

Tips for Online Gatherings

1. **Open the session early.** This can increase safety for some and calm those who are worried about getting in. Using 10-15 minutes before the event begins to troubleshoot is time well-spent. Ensure everyone is ready and comfortable to start.
2. **Welcome people as they arrive.** People want to be seen and a friendly face is a lovely way to enter a virtual space. We can't offer coffee or cookies, so offer a smile and warm greeting instead.
3. **Start with the personal.** Some personal words about family and life - especially in challenging times - is helpful. It will help people enter more easily and quickly, and they will feel respected. Never underestimate a few minutes to hear everyone's name, where they are from, what connects them to the gathering, and a small personal fact (connected to why we are here).
4. **Go slow to go fast.** Start by reminding everyone how to use the technology, as is needed. A warmup will also help get people ready to share and learn together. You may be anxious to jump in and start but taking time to settle in will help people engage more quickly later.
5. **Vary it up.** It's hard to sit in front of a computer screen for long periods of time and your virtual session may be only one of many the participants have had that day. To help keep the energy and focus up, offer the content and invite engagement in a variety of ways. Some examples include: use Breakout Rooms; solo/small group/full group; Chat box and sharing aloud; written and visual text; activities at your desk and while stepping away; and so much more.
6. **Use visuals.** Some learners struggle to listen for long periods of time in a virtual setting. Visuals can help. Depending on the learning platform or tool you are using, consider: PowerPoint slides (with images), video, YouTube, images, charts, downloadable resources, etc. Learning is helped when we see, hear *and* do something with the content presented.
7. **Keep it clean.** Whatever you do in your virtual platform or tools, *less is more*. Ensure that your decisions to add or offer resources and invitations to engage, are rooted in your desire to ensure learning.