



Distance Teaching

How to pair or group students



ACTIVATE

Free language production

- practising language in pairs or groups
- pairing or grouping students in breakout rooms
- practising dialogues or group discussions
- discussing and planning group projects

During a distance video lesson one of the most difficult tasks is to organise speaking practice for pairs or small groups. If all the students speak at the same time, they will interrupt one another. If only two students speak and the rest listen passively, the class may drift off and you may run out of time. If you use the Zoom video conferencing tool for online lessons, it is easy to pair or group students in breakout rooms for simultaneous speaking activities:

- Sign into your Zoom account. Click “Settings” in the navigation menu, then go to the Breakout Room option on the “Meeting” tab and turn on the breakout rooms option.
- Launch a Zoom meeting and wait until all students join the lesson.
- Make sure that all students understand the task they are going to do in breakout rooms while they are all still in the main room.
- Locate the “Breakout Rooms” button at the bottom of your Zoom meeting screen.
- As the meeting host you can choose to split the class into breakout rooms automatically or manually. You can also allow students to select and enter breakout sessions as they please.

Managing breakout rooms

- Groups or pairs of students work in breakout rooms simultaneously. You can switch between breakout rooms at any time, observing students’ work, monitoring and helping.
- Students can ask for help and invite you to visit their room. When they enter the breakout room they have been assigned to, they will see the following notice on the screen: “You can invite the host to this Breakout Room for assistance”. If any member of the breakout room clicks on this notice, you will get the message “Student [X] in Breakout Room [Y] asked for help”. You can then click to join that room to help that group of students.
- Within each breakout room, students can send messages or share files in the chat window with everyone in that breakout room.
- You can share a message via the chat window with all the participants of the breakout rooms from the “Breakout Rooms” dialogue window.
- Students within each breakout room can write on a whiteboard and save it as a PDF or JPG file on their devices. Each group can have an individual whiteboard.

Alternatively...

If you want your students to practise speaking without using Zoom breakout rooms, you can always ask them to phone each other (or make a conference call if there are more than two people in the conversation), press the speakerphone icon on the phone and record their dialogue or conversation on their phones. They can share this recording with you via email or chat later.