

Zooming Tips x Ten



Jo Matthews top ten tips for Zooming.

- Make it clear in your advertising – is this a general chit-chat with a lot of participants chipping-in (“oh dear, I can’t find my script”), or is it a performance, with no chit chat (until afterwards).
- Advertise the complete agenda including an estimated finishing time – important as people need to plan their evening, or when they will be able to stop hogging the laptop/space. I have annoyed my bubble-mate considerably when a show goes on and on and the supper is spoiling. Intervals(s) very desirable.
- Advertise “7.30 for 7.45pm” or similar, so that people know they will not miss the show if they arrive at 7.45pm but can see people earlier if they wish.
- Ask your actors in the above example to log-on at 7.15pm. Several shows I have watched have staggered on till near 8pm with someone missing and an actor has then appeared and said, ‘sorry I forgot’!! 7.15pm would give the director time to phone the miscreants.
- Do housekeeping at the start – obviously muting and stopping their videos, (yes, I have heard a sleeping audience member) but even that means you are looking at a screen with lots of names in black boxes if you are left in gallery view. Even better if the announcer can tell audience to go to Stop Video/Video Settings/. You then disappear and can re-appear at the end. Much nicer to just watch a show with actors and no-one else.
- Recommend Speaker View for the actual show.
- Warn your actors that on Speaker View they loom large and backgrounds are important. One actor had a fabulous 1920’s costume and make up, but she had a very modern, colourful poster right behind her.
- Costumes help a lot and of course only need be hat/hair and top half. Minimal is fine and can be found in any house - even just a colourful scarf thrown nonchalantly can give clues and atmosphere, or spectacles. Props are not necessary unless crucial, but if used can appear very briefly and can add humour. I saw a rolling-pin lovingly stroked by the murderer as he plotted his crime.
- Stage Directions – a thorny issue. They can in themselves be interesting (Bernard Shaw) and thereby a feature but can also detract from the atmosphere you are creating. I suggest looking hard at whether an audience will be confused if you do not have them and decide accordingly. If possible, get a member of your family or similar to watch your dress-rehearsal and comment, e.g., “did he get shot? Or was it just the banging of a door”
- Write a full credits list for us, music sources etc.

Finally, I think it is great at the end when everyone relaxes and talks about the experience. I feel weirdly privileged to be part of this rather intimate chat amongst great theatre friends – Thank you and send your Zooming tips to newsletter@littletheatreguild.org

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