

Zoom for the Novice

Teaching online classes using Zoom is much less of a challenge once a few basic lessons are learned by the novice instructor.

This paper is for the VERY inexperienced in Zoom usage; instructors who are wanting to move into online teaching but just don't know how to jump start the knowledge needed. We'll go baby step by baby step, and at the end you will be much better equipped to decide if Zoom classes are for you.

It is assumed that your class will have to be approved by your state regulators if you're offering it for credit hours, just as you would do for courses presented live.

Zoom Teacher Account

You may already have a personal Zoom account. That account is fine for multiple persons to chat, have virtual birthday parties, etc. It will not work for quality Zoom courses. For quality Zoom courses, you will need a Zoom Teacher Account. Among other neat features, the Zoom Teacher Account will allow you to assess student progress and manage student accounts.

Class Setup on Zoom

Each of your classes should have its own separate space on Zoom. Most of you will start with one class to test whether Zoom is right for you. If it is, then you may be tempted to just add as second class to the first. For many reasons this is **not** the smart thing to do.

Add Lessons to a Class

The Zoom Teacher Account will allow you to add lessons to an existing class that is already on Zoom, so if you find that additional materials or activities will improve the class you don't have to delete the existing class and start over from scratch.

Student Registration

There is a feature in the Zoom Teacher Account that allows students to register for your class. Please note that they can register using this feature, but not pay. You will have to use a separate payment service.

Payment services such as PayPal, Stripe and many others can be used.

Once you have your Zoom Teacher Account and know how you'll collect fees from students, you're ready to move on to the next steps.

Class Scheduling

What's the best day of the week or month and the most desirable time of day for your courses? You're the expert on that information because you have local information. Many instructors elect to use the recording feature on Zoom so that the class can be repeated at an alternative time. This is a very handy feature, but it means that the class watching the recording won't have the same opportunity to interact with the instructor and other students, so it will have to be cleared with your state regulators if the recorded class is offered for credit.

Equipment

This is one of the big factors in quality Zoom classes. It's also the single most expensive factor, although many instructors already have some usable equipment on hand.

Internet Connection – You're probably not that much of a novice that you don't know you'll need an Internet connection, but not all Internet connections are created equal. The real question is: 'Will your Internet connection be capable of transmitting a Zoom course?' If others in your area are using your same Internet provider, you're probably ok. If you're a pioneer in your area, call your service provider and inquire. Zoom will also tell you on their website.

Laptop – Laptops are also not created equal, and you will need a laptop that can handle basic Zoom functions as well as any additional bells and whistles you decide to add to your course. Use of these bells and whistles are too advanced for this paper, but not necessarily difficult to incorporate and use in your course.

Microphone – The mike built into your laptop will work if you stay close enough and speak distinctly. If you plan to look up so students can see your face, you will need either a connecting headset or a USB microphone.

Camera and Background - The camera in your laptop will not work. You will need a webcam and camera stand! Prices vary widely, but most instructors opt for middle to higher priced cameras.

If you want a background instead of the room in which you are teaching, Zoom offers a variety from which you can choose, mostly free. If those don't suit you, a multitude of apps sell them (type Zoom backgrounds into your browser).

Additionally, some much more advanced, information is available from Zoom and in a multitude of online posts and YouTube videos. The best help comes from experienced Zoom instructors. The Real Estate Educators Association (REEA) offers some of the best, real estate specific, videos and virtual classes available. They are free to members, and membership is very reasonable.