

On-line Group Platform Options: *Pros, Cons, and Tips*

How To Host An Online Group

An online group is an incredible tool to help people connect with each other when an in-person group may not be possible. You can encourage one others faith, connect intentionally, and pray for God's work in each other's lives.

Your first few meetings will take some adjusting as everyone gets acquainted with the technology and the format and works out all of the kinks.

So don't give up too quickly if your first few meetings are a bit of a challenge. The first step is picking the platform that works best for you. Below are some pros, cons, and tips for using these options:

- **GOOGLE HANGOUTS**

- **Pros: Free. Unlimited time. Closed Captioning. Accessible via web browser on computer.**
- **Cons: Requires a google account for all participants.** (can sign up for one [HERE](#)). **Phone-in option not available unless you have a business account.** (If you have a [G Suite business account](#), you can also share a phone number for people to call into the meeting if they don't have access to a computer or smartphone. GSuite accounts are free till July 1.)
- **Capacity (25 Participants/Devices)**
- **How to use:**
 - Open Google Hangouts in [web browser](#) or mobile app ([apple device](#) , [android device](#), [chrome web browser extension](#))
 - Login
 - Click "Video Call" button
 - Click "Invite People" and type in their email address (If they don't have a google account it will send them an invite to setup an account)
 - You can also schedule a meeting on your google calendar and send an invite to join you at a specific time, including a link to your online meeting. ([See Instructions](#))
- **Watch 6 minute youtube tutorial.**

- **ZOOM**

- **Pros: Free. Only hosts are required to have a Zoom account. There is a phone-in option.**
- **Cons: Limited to 40 minutes unless you have a paid account (\$14.99/mo). Have to download Zoom application to phone or computer.**
- **Capacity (100 participants/Devices)**
- **How To Use:**
 - Open Zoom in a **web browser** or **mobile app (apple device, android device, chrome web browser extension)**
 - Login
 - Click “Host a meeting with video on”
 - Click “Invite participations”
 - Select how you’d like to send an invite:
 - Default Email, Gmail, Yahoo to send email invite
 - or “copy URL”, “Copy Invitation” to copy a link and send it via a text message, email, facebook message, etc.
 - You can also schedule a meeting on the zoom website and send an invite to join you at a specific time, including a link to your online meeting. (**See Instructions**)
- **Watch tutorial videos in Zoom video library.**

- **FACEBOOK MESSENGER GROUPS**

- **Pros: Free. Accessible via web browser on computer. Can access without a facebook account.** (If you don’t have a facebook account you’ll need to **download the app** to your phone and use phone number.)
- **Cons: Phone-in option not available.**
- **Capacity (50 participants/Devices: 6 video, 44 audio)**
- **How To Use:**
 - Open facebook messenger on **web browser** or **mobile app**
 - Login (with facebook account or phone number)
 - Click “New Message” button to add facebook friends to group chat (see image below)
 - After adding contacts, click the “Video Call” button to start video chat. (see image below)
- **Watch 2 minute tutorial.**