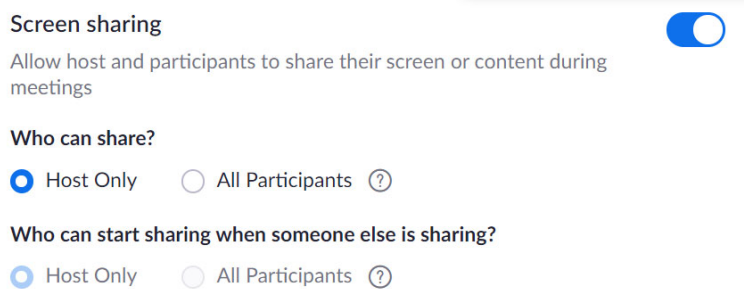


# Defending Online AA Meetings Against Zoom-Troll Intrusions

## WHAT TO DO BEFORE MEETING STARTS; *BEFORE AN ATTACK*:

1. Log into your meeting's Zoom account on [zoom.us](https://zoom.us) (*not the app or browser client, but their website*) and click the “**Settings**” link in the left nav.
2. Find and turn on the option to “**Mute participants upon entry**”
3. Set “**Screen Sharing**” to Host –only:



4. Ensure these other settings are set:
  - **Chats** – your prerogative on or off; chats can be useful, but can also become disruptive
  - **Save Chats** – disabled
  - **File Transfer** – disabled
  - **Co-hosts** – enabled
  - **Polling** – on or off; can be used for group conscience, but not necessary
  - **Annotation** – disabled
  - **Allow Removed Participants to Rejoin** – disabled
  - **Virtual Background** – on or off, but can be used to post explicit imagery
  - **Blur Screenshots** - enabled
5. Before your meeting begins, assign 1-3 trusted members as “**co-host**” - do this by clicking on **Participants** within the meeting, click on an active member's name and choose “**Make Co-host**” Co-hosts can then serve as screen-sharer for onscreen sharing of daily readings, should your group choose to include them, as well as other key functions. Screen-sharing is great for introducing AA literature to newcomers. Co-hosts can also serve as “spiritual bouncers” (screen-sharing & security may require some basic training from you, the Zoom account manager).

## IF ATTACKED:

*Expect* explicit, obscene porn, lewd images, foul language and verbal abuse (often directed at the lead/chairperson to invoke chaos). First and foremost, *remain calm*, having expected to experience this. Shock their primary goal. If you are calm, you can act quickly and decisively instead of react.

Having already blocked their ability to video-share, which is their primary weapon, the only thing that intruders can do now is post deplorable images, show live video from their device, and/or verbally abuse, which they seem to like to do in gangs of many in order to rapidly overcome a meeting.

1. If this happens (you will have no doubts), immediately click the “**Mute All**” button (turns blue)
2. Quickly uncheck the option “**Allow attendees to unmute themselves**” nearby, under ‘**More**’ (just next to the Mute All/Unmute All buttons. This essentially gives Zoom-bombers no reason to stay on at this point, and they likely will start dropping once they see that you know how to take away their ability to disrupt a meeting. Under normal meeting circumstances, you *want* members to be able to mute and unmute themselves in order to engage more naturally with the group as we would in face-to-face meetings, so blocking attendees from unmuting themselves should be a temporary action until the intruders have left.
3. Feel free at any time, unmuting yourself and your co-hosts, to inform the audience what you’re doing (while attendees remain force-muted, things tend to get awkward), putting a temporary hold on the meeting while the problem is being addressed. Let them know the meeting will restart shortly.
4. During this hold period, have your co-hosts along with you, click on “**Participants**” and go thru and “**Remove**” all the obviously bad actors. You can also distinguish most of them from the names or images they post for themselves. Sometimes they will have video on, being their only chance left to show a shock video, with the camera pointing somewhere random like a ceiling fan. If you are unsure and don’t want to drop someone who may be an actual AA member, unmute them and request that they identify themselves. Trolls either won’t identify or they will say something making it obvious they are a troll, or they’ll just stay silent or drop altogether.
5. Under “**More**” settings, select the “**Lock Meeting**” option at a certain point early on, for example, after the readings. This prevents anyone from joining after a period of time of your choosing.
6. Once you’ve experienced this a few times, it will be easier and troll groups will find your meeting “no fun” and will move on. If we get enough of our groups shutting them down, they will stop having any reason to Zoom-bomb our AA meetings.
7. **Password-protected meetings are also an option** - *but* newcomers, having no face-to-face meeting options today, will have *no way to get invited to a password-protected meeting*. So take that route only if you intend to have a closed meeting by invitation only, keeping the traditions in mind.

It would be wise to do several ‘as-if’ run-throughs in order to develop a familiarity with where key buttons and links are to close them down quickly. The Zoom online meeting platform enables new kinds of service positions to consider for your meetings:

- **Chairperson/Secretary**
- **Screen Sharer**
- **Greeter**
- **Tech Host** (assigns co-hosts, monitors muting & hands-up/hands down, etc)
- **Time Keeper**
- And now, maybe one or two “Spiritual Bouncers”

**Enjoy your meeting!**