

Afraid of Zoombombing? Try Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, WebEx for virtual classes

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Many teachers have thrown up their hands in frustration about the recent wave of "Zoombombing" incidents on the Zoom video conference

service and are looking for quick solutions elsewhere.

The New York school system made the decision even easier for them: banning the use of Zoom in the schools. (Elon Musk's Space X company and rival Google also asked employees to remove Zoom from company computers, citing [security concerns](#).)

"I will no longer be able to use Zoom due to the security failure," writes reader Caroline Pratte, a teacher from Quebec.

"I am searching for an alternative. For a primary teacher, the most interesting feature of Zoom is to see up to 25 people on the screen at the same time. Kids are missing friends so much, they want to SEE each other."

Everything she's discovered, she notes, is "always for business needs."

What to do?

We have some ideas. Because, beyond the fine print, Zoom rivals actually have some sweetheart deals (as in free) for schools during the COVID-19 crisis.

Microsoft Teams

The software, which is aimed at enterprises, is free for schools, students and teachers who can sign up with their school IDs.

This week, Microsoft went out of its way to invite in educators, noting in a blog post that its privacy controls are designed to not allow for random people to join a meeting and start screaming obscenities or flash pornography, two of the charges that have dogged Zoom. (Those occurred, in part, because the presenter allowed for screen sharing and

didn't require a password for entering the meeting.)

"You decide who from outside your organization can join your meetings directly, and who should wait in the lobby for someone to let them in," Microsoft says. You can also remove participants during a meeting, designate "presenters" and "attendees," and control which meeting participants can present content. "Advanced artificial intelligence monitors chats to help prevent negative behaviors like bullying and harassment."

As many as 250 people can be in a meeting.

To sign up for Teams for education, use this link: www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office. The cost to businesses signing up for Teams starts at \$5 monthly per user, or \$12.50 monthly to get Teams along with Outlook, Word, Excel and SharePoint.

Google Meet

The Google Meet app has consistently been in the top 10 of most downloaded smartphone apps since the COVID-19 crisis began, but for many people, it will be inoperable.

Meet is aimed at businesses and education to offer secure meeting space. Download the app, and you won't be able to do anything with it unless your school or business has signed up for the G Suite service, which is free for education, or \$6 per person a month for enterprise.

Then, a new corporate or school ID will be issued to each participant. The presenter can choose who can attend each meeting, and who can live stream or record the session.

Google has waived fees on premium features like the ability to have as

many as 250 people in a meeting and live streaming to as many as 100,000 people through September, because of the pandemic.

As many as 100 people can be in a meeting. Sign up here:

edu.google.com/products/gsuite-for-education

Note: The Meet app is a different animal from the Google Hangouts app, which has no restrictions and is aimed at the general public. Although No. 43 on the iOS app chart, Google had hinted that it would phase out the app in 2020 in favor of the new Duo app, which also is aimed at basic video chatting. Duo is No. 12 in iOS. Neither applications are in the top 50 on the Google Play Android chart, but have come pre-loaded on Android phones. Duo essentially serves as a kind of FaceTime video chat option that can connect either the Android or iOS platform. FaceTime works only with Apple device users.

WebEx

The corporate solution, owned by networking giant Cisco, has opened up to a wider audience looking for a secure solution to Zoom with new free offerings.

Anyone can hold a meeting with WebEx with as many as 100 participants and meet as long as you want. (Zoom is free with a 40-minute limit and will allow you three sessions monthly.) Cisco says the free version of WebEx has advanced security such as the ability to lock and unlock the meeting room. For more advanced features, like encrypted meetings, the rate is \$13.50 monthly, or \$17.95 monthly with tech support.

However, WebEx has more steps involved than others to join. Once you set up the meeting, you grab the URL and share it. Then your participants will need to click it, then download the Cisco app if they're

on a smartphone and enter their name and email before being allowed in. As an alternative to Zoombombing, though, these steps may be welcome.

Up to 100 people can attend the meeting. Sign up:

www.webex.com/webexremoteedu.html

GoTo Meeting

The corporate entity Logmein is the owner of enterprise-based GoToMeeting, which has made the service available for free for the "next 3 months."

As many as 25 people can attend a "class," but if the teacher decides to teach it in the "webinar" format instead, as many as 3,000 can attend. The webinar can be recorded to be viewed at a later date. Logmein says meetings have a "security lock," which means participants will have to wait to be let in when locked.

Finding additional information about security concerns on Logmein's website was a challenge, and attempts to reach press representatives for the company weren't answered by publication.

Monthly rates for enterprise customers start at \$12.95 monthly for up to 150 participants.

How to sign up: meeting/education/k-12"

target="_blank">www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/education/k-12

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