

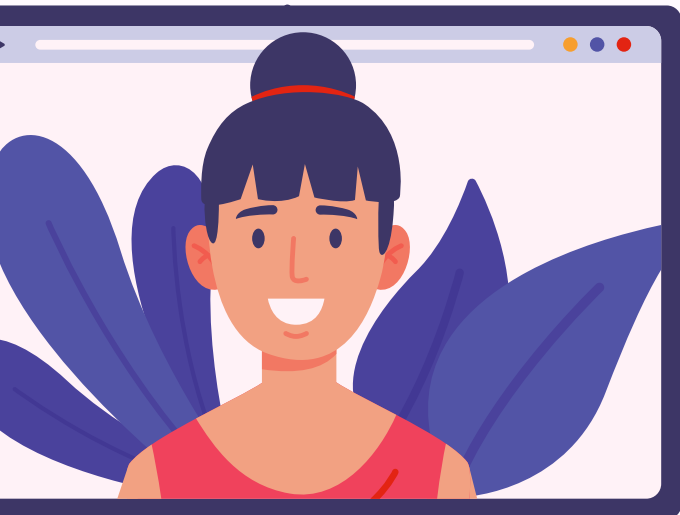


# A Complete Guide to Running Alpha Youth Online



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## Three Simple Steps

1. **Schedule** a Zoom Meeting for Alpha Online
2. **Invite** Guests
3. **Host** a Zoom Meeting for Alpha Online

## To Prepare

### Pray

Thankfully, the presence and power of God is not bound by social distancing or digital interfaces! Pray for youth by name. Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit to bring peace and love to people and pray against the spiritual forces of evil that want to bring fear, death, and destruction in this time. Pray for your team. And pray for all of the technology to work well. Try and find ways to join other youth workers to pray together. And **don't forget to ask others to be praying for you!**

### Build a Team

More to come on what new roles you will need to fill. One thing to consider is how to **empower young people to be hosts and helpers** on your Alpha.

### Reach Out

While many of us are thinking through the question of how we can stay connected to the students already in our ministry...a GREAT question is how can we use this situation as a way to reach out to those who don't yet know God? Now, perhaps more than ever, the **need for the hope found in Jesus is profound.**

Young people, like all of us, have questions and fears about all that is happening. You can provide a safe and loving way for them to connect. Be prepared for questions to naturally lean towards what's happening with COVID-19, and then invite conversation around the deeper issues of faith and **where truth can be found** in a world that is very confusing and concerning.

Some of the young people in your ministry who were always "too busy" to share their faith or intentionally connect with their friends may now have their calendars cleared. Encourage them to use this time wisely and with great intentionality. It is highly probable that their friends would welcome the opportunity for something to break up their day and help them work through their questions.

# To Prepare

**Register** your Alpha <https://run.alpha.org.au/>

**Download** the video for this week's Alpha or have the link to the video and the password ready to go: <https://australia.alpha.org/ayscatchme>

Copy and paste the **questions** from the Team Guide / Discussion Guide for this week's Alpha into a Google Doc / Word Doc / email etc. ready for you to paste into the chat window at the appropriate time

Either create an **account** or login <https://zoom.us/>

**Schedule** a meeting

Select "My Account"

Select "Schedule a Meeting"

My Meetings > Schedule a Meeting

Schedule a Meeting

Topic:  **MEETING TITLE**

Description (Optional):  **MEETING DESCRIPTION**

When:    **SCHEDULE MEETING (CHOOSE RECURRING MEETING OPTION AND SELECT AMOUNT OF OCCURRENCES OR END DATE)**

Duration:  hr  min

Time Zone:

Recurring meeting: Every week on Mon, 8 occurrences

Recurrence:

Repeat every:  week

Occurs on:  Sun  Mon  Tue  Wed  Thu  Fri  Sat

End date:   occurrences

Registration:  Required **LEAVE THESE UNSELECTED**

Meeting Password:  Require meeting password

Video: Host  on  off  
Participant  on  off

Audio:  Telephone  Computer Audio  Both  
Dial from United States of America [Edit](#)

Meeting Options:  Enable join before host  
 Mute participants upon entry   
 **Enable waiting room**  
 Only authenticated users can join  
 Breakout Room pre-assign  
 Record the meeting automatically

**ADD THE EMAIL ADDRESS/S FOR OTHER HOSTS/HELPERS**

Alternative Hosts:

Send the Invitation to guests by sharing this link with them

Invite Attendees

Join URL: <https://zoom.us/j/294325712>



# To Begin

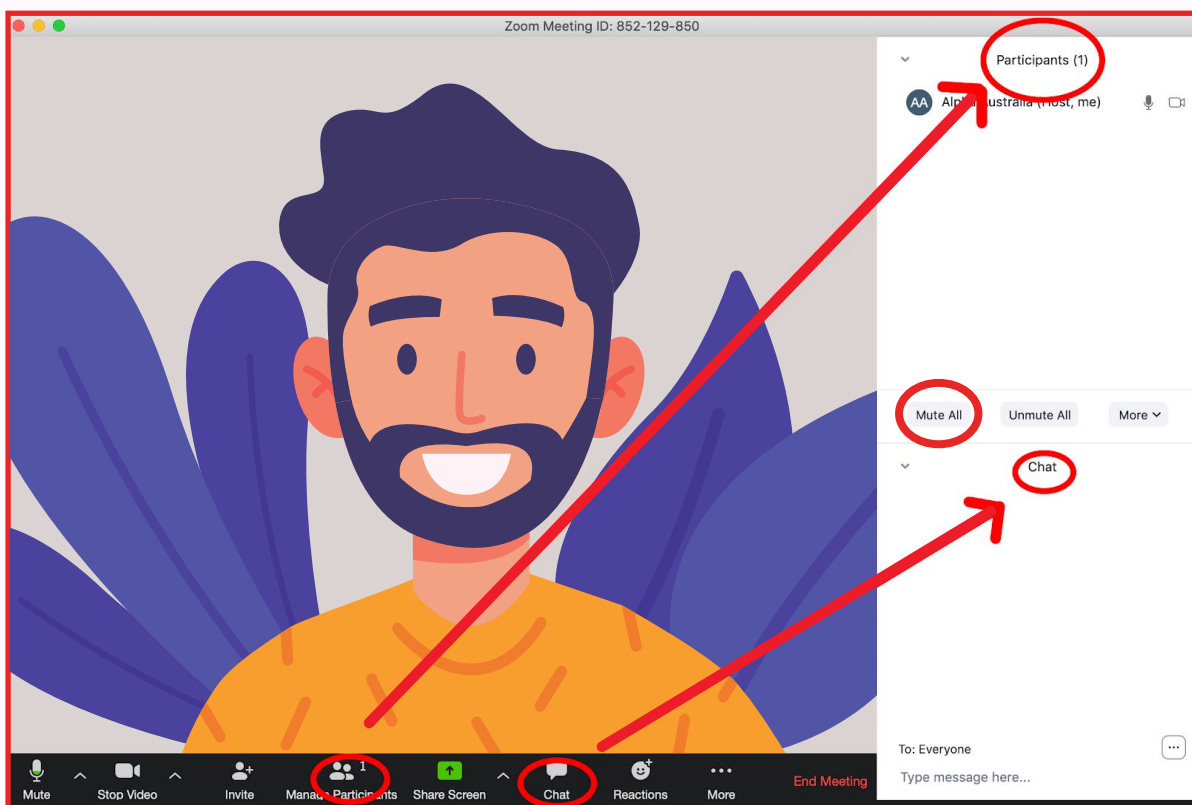
Open zoom using your meeting invite and begin the call. Make sure you're early!

Wait for participants to join, engage in friendly conversation as guests join the call

Once everyone is on, explain the importance of muting

You can "mute all" as shown below

Open "Manage Participants" and "Chat" to get your window set up



# Sharing the Video

## Option 1

Share screen

Select Alpha Video

Click two buttons at the bottom then click Share

Tell participants to write in the chat if they are having trouble hearing the video

Mute all participants

Click Stop Share during discussion times

\*A guide for video optimisation can be found here: [Zoom Video Optimisation](#)

## Option 2

Add this link to the chat

[alpha.org.au/ayscatchme](http://alpha.org.au/ayscatchme)

Send the correct password to the corresponding video:

Episode 1 - Life: Is This It? **<no password>**  
Episode 2 - Jesus: Who is Jesus? **<no password>**  
Episode 3 - Cross: Why did Jesus die? **chair**  
Episode 4 - Faith: How can I have faith? **club**  
Episode 5 - Prayer: Why and how do I pray? **superhero**  
Episode 6 - Bible: Why and how I should read the bible? **island**  
Episode 7 - Spirit: How is the Holy Spirit and what does he do? **hyena**  
Episode 8 - Fill: How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? **acts**  
Episode 9 - New Life: How can I make the most of the rest of my life? **lawrence**  
Episode 10 - Evil: How can I resist evil? **light**  
Episode 11 - Telling Others: Why and how should I tell others? **treadmill**  
Episode 12 - Healing: Does God heal today? **bank**  
Episode 13 - Church: What about the church? **sushi**

Ask all attendees to be on mute and watch the video, then have discussion during the video as normal.

# The Discussion

Copy and paste the discussion questions into the chat window

Facilitate the discussion if you have 1-8 participants

If you have more than 8 participants, use the **Breakout** room feature (or whatsapp, texts, separate Zoom calls etc, this is based on user preference).

Before the call ends, ask participants if they would be willing for you to take a **photo** of the meeting to share on Alpha Socials. Send this to [youth@alpha.org.au](mailto:youth@alpha.org.au). You don't need to do this every week, one week is enough.

When it is time to end the call, let participants say goodbye and leave the meeting first then end the meeting

# Breakout Rooms

To enable the Breakout Room feature on your account: Sign into the Zoom web portal, click **Account Management**, Click **Account Settings**, Navigate to the **Breakout Room** option on the and select "on" and tick "Allow host to assign participants to breakout rooms."

The image shows a screenshot of the Zoom Breakout Rooms interface. It is divided into four numbered sections:

- 1 SELECT BREAKOUT ROOMS**: A red circle highlights the 'Breakout Rooms' button in the bottom toolbar.
- 2 SELECT NUMBER OF ROOMS**: A red circle highlights the 'Assign 0 participants into 1 Rooms' dropdown menu.
- 3 ASSIGN GUESTS TO ROOMS**: A red circle highlights the 'Assign' button in the 'Breakout Room 1' window.
- 4 ADJUST SETTINGS IF NEEDED**: A red circle highlights the 'Options' menu in the 'Breakout Rooms - Not Started' window, which lists settings like 'Allow participants to return to the main session at any time', 'Breakout rooms close automatically after: 30 minutes', 'Notify me when the time is up', and 'Countdown after closing breakout room'.

# The Alpha Retreat

Even though you won't be able to host an Alpha Retreat we would still encourage you to host an **Alpha Retreat Online**. While you won't be able to visit a new location and have the opportunity to connect during free time the same way, spending extended time connecting with others will be incredibly valuable for those who are feeling the strain of social distancing.

In this context, we recommend hosting a **"binge party"** and watch all three videos in one day. Make sure to add fun elements into the day - **surveys, games, humorous videos** - the day should feel **varied and creative**. You don't have to stay online all day, but be sure to communicate the schedule clearly.

When it comes time for **prayer ministry**, break out into small groups and offer to pray for anyone who would like. Set aside time and let groups connect through various platforms. You can also invite guests to request prayer from the group host via chat or email. The group host can then reach out individually to the guests to set up time for a quick individual prayer time that day.

If you feel it is appropriate you could also host a few **worship songs** together before, during or after the sessions. This could be done by someone leading a few songs live, or Youtube videos of your favourite artists and songs.

## Hospitality

Even though groups are meeting online, churches can still put a **strong emphasis on hospitality**.

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 course host 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.

## Hosts & 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 may 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 help 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

**Technical Help:** If the Host brings the fun, this person brings the function. This person will work behind the scenes to handle everything from sharing the video, to creating breakout rooms, and troubleshooting tech issues with guests. This person needs to be very comfortable with the platform you choose and needs to understand the functionality of it all. .

## Host Preparation

**Be prepared:** Hosting online is a different experience to hosting in person, make sure your team is ready by ensuring they have access to all video files, discussion questions, and fully understand Zoom.

**Be aware:** Churches have found that guests tend to feel more vulnerable online than in person. Prepare your hosts so they can expect this.



## Logistics

**Internet Connection:** Make sure you have a strong internet connection. If possible, plug directly into an ethernet cable. If you are using wifi, a way to check your wifi speed is here: <https://www.speedtest.net/>

**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.

**Email more:** In a digital setting, more communication is needed than usual:

Send weekly emails re-capping the talk and ask guests to share their thoughts via email. Include the link for the next session.

**Check-in** if someone missed a night.

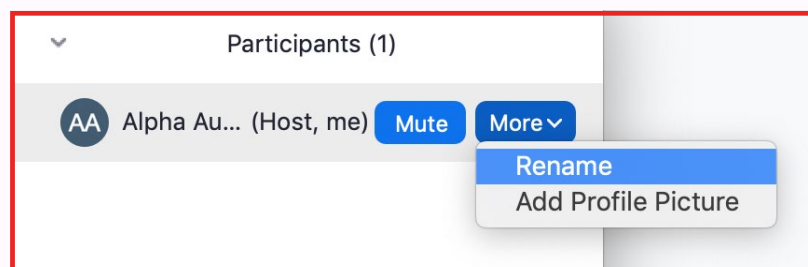
## Zoom Etiquette

Ask all guests to be on **video**, not just audio

Ask all guests to join in a quiet environment if possible

Ask all guests to **unmute** during discussion (unless in a noisy setting). This allows for more organic, free flowing conversation

Have a host or helper rename participants in the **“manage participants”** section for those who are not being listed as their name. This makes it easier to assign participants to breakout rooms.



## Other Top Tips

When running Alpha in a physical space, the setting and environment are essential elements to help people feel comfortable and open up in conversation. In a virtual Alpha, the space that you are inviting people in to is equally important. There are a few things that you can do to help create the best online experience for your guests.

### 1. Minimize Technical Distractions & Expect Technical Difficulties

As people enter the room, the host will be the first face that they see. It's important for the image and audio to be as clear as possible to avoid distractions. You'll also want to make sure that all of the settings are sorted out before guests start to arrive. The same principle applies to small group hosts if you are using breakout rooms.

#### **Tech it to the next level!**

Also remember that the kind of microphone you use will affect the other participants' ability to hear you. Preferably, you should use a headset rather than the camera's built-in microphone to help lessen any unwanted background noise, as well as feedback.

By lessening technical distractions (and not allowing them to bother you too much by expecting the learning curve), you are increasing the feelings of being connected and "together," as well as honouring those who may be sharing at any given time.

### 2. Check Your Connection

The most important aspect of video conferencing is stable and fast internet connectivity. Once the connection is slow, it will affect the conference adversely with visual disruptions and inconsistent audio. This is an essential component for the person hosting the call.

The ultimate goal is for people to feel comfortable and allow themselves to settle into the experience ahead. If the video is choppy or they have to constantly repeat themselves because the host connection is weak, it will be hard to feel like they can open up about their thoughts and feelings.

Also be sure to limit other software or apps that are running on your computer to help things run as smoothly as possible.

## Other Top Tips

### 3. Do a Practice Call

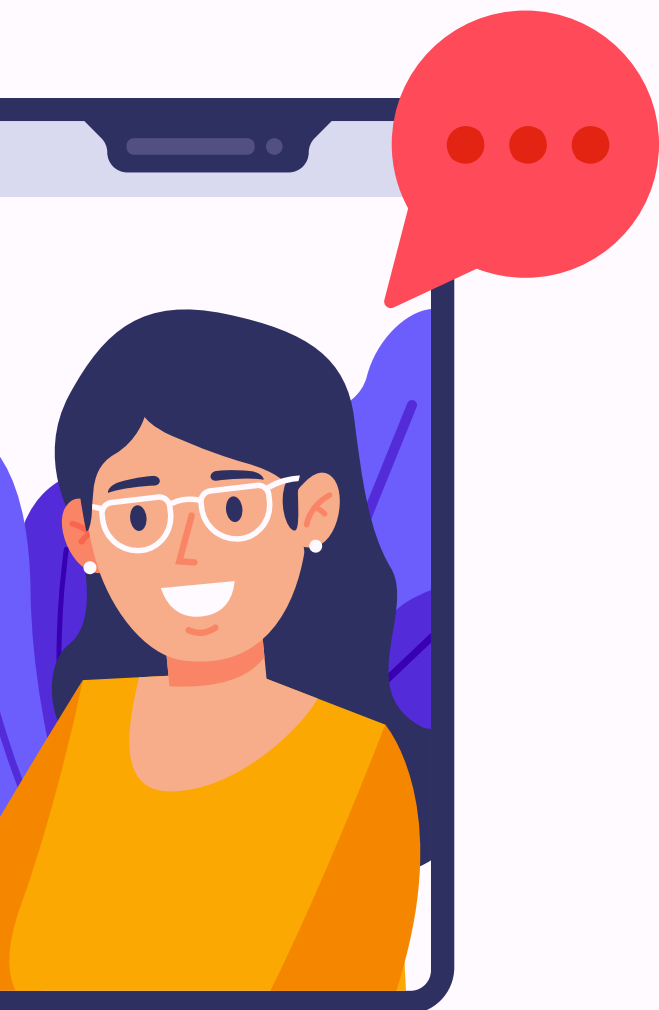
As you prep your team to run online, it's a great idea to do at least one practice call. Assemble the team on the platform you're using, run through the basics of how it works, test video and audio settings and do a test run of breakout rooms on Zoom. The goal is to have the team comfortable with the experience so they can help others, rather than needing to be helped themselves.

### 4. Look Behind You!

The people you're interacting with will be treated to the view of whatever is behind you through the whole session. While it's not about projecting a perfect image, you may have something sitting there that's part of the scenery to you but jarring to everyone else. The goal is to minimize visual distractions to help guests focus on the conversation. Encourage all team members to do the same.

#### **Tech it to the next level!**

Hosts may also want to consider some form of "On Air" sign for their door to help others at home know that it's not a good time to wander in for a visit.



# IceBreakers

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?

Are you more inclined to "build your own empire" or "unleash the potential of others"? Explain.

What's your preference: plane, train, boat, automobile, horse, or camel?

What was your favorite recess activity: dodgeball, kickball, foursquare, hopscotch, freeze tag or jump rope?

What's your pick: hang glide, sky dive, bungee jump, hot air balloon, or kite?

What is one of your favorite souvenirs brought back from your travels? Where do you keep it?

What is your favorite bumper sticker or t-shirt slogan?

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 favorite kind of lollies?

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

Which movies have you watched over and over again?

What do you admire most about your best friend?

What items do you currently have stored in the boot of your car?

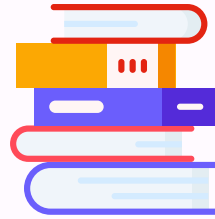
Are you an early bird or a night owl? Why?



# Get Creative!



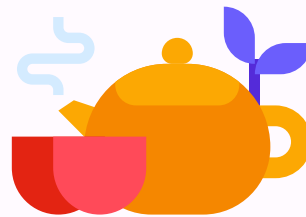
Offer a **Deliveroo** gift voucher as a prize to one of your guests



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 starts



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

If you have a suggestion for getting creative on Zoom, email [youth@alpha.org.au](mailto:youth@alpha.org.au) and go in the running to win a Deliveroo voucher