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*by Alice Hunt*

While chances that you'll experience a Zoombombing are low, the traumatic nature of these events makes it imperative that you know best practices in preventing and managing such an occurrence. This document provides guidance on preventing a Zoombombing before it occurs. However, we know that, as our security measures grow in sophistication, those who desire to breach our security measures also grow in technical ability to rout these settings.

Recognizing this problem, the majority of this guide offers counsel to help you manage and recover from a Zoombombing in the instructional context. Knowing these tips can give you the confidence to handle an incident while minimizing its traumatic impact on meeting participants.

## WHAT IS ZOOMBOMBING?

Zoombombing occurs when uninvited participants enter and disrupt a virtual meeting. Intruders can hijack video and audio to show disturbing images and spew offensive slurs. [Incidents have been on the rise since the switch to virtual meetings in 2020](#). These disruptions can be highly traumatizing for all participants, but sometimes Zoombombers target a specific person or group of people in the meeting with hate speech and threats of violence.

A large percentage of Zoombombing cases happen in one of two ways:

- [Students in a course share class meeting information](#) with or without the intention of inviting Zoombombers.
- Zoombombers pick meetings to attend, either by [choosing publicly-posted meetings or choosing random meeting IDs](#) to join.

Selecting the right security pre-sets can help you avoid Zoombombings. Note that, after a recent update, Zoom's security settings will now send the host a message if the link is shared publicly without meeting Zoom's security standards.

## HOW DO I PREVENT ZOOMBOMBING?

The following security features can be set up in advance of a session to reduce the vulnerability of your Zoom sessions:

- Generate a random meeting ID for each meeting you create.
- [Require participant authentication](#) through a password, email sign-in, or [two-factor authentication](#).
- Turn on the waiting room feature and enable mute upon entry.
- By default, disable the following Zoom features—these settings can temporarily be reversed for a single meeting by the host(s) as needed:

- join before host
- in-meeting file sharing
- annotation
- whiteboard
- screen-sharing by users
- remote control
- allow removed participants to rejoin a session
- Lock the meeting once all attendees are present so others cannot join, even if they have the session meeting ID and password.
- If available, assign a co-host or alternative host who can remove uninvited participants.

## HOW CAN I PREPARE TO HANDLE A ZOOMBOMBING?

Establishing and sharing a plan for how you and your students would respond should a meeting interruption occur can give you peace of mind and will prepare you to minimize the traumatic impact to participants if that interruption is due to Zoombombing. Consider including emergency Zoombombing response guidelines in your syllabus and making time to discuss your plan with students early in the semester.

Your plan might include:

- An overview of your response protocol (mute and remove participant, end the meeting, etc.) if the interruption is due to Zoombombing.
- Where students should look for information from you about what to do next if you are forced to end a Zoom meeting early (eLC announcement, email, etc.).
- How you will reconnect to process the event (new Zoom link, discussion board, etc.).

## HOW DO I MANAGE A ZOOMBOMBING IF IT OCCURS?

If, despite your best efforts, Zoombombers enter your meeting, act quickly to follow these steps:

- Use **ALT+M** to mute all audio until you can remove the participant.
- If needed, disable “Allow participants to unmute themselves” option.
- Remove the participant from the meeting.
- End the meeting for all participants if necessary.
- [Report the Zoombombing through the EITS HelpDesk ticket system.](#)

Depending on your own emotional state after the incident, you may decide to resume the meeting following your established protocol or to cancel the remainder of your class session.

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Whatever you choose to do, be sure to communicate your decision to students following the plan you shared early in the semester.

## HOW DO I RECOVER FROM A ZOOMBOMBING?

Zoombombings can be traumatic for all participants, not just those who may have been targeted by the intruders. Though you may feel uncomfortable doing so, it is important that you take steps to help students process and recover from a Zoombombing. Studies indicate that students are “disappointed” when their professors choose not to address tensions in the classroom. Choosing to avoid these difficult conversations can hinder students’ success in your classroom (Harper & Davis, 2016). Conversely, even if you struggle to lead the conversation, students appreciate efforts to directly address a traumatic incident (Huston & DiPietro, 2007).

The post-Zoombombing debrief you have with your students will depend on the extent of the incident. Consider using some or all of the steps and phrasings offered below:

- Send an **immediate follow-up message** to students acknowledging the disruption and its negative effect on the learning environment.
  - *“I recognize that this incident may have left you feeling uncomfortable or unsafe in our remote classroom environment.”*
- **Condemn the incident** and any offensive content shared.
  - *“The views expressed by the Zoombomber(s) do not support the kind of inclusive, supportive environment that we endeavor to create in this course or at this institution.”*
- **Assure students** that you are committed to maintaining a healthy learning environment.
  - *“I want to do everything I can to help you feel comfortable in this space again.”*
- Acknowledge that these **incidents affect us all differently**.
  - *“I recognize that the Zoombombing negatively affected all of us in different ways.”*
- **Demonstrate that you care** about how the incident affected student well-being by checking in with them.
  - *“How are you feeling? I’m opening this space for us to share our thoughts and feelings in response to this incident so we can collectively process what we’ve experienced.”*
  - Refer to the “Intentionally Articulate Interest in your Students’ Well-Being” section of our [Trauma-Informed Teaching](#) resource for more suggestions on how to convey your concern for student well-being.
- **Invite students to share what they need from you** to feel comfortable in the environment again.

- **Encourage students to seek support** from each other, community resources, family, and friends. Provide contact information for [campus counseling services](#).
- Explain how you **plan to tighten security** for future meetings.
- **Check back in with your students** one and/or several weeks later to follow up on their processing of the incident as well as their general well-being.

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

[“Preventing Zoombombing,”](#) UGA Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

[“Zoom: Recommended Tips,”](#) UGA EITS Help Desk Knowledge Base

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Center for Teaching. (2021). *Preventing and Responding to Zoombombing*. Brightspace. <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/brightspace/preventing-and-responding-to-zoombombing/>

Harper, S. R., & Davis III, C. H. (2016). Eight actions to reduce racism in college classrooms. *Academe*, 102(6), 30-34. <https://www.aaup.org/article/eight-actions-reduce-racism-college-classrooms>

Harvard Teaching and Learning. (2021). [Zoom Bombing](https://teaching-and-learning-website.document360.io/docs/zoom-bombing#). Teaching Extension Harvard. <https://teaching-and-learning-website.document360.io/docs/zoom-bombing#>

Huston, Therese A., & DiPietro, Michele. (2007). In the eye of the storm: Students' perceptions of helpful faculty actions following a collective tragedy. In D. R. Robertson & L. B. Nilson (Eds.) *To Improve the Academy: Vol 25. Resources for faculty, instructional, and organizational development*. Bolton, MA: Anker. Pp. 207-224. [https://podnetwork.org/content/uploads/In\\_the\\_Eye.pdf](https://podnetwork.org/content/uploads/In_the_Eye.pdf)

Office of the Dean of Students. (2021). *Responding to Zoombombers*. University of Illinois at Chicago. <https://dos.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/262/2020/06/Responding-to-Zoombombers-4.pdf>

*Zoom Frequently Asked Questions*. (2021). Center for Teaching Innovation. <https://teaching.cornell.edu/fall-2020-course-preparation/answers-faculty-questions/zoom-frequently-asked-questions#Policy>