

# 10 TIPS FOR DIGITAL GROUPS

Use these best practices to make your Starting Point group's online experience great.

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## 1 **Make video participation optional.**

Consider making it optional that group members turn on their camera during meetings. The opinions and stories shared can sometimes be sensitive. So, for some, being able to stay somewhat anonymous removes what would otherwise be a barrier to joining.

## 2 **Save screen time for conversation.**

Ask group members to read the chapter and watch the video message before each session's online meetup. Kick off your meeting with a quick recap of the content for anyone who didn't get to it, then dive into the best part—questions and conversation.

## 3 **Open your (online) doors early.**

Leaders should log on 15 minutes before the start time to help troubleshoot for group members who run into snags joining the meeting, launching their camera, or turning on their microphone. Share your phone number so group members can reach out if they run into trouble. And remind anyone who's unfamiliar with the platform\* to begin logging on a few minutes early.

\*The features and functionality of Zoom make it (in our experience) the best online meeting platform for digital groups. A Zoom pro account allows you to have extended meeting time and many participants, and a single account can be shared by multiple groups.

## 4 **Begin with the basics.**

At the beginning of your first digital meeting, cover the basics of online meeting etiquette. For example, teach everyone how to use the mute function. (Pro tip if you're using Zoom: teach your group members that while muted, they can hold down the space bar to temporarily unmute when they want to jump into the conversation.)

## 5 **Get going by getting everyone involved.**

Try to get everyone talking within the first few minutes of each meeting. For example, you could ask group members to bring something from around their house that represents their perfect weekend or a favorite memory from childhood. Then at the beginning of your meetup, have everyone show and say a few words about what they brought.

## 6 **Reshape sharing stories.**

If your group members typically take turns sharing their stories, consider alternatives like offering people the option to introduce themselves or share their story through email. Most of us lose focus after about an hour of online meeting, so sharing stories through email preserves time for group conversation.

## 7 **Nudge people to speak up.**

Conversation doesn't flow quite as naturally during an online meeting as it does in person. And being muted—though necessary for call quality—makes it less likely that folks will casually chime in. So invite specific people to respond. Before asking your question (so they have time to engage), say something like, "I'd love to hear Joe and Katie's thoughts on this one..."

## 8 **Meet—no matter who can make it.**

If three or four people can't make an in-person group gathering, you may reschedule because an unusually small group can be awkward. Not so with a digital meeting! Online gatherings may even benefit from the intimacy of having just a few people "in attendance." So as long as the leaders can make it, meet—even if there's only one or two other people joining you.

## 9 **Connect "offline."**

You may not be able to meet your group members for lunch or coffee, but try to connect with them beyond your digital group meeting each week. A touchpoint like a text or email—while still technically digital—will feel personal, and may be just what someone needs to feel part of the group.

## 10 **End well.**

Digital Starting Point group members may never meet each other in person. But there are creative ways to still mark and celebrate the journey you've been on as a group—even if it's as simple as inviting everyone to eat dinner "together" during your last group meeting.