Small Breakout Groups with Zoom

A Primer for running online discussions & activities

Engage online students with small breakout groups

Why run breakout groups online?

One way to engage students in a seminar format online is to divide them into small groups in order to dive deeper into a given discussion prompt, question, or problem. Within these discussions, students have a chance to engage with their peers in an online environment that can sometimes feel isolated and remote.

Examples

Discussion Prompt	Brainstorming Session	Group Projects
Students break off into groups to discuss readings, questions, etc.	Students collaborate on a shared document or digital whiteboard.	Students come together to for updates on group projects.

One solution for this learning challenge is "Zoom"

Zoom is a video-conferencing tool typically used for online meetings and for webinars, and is supported by Georgetown University for all students, staff, and faculty. A few features in particular make it an ideal solution for facilitating breakout groups in an online environment:

- You can invite participants into your meeting directly or have it ready ahead of time
  - Invite participants from Zoom,your calendar, or within your Canvas course

- **"Share Screen"** feature lets you or your students share your whole screen and/or a specific window,
  - It also allows you and your students to annotate and highlight the screen you are sharing and/or a white digital whiteboard.
  - You can quickly save these annotations as an image file for future use

- **"Breakout Groups"** feature enables you to either automatically or manually sort students into separate groups that act as their very own session
  - As the host for the meeting, you can send a message out to all of the groups, join in and leave each group as needed, and end the breakout groups when you are ready to consolidate.
  - Organize breakout group categories ahead of time, or automatically sort them on the fly.

Preparation ahead of Time

Log in to your **Account**

Georgetown University provides Zoom accounts for Faculty, Students and Staff. You will use your Georgetown login credentials to use Zoom at: **https://georgetown.zoom.us/**

Set up your Zoom **Meeting**

There are multiple options for setting up a Zoom meeting. You can find the university's resources on these options as well as help for hosting a Zoom Meeting at: **https://uis.georgetown.edu/Zoom**

Familiarize Yourself with How Important Features Work

In order to confidently run the activity, you will want to be familiar with a few important features:

Basic Navigation for Attendees

This link will take you to a UIS (University Information Services) page that shows how attendees will join a Zoom Meeting and which options they will see in their menu at the bottom. It's helpful to be familiar with their experience so that you will be in a position to help anyone who is confused or needs help. These same options will be work the same for you, the facilitator, in addition to a few more advanced options.

Share Screen

Follow this link for the "Share Screen" feature to find resources located on the official Zoom Page.

Breakout Rooms

To find resources located on the official Zoom Page for breakout groups: Follow this link for getting started with "Breakout Rooms" in Zoom, and this link to manage those groups.

Prepare any **Supplemental Resources**

Depending on the type of activity you are facilitating, you may want to have resources ready ahead of time.

- A PowerPoint presentation slide with a question prompt
- A Google Drive Doc for collaboration
- A question that you can broadcast out to each breakout room using Zoom's built in breakout groups feature

Sample Agenda - Running the Activity

Prepare Participants for Breakout Groups (5 min)

Let students advance know what to expect ahead of time in order to proactively address points of confusion.

- "Breakout Rooms" will temporarily place them into a separate space with a few of their peers.
- Students can contact the faculty member by inviting the them to their breakout group using the "ask for help" button, or alternatively by "raising their hand" from their menu options.
- Help them understand which features students will make use of within the "Breakout Room", how they are able to share screens with each other, the interactive whiteboard, etc.
- Length of time set aside to discuss the prompt with their group.
- When the faculty member wants to end the breakout groups, students will see a countdown timer for 60 seconds letting them know to wrap up and return to the main session. (At the end of the countdown, that will happen automatically.)

Initiating the Discussion Prompt (10-30 min)

1. Once everyone is ready, Prompt discussion by visually displaying a discussion prompt or activity using the "Share Screen" feature to display a PowerPoint Slide, Website, Image, Video, etc from your personal computer. You could also just explain to them what you'd like them to do over video.

2. Select the "Breakout Rooms" button at the bottom of their window. A menu will pop up giving you the option to sort attendees into groups either by randomly sorting groups or manually dividing them as necessary. From there, you can join and leave the various breakout rooms from within this menu.
   a. You can also "broadcast" a message to all participants in every breakout room from this menu. The message will display as a pop-up text message in each room for about 15 seconds.

3. Once you'd like to finish, select the "close all rooms" button in the "Breakout Rooms" menu in order to initiate a countdown timer for all involved. They will then rejoin the main session either on their own or automatically at the end of the timer.

Bring It Back Together (10-15 min)

The combined group can then discuss together shared insights or results depending on the type of breakout groups activity.