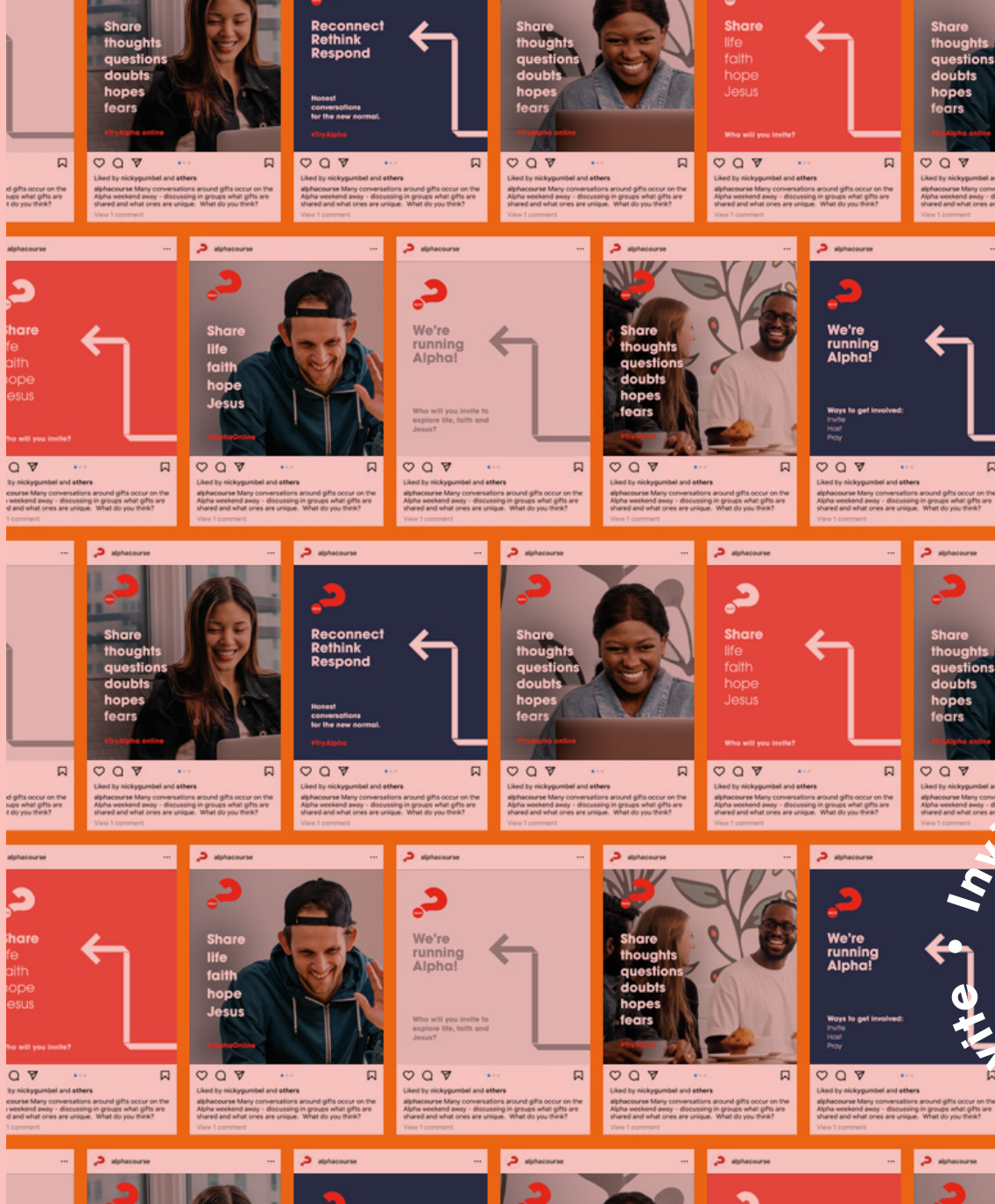
We recommend small groups of no more than 8 people (6 guests + Host + Helper) and that the discussion lasts no longer than 30-45 minutes.



Prepare • Prepare • Prepare



• Invite • Invite • Invite • Invite • Invite



2.1 Invite

Nicky Gumbel believes that now is the greatest evangelistic opportunity of his lifetime, so encourage your congregations to invite people to your Alpha.

There are Alpha guests saying they would never have never considered walking into a church to do Alpha but they feel comfortable exploring faith online.

In MyAlpha we have a variety of resources specifically designed to help your church invite their friends, colleagues, or family members.

Go to **MyAlpha**, click on your registered Alpha, then go to the **Promote** tab



Host • Host • Host

3.1 Welcome

Open Zoom using your meeting invite and begin the call

It's best to have all guests enter via the Waiting Room. Admit your team first in time for your Team Meeting and prayer.

Allow a few guests to build up in the Waiting Room before you begin to admit them. It's less intimidating than a lone guest arriving and facing the entire team.

As guests to join, engage them in friendly conversation.

Once everyone is on, explain the importance of muting.

3.2 Zoom Etiquette

Ask all guests to be on video, not just audio

Ask all guests to join in a quiet environment if possible.

Ask guests to rename if they are not being listed as their name. This makes it easier to assign participants to breakout rooms.

In the Breakout Room ask all guests to unmute during discussion (unless in a noisy setting). This allows for more organic, free flowing conversation.

3.3 Handy Zoom Checklist

Before You Start

Check your connection

- What plan are you on with your internet service provider?
- What speeds can you access?

Close down everything you don't need, especially browsers, for the Zoom call

- This will make your computer run better
- Maybe reboot your computer before the Zoom call

Check your software

- Ensure web browsers are updated
- If you are having trouble, try an alternative browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Safari)

Understand that different devices have slightly different functionalities

- Mac vs PC; Desktop vs laptop vs tablet vs phone
- Therefore the buttons will be in different places, but should all be there

When You First Join The Call

Ensure that your name is your correct name on the screen that you wish us all to see

- Sometimes if we use different accounts or our phone/tablet it can be a bit random

- To speak: 3 options to unmute
 - Hover over your pic & click with mouse
 - Use ALT-A on keypad
 - Press space-bar & hold down

Check you have your video on so we can all see each other (at the start).

- You can turn your camera off (Stop Video button) when the Alpha talk is playing (helps with bandwidth). But please turn on again at the end
- You can change view to see everyone - Speaker view > Gallery view.

Use the chat function to connect, comment or ask questions

Check your background (not distracting)

- Noise (levels)
- Lighting (can we see your face clearly?)
- Virtual backgrounds (some devices / cameras don't work well with virtual backgrounds)

Mute yourself – especially when the video is playing to eliminate any background noise or potential audio feedback. During the discussion often it is easier to have yourself unmuted for flow of conversation, however, your host will let you know if there's feedback or sound issues that require guests to be muted.

Check your presentation

- Are you looking into the camera? ie not at the tv or screens, if they are in a different position to your camera. Phone users can often hold their devices low, so we are viewing up their nose
- What are you wearing?

Remember, you can do everything right and have some things not work. The good news is that even if some things go wrong, you can still have a great session!

3.4 Hospitality

Even though groups are meeting online, you can still put a strong emphasis on hospitality to help people connect.

Suggest that your guests prepare themselves their favourite beverage to enjoy during the call like a cup of tea or coffee, and some snacks. (Especially for the weekend sessions.)



Engage from the start
Make sure either the Alpha host/MC or group host is engaging right from the beginning of the online session – saying hello to people, asking questions, telling jokes. Avoid the silence and keep excitement and enthusiasm high.



Chat lots
Encourage hosts, helpers, and guests to utilise the chat functionality to comment and ask questions during the video as well as during discussion time when others are talking.



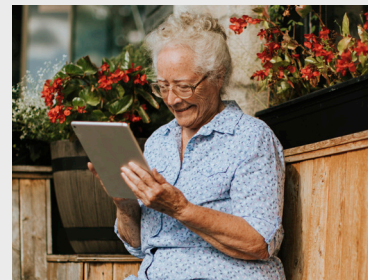
Short and sweet
Churches have found that in an online format, people start to lose interest at around the one-hour mark. We recommend keeping the full session to around one hour.



Check in
Check-in if someone missed a session. A good way to do that is to send them a link to view the episode they've missed.



Open lines
Some people also like to set up a Messenger or What's App group that can provide instant communication if someone is experiencing difficulties like a problem logging into the meeting or the video isn't playing well for them.



Reminders
Email or text your guests on the day of each Alpha saying something like "Looking forward to seeing you at Alpha tonight at 7.30pm." Include the Zoom link for the session.



3.6 Alpha Retreat

Also known as the Alpha Weekend or Day Away. Here are some suggestions on how to schedule this. Remember these are only suggestions and not prescriptive. You may need to adapt it to your own context.

There is a 10-minute video in Series Material called 'Introduction to the Weekend'. We recommend sending this to your guests to watch in the week before your Retreat. It seems particularly relevant now, in this time of lockdown and social distancing.



Option 1

Earlier in the week send guests a link to watch the 10 minute video **Introduction to the Weekend**.

Friday

Send your guests a link to watch Who is the Holy Spirit? (24 mins)

Saturday

9:30am
Welcome & Icebreaker/Game

9:40am
(Optional) Testimony (No longer than 3 min) Could be live or prerecorded

9:45am
What does the Holy Spirit do? (23 mins)

10:10am
Discussion (20 mins)

10:30am
Morning tea

10:45am
Worship
YouTube lyric videos

10:50am
Video: How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? (29 mins)

11:20am
The video ends with Nicky praying "Come Holy Spirit". At which time the main hosts lead the group in a time of waiting on the Holy Spirit.

See Prayer Ministry Suggestion on page 21

Option 2

Earlier in the week send guests a link to watch the 10 minute video **Introduction to the Weekend.**

Friday

Send each guest the Alpha Youth Series combined talk Who is the Holy Spirit & what does He do? (24 min)

Saturday

9:30am

Welcome & Icebreaker/Game

9:40am

(Optional) Testimony (No longer than 3 min) Could be live or prerecorded

9:45am

Worship
YouTube lyric videos

9:50am

Video: How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? (29 mins)

Option 3

Earlier in the week send guests a link to watch the 10 minute video **Introduction to the Weekend.**

Friday

7:00pm

Welcome / Icebreaker

7:20pm

Watch together Who is the Holy Spirit? (24 mins) No discussion

7:45pm

Game Time

Saturday

9:00am

Welcome / Icebreaker / Game

9:25am

Watch together What does the Holy Spirit do? (23 mins)

9:50am

Discussion in break out rooms

10:20am

The video ends with Nicky praying "Come Holy Spirit". At which time the main hosts lead the group in a time of waiting on the Holy Spirit.

See Prayer Ministry Suggestion on page 21

10:30am

Break for morning tea.

10:45am

Video: How can I make the most of the rest of my life? (23 mins)

11:10am

Discussion

11:30am

Prayer and close

10:20am

Morning Tea

10:35am

Worship
Live or YouTube video

10:45am

Watch together How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? (29 mins)

11:15am

The video ends with Nicky praying "Come Holy Spirit". At which time the main hosts lead the group in a time of waiting on the Holy Spirit.

See Prayer Ministry Suggestion on page 21

11:25am

Prayer and Close

3.7 Prayer Ministry

Alpha Host

Gives guests the opportunity to become Christians by praying 'Sorry, Thankyou, Please'.

Shares any words of knowledge that the team has received then prays over all guests and offers opportunities for individual prayer and tells them that their small group hosts will contact them to see if they want prayer

Alpha Helpers

Ask each guest by private message if they would like prayer. If so they arrange a time for a separate Zoom call that afternoon.

A note about worship and copyright

Your church will probably have a blanket licence (like CCLI) but you need a specific CCLI streaming licence. There is also one license which covers older hymns.

NOTE: As at September 2020 Hillsong have removed the copyright on their material so that churches can stream YouTube videos of their songs.



3.8 Icebreakers

Describe yourself game (replace name game) – 30seconds to find an object that best describes you, share in turn.

If you were trapped on a desert island (isolated at home and can't go out), what one thing (and one person?) would you take with you.

Do you squeeze the toothpaste tube or roll it? What's the advantage of your method?

When was the last time you square-danced or line-danced? Rate your dancing ability on a scale of 1 to 10.

What's one fashion trend you hope never comes back? Which ones have come back that you wish hadn't?

What magic tricks do you know? Perform one now.

Do you have a collection? If so, what do you collect and why?

As a child, did you ever peek into a wrapped gift before you actually received it? Did you ever get caught? Explain the details.

What room in your house best reflects your personality? Why?

Who's the most famous person you've ever met? What famous person would you most like to meet?

What's your favourite kind of candy?

What's the wackiest belief you held as a child?

Which movies have you watched over and over again?

3.9 Games

Pictionary with the Random Word Generator

Charades game (everyone to come up with a word themselves)

Trivia with the Random trivia generator - <https://www.randomtriviagenerator.com/> (take time to play around with it- click on the plus, you can do rounds and do this via a screen share. Get everyone to do an honours point system)

<https://www.triviaplaza.com/miscellaneous-general-quizzes/>

4.0 Get Creative



Offer a Skip the Dishes / UberEats gift voucher as a prize to one of your guests



Suggest every guest bring their favourite book to show and talk about for 1 minute



Hold a "best dressed" night or a night where you encourage everyone to wear the same colour or their favourite hat



Encourage your guests to fix themselves their favourite beverage before the call start



At the end of the meeting, play a spotify song and have everyone "dance" off the screen before you end the meeting