



ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS

**FINAL REPORT ON THE EDS ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT –
DEVELOPING ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS AMONGST
ELEMENTARY LEVEL LEARNERS OF ESOL**

Islington Adult Community Learning

Islington Adult Community Learning (2021) *Final Report*
on the EDS Action Research Project – *Developing Essential*
Digital Skills amongst elementary level learners of ESOL.
London: ETF.

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For further information regarding the EDS Action Research programme and this project go to <https://ccpathways.co.uk/essential-digital-skills/>.

The programme was delivered on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation by -



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consultancy



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Final report - Developing Essential Digital Skills amongst elementary level learners of ESOL

Islington Adult Community Learning

This project developed a short discrete Digital Skills course to bridge the digital skills gap for ESOL learners and to enable the learners who have the greatest need to improve their Essential Digital Skills. The aim of the course was to enable the learners to confidently access email and Zoom sessions across a range of devices. Feedback from learners has been positive and the project team believe that the key to its success was the way in which it was delivered by ESOL teachers rather than IT teachers.

Summary

Islington Adult Community Learning (ACL) is situated in the London Borough of Islington, which borders on the London Boroughs of Hackney, Haringey and Camden. The department offers further education and health and well-being courses for Islington residents over the age of nineteen, with learning centres located in libraries, children's centres, community centres and other locations across the borough.

Islington is a borough of sharp contrasts, with areas of high deprivation as well as pockets of wealth. Within this setting, ACL operates under the wider council priority to create a fairer Islington.

Islington ACL's mission is -

- To create the opportunity for residents from whatever their background, to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.
- By delivering outstanding teaching and learning, to meet the needs of residents, employers and the local community.
- To inspire learners to develop the digital skills, knowledge and aptitudes they need to be successful, happy in their future lives and realise their next steps in education and employment.
- To remove digital skills exclusion, to enable residents who need to access basic digital skills course to increase employment opportunities, access online resources and information.

At a local level, the need for developing valuable skills in this area was exemplified during the 2020 pandemic when the delivery of our programmes in ACL Islington were largely carried out online. It quickly became apparent that there were many learners who were not secure in their digital skills which prevented them from participating and benefiting from our new online mode of learning.

This was a responsive, short term project to support adult ESOL learners to build their confidence and skills with the devices they had to enable the learner to engage in learning. The project revolved around a set of co-created interactive PowerPoint resources, which moved PowerPoint from a linear process to being learner led. Tutors would be able to apply theoretical understanding of effective practice in

teaching, learning and assessment while drawing on the research and learner feedback.

Rationale

It is important that learners are able to make meaning from their online learning. The team were focused on developing responsive resources that helped to address specific needs that learners were bringing. Many of the learners involved in the project had been excluded from other opportunities due to not having the appropriate digital skills or access to devices; reaching them and supporting their digital development was especially important.

Approach

ESOL tutors identified 26 learners from ESOL spring term 2021 programmes (see appendix 1) who required urgent support with digital skills (Beard & Wilson, 2006:16). The learners were split into two groups Group 1 (ESOL Pre-Entry and Entry 1) and Group 2 (ESOL Entry 2 and Entry 3).

The following were identified as the greatest areas for skills development within the ESOL Pre-Entry – Entry 1 cohort. They are as follows:

- devices
- Zoom
- pictures
- WhatsApp
- Internet

ESOL Entry 2/3 cohort required developing skills in the following areas:

- Zoom controls
- Device & internet vocabulary
- Zoom chat & reactions
- Online search
- Moodle
- Email
- Attachments

Before the course went live the tutors developed resources that were able to be used with different devices.

The course delivery was via Zoom and the tutor used interactive PowerPoint presentations (See Appendix 6). As our learners used a range of different devices to access online courses, we did not want to restrict the project to just one device. Although this could have been easier to deliver the project it would not have reflected our learners who use different devices to access courses. It would have been another barrier and further digital exclusion. The project was to develop resources and teaching methodology that could be used not only for ESOL learners on this project but also wider use across the service. Before the course started, the tutor

contacted the learners to find out the type of device they would be using to access the sessions. The tutors were then aware of the different types of devices that learners were using and this in turn informed the resources that were developed to support them.

Each session was designed to take into account scope for free practice. Learners were given time away from the lesson to enable them to practice the skills being taught in the online lessons under the tutor's guidance. This was a logical approach to support the development of the learners' digital skills from the start of the course through to completion. Reviewing each session at the start of the next and giving the learners the opportunity to practice using their own devices, what had been covered in each session. The tutor started each session with a review of what had been covered in the first session and asked if the learners had had the opportunity to use the digital skills they had learnt from the previous session.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

The action research project enabled the tutors involved to reflect on what worked in their own delivery of the material, to meet the individual needs of our learners. Tutors developed their research skills and evidence-based practice. They also gained opportunities to network, collaborate and form professional relationships with other colleagues from different ACLs during research sharing events. The project gave the tutors more freedom and encouraged the tutors to be more creative in developing new resources and using different teaching and learning strategies. This had a positive impact on our learners and encouraged them to be more confident to try new skills and improve existing skills. Tutors are now more confident to try new teaching strategies and also support other tutors, who were not involved in the project to develop their own resources, developing a culture of self-evaluation through Teaching Learning Reviews and removing the fear of trying something new.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

The project was a collaboration with tutors from two curriculum areas, ESOL and digital specialists. The combination of tutors from each specialist area was important to help address language barriers and to meet learners' needs effectively. Teachers worked together to develop resources, with another member of the project team meeting learners after their sessions to collect and collate learner accounts.

The project encouraged and provided opportunities for staff to work together on a research project. Staff have an opportunity to lead in gathering the information, conducting the research, interviewing learners and tutors and presenting findings. The project also provided the opportunity for staff to work together to evaluate each other's practice, including how the strategies implemented during the project impacted on learning and outcomes for learners.

Tutors on the project have shared resources developed with other areas not just ESOL and Digital Skills. The resources can be used across all curriculum areas for learners with low digital skills to enable the learners to access courses. Tutors are

contributing to quality improvements within the organisation, delivering CPD sessions to tutors firstly about the project and then three training sessions to help tutors improve their own digital skills and develop specific resources' that could be used in their sessions and shared across the service. This has been an important part of the Quality Assurance for the service, enabling staff to utilise their skills and share good practice across the service.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression

The project team arranged an initial introduction and a brief survey to find out what level learners were working towards, and which devices they would be using to access their course. However, the resources for the Week 1 sessions were prepared in advance of meeting the learners and having a clear picture of their needs. As a result of this, the materials focused on giving learners a basic understanding of the technologies/ devices they have in-hand and improving their confidence to engage and navigate their learning environment using Zoom.

Tasks were successfully evaluated and tracked through tutor observation of the Zoom participant panel, as well as learner feedback (yes/no). Learners used Zoom chat to send messages to their tutor and other learners in the class. They were also shown how to use WhatsApp to send messages and pictures. This helped provide feedback in sessions and for the tutor to evaluate their learning.

The original course outline was initially considered ambitious for this level of ESOL learner. However, tutors adapted the resources after each session. Using the revised resources, that were easier for the learners to understand and linked to different devices being used, there were an adequate number of practical opportunities for the learners and time to complete them. To check learning, the learners used their own examples of topics and keywords and considered how it could be used outside the classroom. At the end of the course, all objectives were met, and attendees demonstrated and fed back their understanding sufficiently to consider all aims as completed satisfactorily.

Though starting from a basic level, learners were now able to use their own devices to begin accessing courses:

"I learnt how to send message in Zoom chat, how to listen. Which phone is latest, which phone is an old phone, I didn't know before. I know how to send pictures message, how to search and find everything online."

Using the ACL Moodle VLE, learners and staff were able to share their experiences of the project. This provided a safe environment for learners to provide feedback and tutors to develop the resources for learners to access. Tutors were able to manage and encourage positive learner behaviour and learner experience. Removing the barriers of digital exclusion, similar to when learners' opportunities are improved as their literacy and language skills improve and open up a world of opportunity, not only further learning but also able to access both social and employment opportunities.

The project gave learners from different social and cultural backgrounds (including those with limited or no access to digital technologies) opportunity to access and participate in learning. Teaching strategies and the resources developed by the tutors motivated learners to use technology, making the learners more confident in accessing learning. Learners were also no longer afraid to practise or make mistakes when using Moodle or attending sessions using Zoom. The project became more learner-led as it progressed, and as learners' digital skills improved, tutors responded by developing resources that would further stretch and challenge them.

The project focus was on improving ESOL learners Digital Skills and accessing online course EDS and ESOL, the soft skill was learner confidence and this can be seen in the case studies.

"I learn how to find anything how to search, how to write my name in Zoom. I comfortable, I try by myself and I'm happy to teach computer because I want to do learn by myself and I didn't want to ask my friend all day, what can I do what is this. It is hard sometimes to ask all day, 'what is this?'. I'm happy now".

Learner H (appendix 4)

"Nobody can come to you and teach you...struggle, very struggle. Now a little bit better than before because you can go to talk with them, you can talk with them, you can help you in office but because of corona, nobody helped you. Now I know three or four things, I know how you use it...zoom, email. I use it by myself. That one is important, if you learn more, you can do."

Learner A (appendix 5)

Learning from this project

What Went Well

- This project will help shape the landscape for developing the skills our learners need to navigate around the web safely and will greatly enhance their lives in the U.K. Following this discrete programme, learners now have the skills to conduct everyday things such as online browsing, shopping online, and accessing learning materials. Also, importantly, preventing further social exclusion by enabling learners to stay connected through online platforms. Both courses had a positive impact on the learners who attended and they were able to link the gaps in their knowledge to the newly acquired digital skills. They now have an understanding of the technical language needed to recognise and identify skills needed for future development.
- Learners were able use the skills learnt to access online services that previously they were unable to, providing a new outlook for the learners. This was really important, and in a way, a light bulb moment for the learners; Bridging the gap between what they wanted to do and what they were instructed to do by others. This gave them a deeper contextual understanding.

- Learners had particular areas of EDS that were especially aspirational such as transacting online. The project enabled an exploratory approach that was able to tap into learners' interests and motivations.
- The interactive and non-linear design of the resources enabled learners to 'take their own route', which was surprisingly successful.

Even Better If

- The learners made huge steps to improve their digital skills. If we had more information about their level prior to starting the course, it may have helped designing and developing the resources.
- Through the course of learner sampling, it became evident the skills to be taught on the course had to be scaled back to the bare basic. It quickly became evident after the first session that the starting point for the course is vocabulary used in digital skills delivery.
- Learners and teachers would appreciate more time to work on digital skills.
- Learners stressed that 'you don't know what you don't know' and it is important for teachers to remember this.

References

Beard, C; Wilson, J.P. (2006) *Experiential Learning: A best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers*. Second Edition. Kogan Page Limited.

Appendix 1 – The project team

Project Role	Name	Job Role
Project Lead	David Coleman	Quality Manager
Deputy Lead	Simon Fuller	Curriculum Manager
Researcher	Nilupa Rahim	ESOL Tutor
Tutor	Laurie Lawerance	ESOL Tutor
Tutor	Petra Belikova	ESOL Tutor
Tutor	Sonja Rose	Digital Skills Tutor
Tutor	Sharon Hall	Digital Skills Tutor
Project Mentor	Chloë Hynes (ccConsultancy)	
Research Group Lead	David Prinn (ccConsultancy)	

Appendix 2 - Tutor session planning including tutor session plans: Laurie for Pre E1/E1 ESOL EDS and E2/E3 ESOL EDS course

Tutor session plans:

ESOL E2/E3

Course outline:

Week 1 - Vocab & Zoom

- Basic computer & internet vocabulary
- Troubleshooting: how to get back to home screen on PC/laptop/phone
- Zoom: how to join a meeting on PC, iPhone, android
- Zoom menu
- Zoom chat

Week 2 - Online search

- What is the internet + basic icons
- Browsers & search engines
- How to search online
- Using an online dictionary

Week 3 - Moodle

- What is Moodle & how can it help you learn
- How to find Moodle and log in
- How to find your course
- How to find course information and class materials

Week 4 - Email & attachment

- What is an email
- How to access your account
- Sending an email
- Replying to an email
- What is an attachment
- How to attach a photo

Rationale:

Sessions are designed to be followed with little additional instructions for teachers

Step by step guides included in sessions

Sessions are designed to be printed and sent to learners

Learners should be sent summary PDFs by email as well as printed copies (to ensure all learners have easy access to step-by-step guides etc)

Some slides with step-by-step guides can be replaced by live demonstrations. They are included for clarification and to be sent to learners

Interaction content

The topics are too complex to cover in depth in such short sessions & learners are unlikely to be confident navigating around websites etc on their own during the sessions. They get to practise Zoom functions and returning to home screen during the first lesson, but in other sessions practice is set as homework.

The sessions are too short to include more interaction and practice. 1.5-hour sessions would have been more practical for this level. This has made planning quite challenging.

Vocabulary

There is a lot of new vocabulary. It is essential to include vocab as this is one of the gaps in knowledge and a barrier to online learning. Vocab is split over the 4 sessions, so as not to overwhelm, and introduced where most relevant. Vocab summary/ quiz included at the end of each session.

Appendix 3 - Essential Digital Skills course published on the ACL learner brochure (ACL Islington 2021)



ENTRY LEVEL 3 ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS (ONLINE)

In an increasingly digital world, it's becoming more and more important to have the right skills in order to use computers and other technological devices well. This course will help you to develop those skills for work and also everyday use. Course will be delivered online via an online learning platform

Apply now - places still available
Mondays 9.30-11.30am and Tuesdays 2-4pm

For more information contact 07734 777 466 or visit www.adultlearning.islington.gov.uk

Appendix 4 - Interview transcription and case study – H

Transcription

Interview Question	Interview Answers
Q1: Have you done a course like this before	"No"
Q2: Why did you do the course?	<i>"because I don't know how to use computer and I don't know how to use the Internet to find anything that I want to learn...how to find anything and for that, I want to learn computer"</i>
Q3: Why is it important for you to learn about computers?	<i>"Because I found a job and I want to find by computer online by computer and I want to learn. Before I do not know how to use computer...and er shopping, when I want to buy clothes and shoes, I don't know how to use because of that, I want to learn computer. I want to learn for me...and how to find job, I want to understand everything learn everything. Maybe when I start a job, maybe it is computer, work with computer...because of that, I I want to learn computer".</i>
Q4: What did you learn on the course?	<i>"In computer, lots of documents, how to search, how to open the computer android and IOS is different in laptop in the iPhone, I didn't know before...I think all the same but Laurie teach me everything, how to write my name in laptop, in Zoom, how to change my name".</i>
Q5: Have you used what you have learnt in your daily life?	<i>"I have told my friend, she didn't know. I tell to her, I have laptop, searching. I am confident now, I try by myself".</i>
Q6: Do you think one hour per lesson was enough?	<i>"One hour is not enough, maybe three hours, if you can, two hours and three hours learning English. Even one day is not enough, if you can two days is good".</i>
Q7: What did you think about the English language used on the course?	<i>"Laurie is a good teacher, she understand for all...sometimes it's coming difficult language but she explain, I love her because she understand everything...when it coming difficult word, she</i>

What the English learning ok, was it good because of L?	<i>explain sometime one word difficult, like this like this how to explain".</i>
Q8: Do you think you will take another course like this again?	<i>"If you have (more courses), I would".</i>

Case study.

My name is H.

From April, I'm living in Islington. I didn't study about ICT before. I don't know how to use computer and laptop only how to use phone and when I want to do anything, I ask my friend and this time, now when I started to teach with Laoreal, I know how to use computer and I try to search anything and sometimes I do myself. With Laurie, I learn how to find anything how to search, how to write my name in Zoom. I comfortable, I try by myself and I'm happy to teach computer because I want to do learn by myself and I didn't want to ask my friend all day, what can I do what is this. It is hard sometimes to ask all day, "what is this". I'm happy now".

Appendix 5 - Interview transcription and case study – A

Transcription

Interview Question	Interview Answers
Q1: Have you done a course like this before?	<i>"I didn't do course before".</i>
Q2: Why are you doing this course? Q3: Why was it important for you to develop your digital skills?	<i>"Because for future, support for us for everything, how to send everything, of everything is technology by paper, any job, for children as well. How do you use it about the Zoom. They use it the world, the technology, the internet, how to send to any office, in council, how you use it Zoom, Viber, WhatsApp, how to copy, like going somewhere, if you have phone, have a laptop, you use it home, for future, for job, for everything. How do you control, the kids, when they use it – what they do inside the phone. Parental. Yeh the kids use it, you use it to help them because they're under 12, under 7".</i>
Q4: What did you learn on the course? Q5: Have you used the skills learnt on the course in your everyday life now that you have finished the course?	<i>"Some words difficult in English, some words, she use picture on the phone, messenger as well. I send to my teacher. ESOL teacher as well. Before they go to school, now because fo corona, because if you don't know you can't do it. Somethings I understand from teacher – N. The teacher use WhatsApp. Laurie teach us WhatsApp and how you do Zoom. I use the phone but commuter difficult. Still I didn't use it (laptop) – problem with computer".</i>
Q6: Do you now understand about online safety?	<i>"How you see – bad or good, little bit understand".</i>
Q7: Do you think an hour per lesson was enough?	<i>"Sometimes you rush, sometimes more time, good. If you can more lesson, it's good as well. I think two hours and then four hours is good".</i>
Q8: How did you find the language used on the course? Did L make it easy for you to understand?	<i>"She made us understand, if you don't understand, she repeat the word, if you don't understand, she make you understand, the teacher repeat the word, she good teacher, some words you don't understand, she explain...she repeat, you understand more. Example, inside the Zoom...something I don't understand, I tell her".</i>

Q9: Do you think you will take another course like this?

"I understand I like it, I understand, some things I know I don't know it because out of computer, I don't know...some people, I say help me. Like the Chromebook, nothing work but if somebody teach you, it's good. If you don't know, you don't you. If you don't know, you keep it you leave it. When you know it, you use it a lot of things, even job. Now I cancel something, I know it – if you don't want, whatever cancel. If you don't want it, you cancel it. If you lose your phone, you can find it. I not proper proper do it but three things I know. I know email send, now GP now you know when you sick, for children. I struggle this one beginning corona, little bit I struggle now but better than before".

Case study testimonial

I come here in 2004, to UK. I go to ESOL before, entry 2 entry 3, now the girl is 12 years now, after that, I go to the ESOL then I had my second – my son, I stop everything, I stop everything, single mum and still now, I go ESOL support my children as well. Now I come to the ESOL E1/E2 I use it. Now they do more the together and now the course. Better than before – I don't know before the internet, like how do you use it, how do you change, how to put Zoom because I don't have internet before, that's the thing. I have only online, telephone call. Now I use with ESOL as well. If I want, copy the paper, now I have Wi-Fi, I use it the picture, how to use it with Zoom, email, WhatsApp. How to use WhatsApp to send something to GP. Everything you have paper like Official, like council, now because of corona, you can't do anything only online and phone and email and WhatsApp and IMO. The importance with Zoom, talking in front. Nobody can come to you and teach you...struggle, very struggle. Now a little bit better than before because you can go to talk with them, you can talk with them, you can help you in office but because of corona, nobody help you. Now I know three or four things, I know how you use it...zoom, email. I use it by myself. That one is important, if you learn more, you can do.

Appendix 6 - PowerPoint resources

Entry 2 and 3 Session 1

30/06/2021

Essential Digital Skills for ESOL

Entry 2 & Entry 3
Vocabulary & Zoom

1

Today we will:

- Learn computer and internet vocabulary
- Talk about what to do when you get 'lost' on your phone or computer
- Practise turning your microphone and video on and off
- Send a message in Zoom chat

2

1

Do you know what these pictures mean?



3

icon – (noun) a **small picture** on a computer screen or a phone that you press to do different things (for example open your WhatsApp or use your camera)

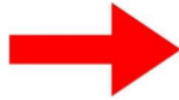


How many **icons** can you see on this phone?

4

2

What's this?



5

What is a **device**?



6

3

device – (noun) a piece of computer technology, for example a smartphone

Do you know any other devices?

7

Match the pictures and the words in the box.

smartphone laptop tablet iPhone desktop computer

A  A small computer you can take with you

B  **C**  A large computer that sits on top of your desk

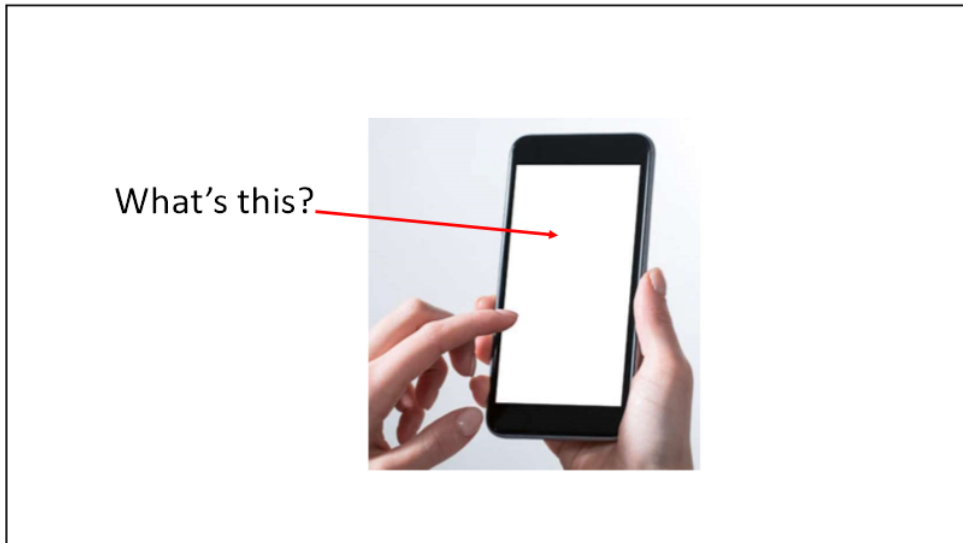
D 

E 

What device are you using?

8

4

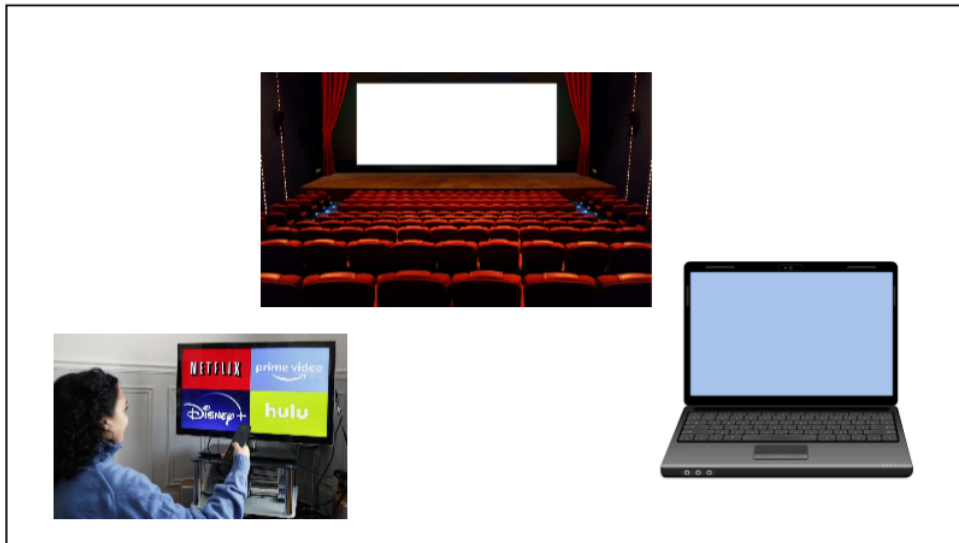


9

Can you think of other things that have a **screen**?

10

5



11

Match the words and the meaning.

to type

to click

microphone

cursor

A Use it for people to hear you **speak**



B Write text on a phone or computer

C A small arrow icon on a computer screen that shows you where you are working




D To **press** on a part of a computer to make the computer do something

12

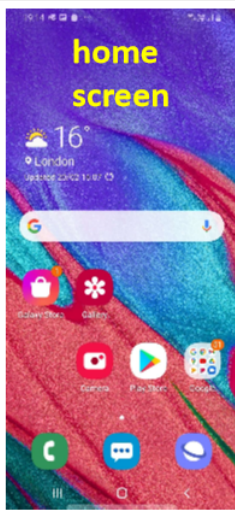
6

If you get lost on your phone



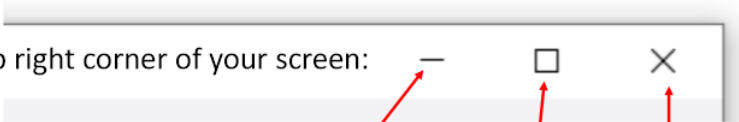
Press the **home** button at the bottom of your screen

You will return to your **home screen** and you can start again




13

If you get lost on your computer/laptop




Icons in the top right corner of your screen:

If you get lost, you can **close**  the page and start again

hide the page (make it go away)

Make the page smaller (so you can see other things on your screen)

Close the page



14

How to join a Zoom meeting



join = connect

Your teacher will send you a **link**. The link is always underlined. It looks like this:

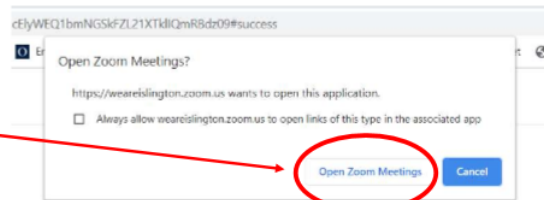
<https://weareislington.zoom.us/j/91029085478?pwd=cElyWEQ1bmNGSkFZL21XTkllQmRBdz09>

You press/click on the link to join the meeting and follow the instructions

15

Joining a meeting on your **computer** or **laptop**

You will see this message. Click open Zoom Meetings

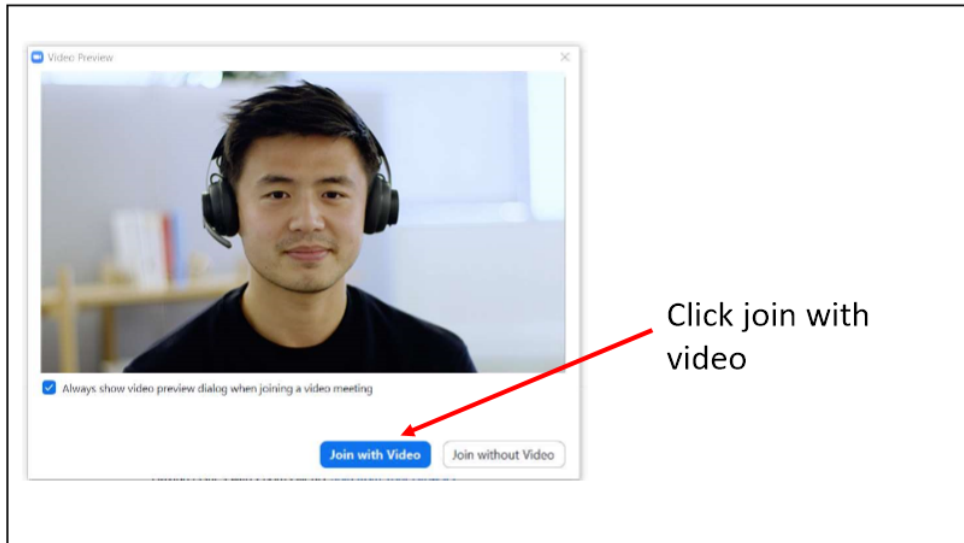


Click **Open Zoom Meetings** on the dialog shown by your browser
If you don't see a dialog, click **Launch Meeting** below

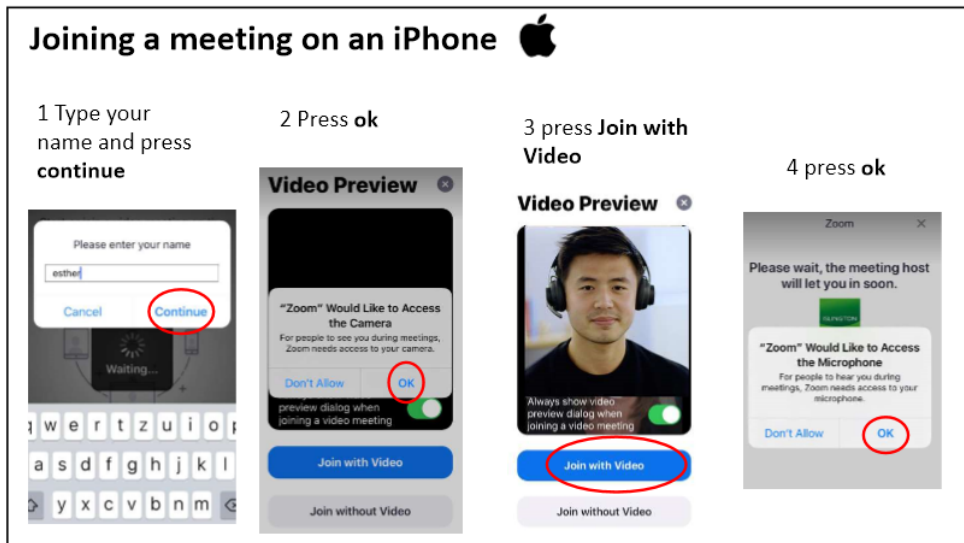


16

8



17

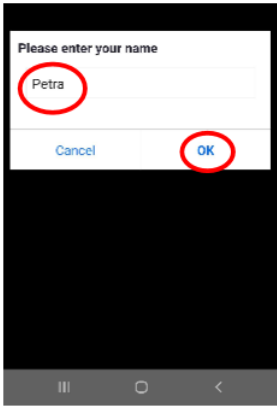


18

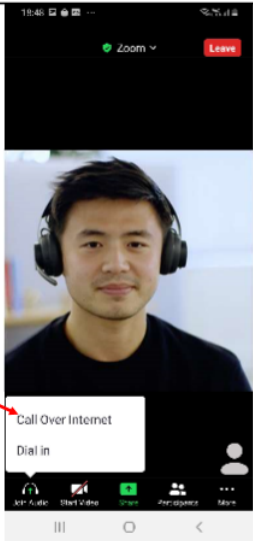
9

Joining a meeting on a different phone (not iPhone)

1 Type your name and press ok




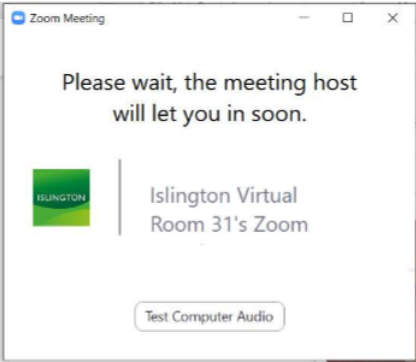
2. Press call Over Internet



The image shows two screenshots from a Zoom mobile app. The left screenshot shows a 'Please enter your name' dialog box with 'Petra' entered in the text field and the 'OK' button circled in red. The right screenshot shows the Zoom meeting interface with a video feed of a man wearing headphones. A red arrow points from the text '2. Press call Over Internet' to the 'Call Over Internet' button in the bottom right corner of the meeting interface.

19

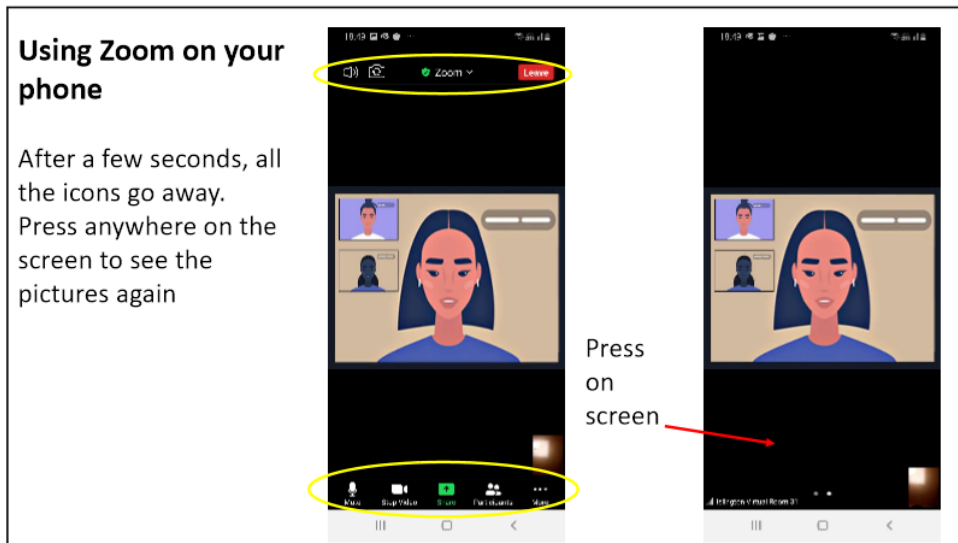
Now wait, your teacher will let you in to the meeting.



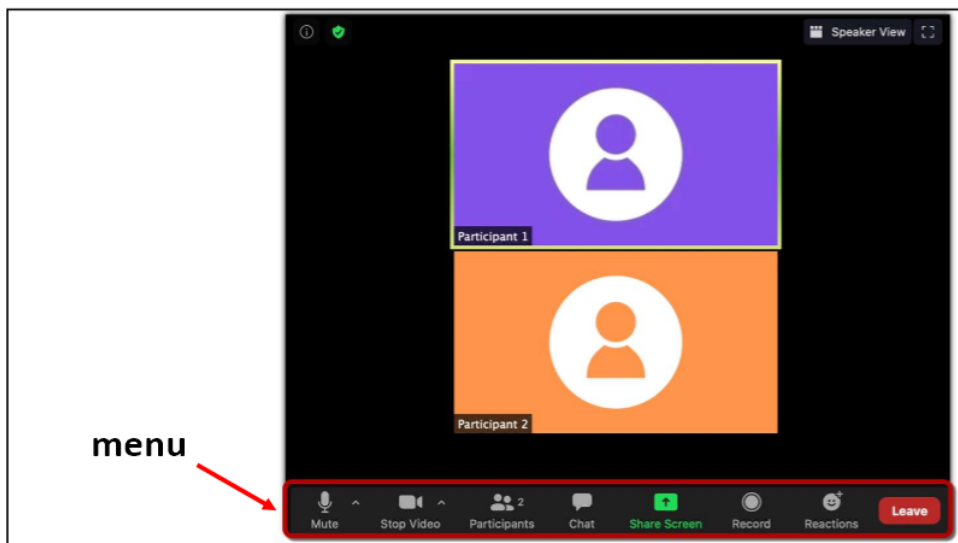
The image shows two screenshots of a Zoom meeting waiting screen. The left screenshot is a desktop window titled 'Zoom Meeting' with the text 'Please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon.' and 'Islington Virtual Room 31's Zoom'. The right screenshot is a mobile phone screen with the same text and a green 'ISLINGTON' logo. Below the logo, it says 'Islington Virtual Room 31's Zoom Meeting' and 'London Borough of Islington - Please wait, you will be admitted to the meeting shortly'.

20

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11

Zoom menu – press/ click on each picture to do different things

turn your microphone /sound **on** or **off**

turn your camera **on** or **off**

see the **people** in the meeting

write a **message** in the chat

send pictures

leave the meeting

23

Microphone: you can turn your sound **off** (= **mute**) or **on** (= **unmute**)

Video: you can turn your camera on or off

microphone and camera are **on**

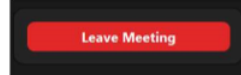
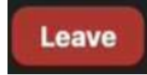
microphone and camera are **off**

Let's practise!

1. Turn your microphone off. Turn it back on.
2. Turn your video off. Turn it back on.

24

To **leave** the meeting press



Let's practice!

Everyone leave the meeting now, then find the Zoom link from your teacher and join the meeting again.

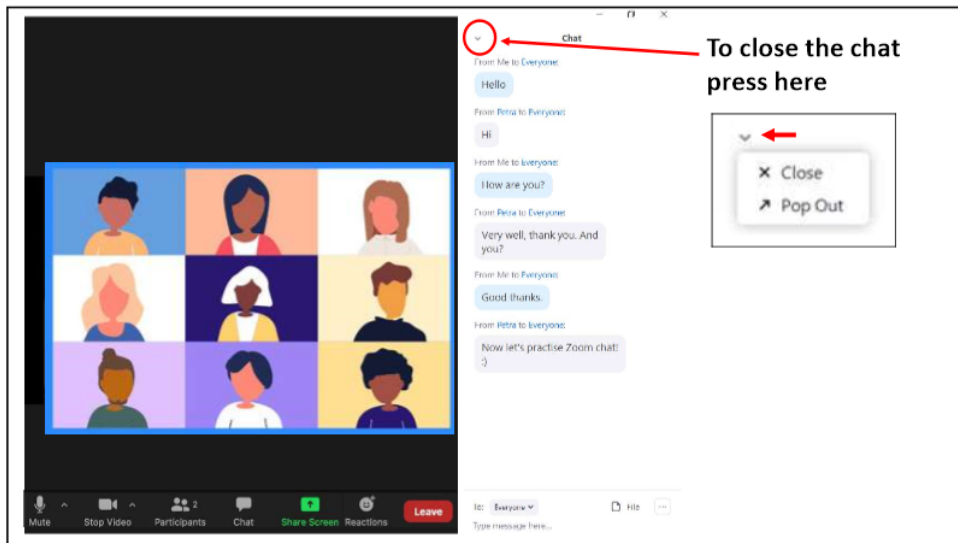
25

Using chat on your computer/laptop

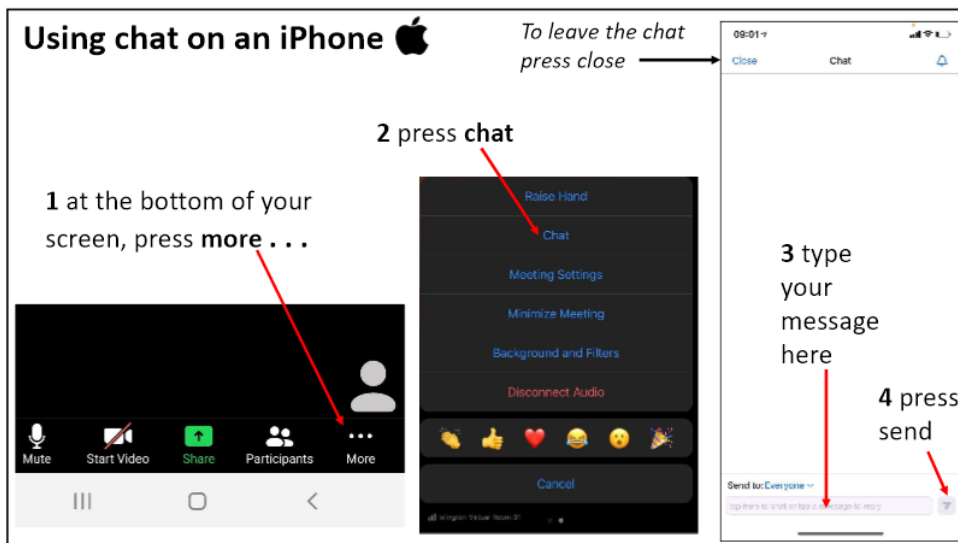
Type your message here and press the Enter key

26

13

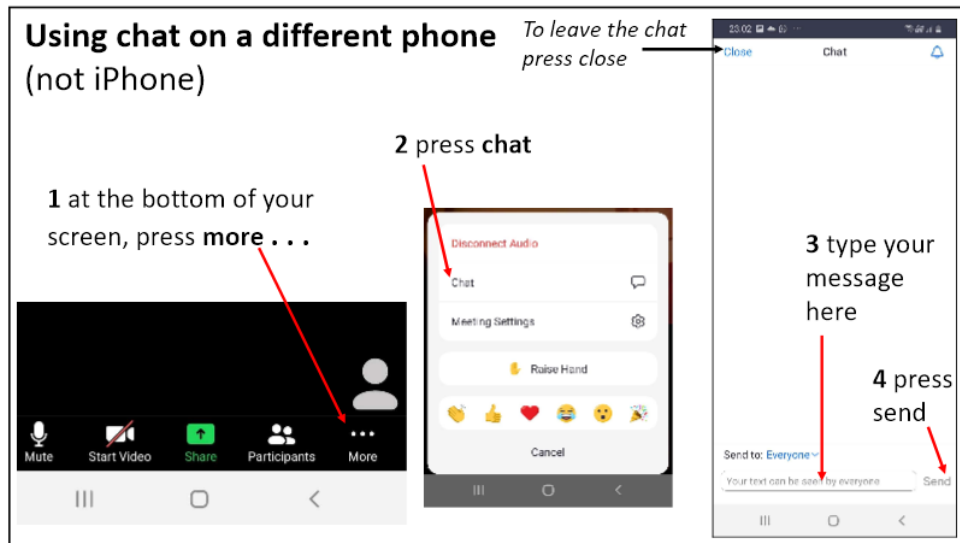


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Let's use Zoom chat!

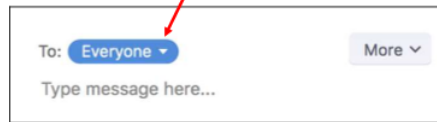
Say hello in the chat

30

15

You can send your message to everyone or send a **private message** to one person, for example to your teacher.

Press/click on the small arrow, you will see all the people in the meeting.
Choose the person you want to message



Let's practise

1. Say hello in the chat, send the message to everyone.
2. Say hello in the chat, send the message only to your teacher.

31

Homework: Revise vocabulary from today's lesson:

icon - a small picture on a computer screen or a phone that you press to do different things

arrow - 

device - a piece of computer technology, for example a smartphone

screen - 

to type - to write text on a phone or computer

to click - to press on a part of a computer to make the computer do something

to mute - to turn microphone/sound off

to unmute - to turn microphone on

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