

INTRUDER ALERT

How to keep a Zoombomber out of your family virtual get-together

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During the March 2020 virus emergency, many people have established free Basic **Zoom** accounts, enabling them to initiate virtual meetings with distant relatives via **Zoom**. Now it is time to beef up virtual meeting security.

THE RISK OF INTRUSION

You may have seen in general media in March and April 2000 that, as **Zoom Meeting** use has skyrocketed, some public Zoom Meetings have been joined by uninvited guests, who spoil the meeting in one way or another. These wanted intruders have become known as *Zoombombers*.

My son did some quick research in early April and found at least three Facebook groups devoted to Zoombombers and wannabe Zoombombers. These groups share knowledge of scheduled **Zoom meetings**, and **Meeting IDs** for scheduled meetings. Also, my son found a mention and a screen shot of an automatic Zoom meeting dialer program, *zWarDial*, that is said to try connecting to every possible Zoom Meeting ID very rapidly. The program produces a list of the Zoom Meeting IDs that are active, meaning live current Zoom Meetings, at the time the program runs.

So the risk of an intrusion in your family virtual get-togethers has increased a bit.

WAYS TO MINIMIZE THE RISK

Between some **Zoom** config options, and an updated **Zoom** application distributed as of April 8 for Windows and Macintosh, you now have several ways to prevent intrusions.

In a nutshell, here is the list of easy preventatives:

- When all participants are present, use the new **Security** icon in your **Zoom task bar** to **Lock the meeting**, preventing anyone else from joining.
- If someone does intrude in your Zoom Meeting, you can **disconnect that intruder**.
- **Use a different random Meeting ID for every Zoom Meeting you initiate**, instead of using your account's default Meeting ID every time. This is especially valuable if you hold a regular daily or weekly meeting. Below you will learn how to find the random **Meeting ID** so you can tell your invitees.
- **Use a different Meeting Password every scheduled Zoom Meeting you initiate**. Zoom now creates a numeric password by default **for every Zoom Meeting**. For *scheduled* Zoom Meetings, you can instead specify a custom self-created password, including alphabetic characters and a few permitted special characters. The length limit on a Zoom meeting password is 10 characters.

Note that the default configuration settings in Zoom now require use of a **Meeting Password**. That config setting was locked by the Zoom folks for one day, April 5, and that config setting locks was removed the next day, April 6, without any announcement and explanation. Meeting Passwords remain the *default* configuration, though you

can override the default. I do not recommend overriding it, but you can do so if you want to risk an unwanted intrusion. Below you will learn how to find the **Meeting Password** so you can tell your invitees.

All right, let's look at how to make each of those happen.

HOW TO LOCK YOUR MEETING

The Lock Meeting feature is available in version 4.6.10 and up of the Zoom for Windows app for any Zoom account holder, even holders of free Basic accounts. That version was released on April 8, 2020.

You can download the latest version at this web site:
<https://zoom.us/download>

When you initiate a Zoom meeting, you will see in the Zoom task bar a new icon, labeled Security. If you click on that icon, a menu appears. You can see the icon and the menu in **Illustration 1**. In the menu, select the **Lock Meeting** choice.

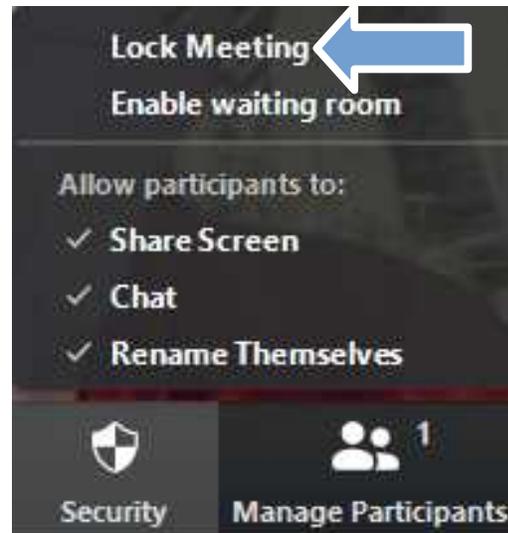


Illustration 1

The participants in your meeting do *not* need to use version 4.6.10 of Zoom.

HOW TO DISCONNECT AN INTRUDER

In the Gallery view of the Zoom meeting window, which shows a video image of each participant as well as the screen name for each participant, find the unwanted participant. Move the mouse pointer over that unwanted participant's video image. Two blue buttons appear in the upper right corner of the video image. Click on the second button, which contains three dots, and a menu appears. You can see the two blue buttons and the menu in **Illustration 2**.

In the menu, select **Remove**.

Zoom displays a confirmation window, indicating that a removed intruder will be unable to return.

It is a good idea to Lock your meeting immediately after that, so the intruder cannot return.

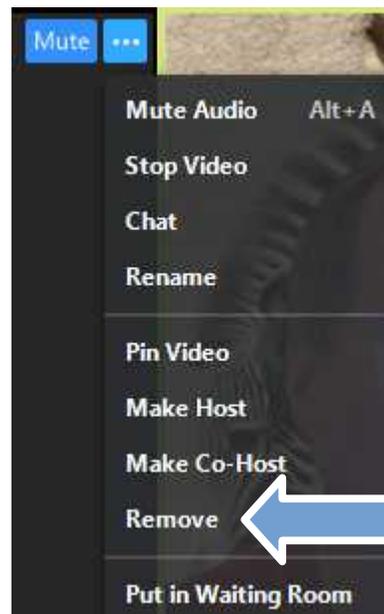


Illustration 2

HOW TO START YOUR INSTANT ZOOM MEETING WITH A RANDOM MEETING ID

When you start the Zoom for Windows application, it displays the main Zoom window with a large icon labeled New Meeting. Next to the label for that icon is a **down-arrow character**. Tap that character, and a drop-down menu appears. The icon, the down-arrow character and the menu are depicted in **Illustration 3**.

In the menu, **uncheck** the check-mark box to the left of the label **Use My Personal Meeting ID (PMI)**.

Then click on the New Meeting icon to start your instant Zoom meeting.

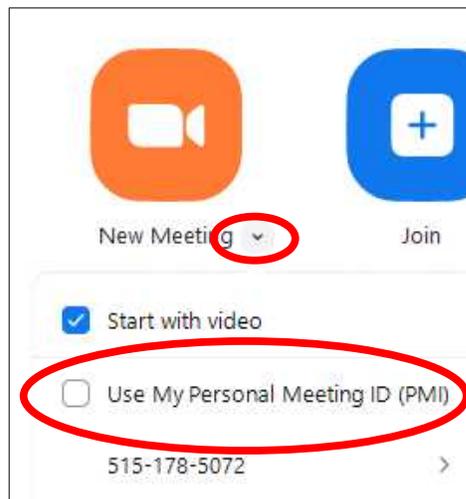


Illustration 3

You still need to convey your random Meeting ID and Meeting Password to your family members. You can find both the Meeting ID and the Meeting Password using this method in the Zoom Meeting window:

In the Zoom task bar, click on the **Participants** icon. The **Participants** side window opens in which only you are listed at the moment. At the bottom of the window, there is an **Invite** button. You can see the buttons at the bottom of the Participants side window in **Illustration 4**.



Illustration 4

Click on the **Invite** button, and the **Invitation** window opens. You can see in that window both the Meeting ID, in the upper left corner, and the Meeting Password, in the lower right corner. You can see an example in **Illustration 5**.

You can use email or smart phone texting to send those details to family members.

You can close the **Invitation** window by clicking on the X in the window's upper right corner. You can close the **Participants** side window by again clicking on the **Participants** icon in the Zoom task bar.

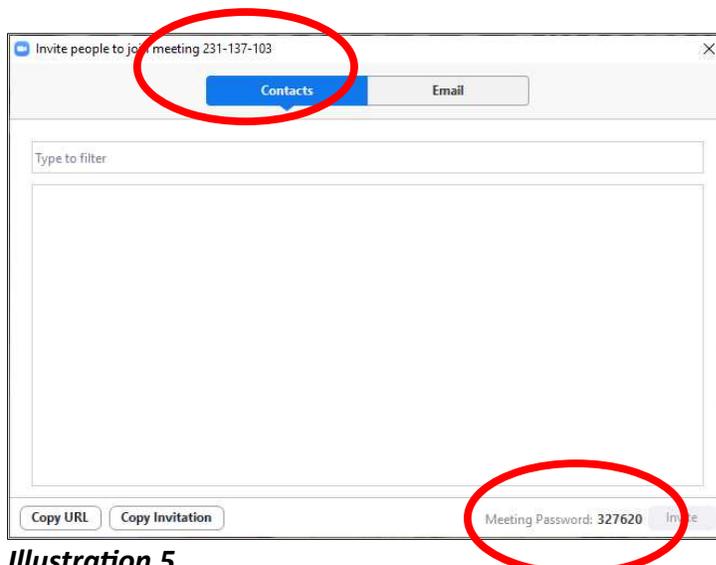


Illustration 5

CUSTOMIZE THE PASSWORD FOR A SCHEDULED ZOOM MEETING

You can schedule a Zoom Meeting to start very soon, say in 5 or 10 minutes, which is almost an Instant Meeting. By doing so, you can customize the Meeting Password.

To do that, look at the main Zoom window, the one that includes the New Meeting button. At the top of the window, there are four icons labeled **Home**, **Chat**, **Meetings**, and **Contacts**, as shown in **Illustration 6**.

Click on the **Meetings** icon. The screen initially contains no info about any scheduled meetings. To schedule a meeting, tap the + button which is circled in **Illustration 7**. That makes a menu appear, also shown in **Illustration 7**.

In the menu, select **Schedule a Meeting**.

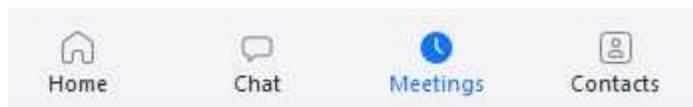


Illustration 6

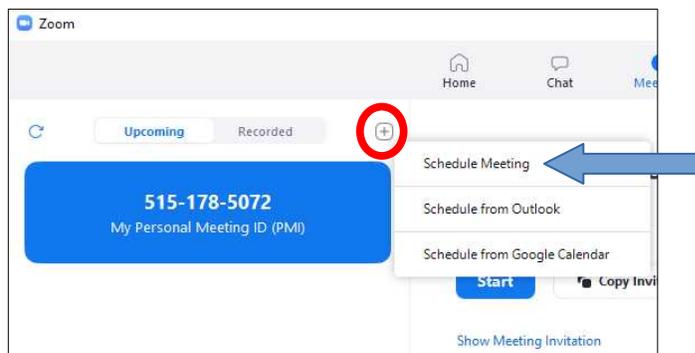


Illustration 7

The **Schedule Meeting** dialog box opens, as shown in **Illustration 8**.

In this dialog box, under the **Topic** heading, you can create a **custom Meeting Topic**. You can set the date and time at which the meeting is to start. If you use the free Basic account to connect with three or more other Zoom users, then you are **limited to 40 minutes duration**, though at low usage periods the Zoom server system might tell you at the 40-minute point that you are allowed to continue.

Under the **Meeting ID** heading, I recommend you click on the button labeled **Generate Automatically**, instead of using your **Persona Meeting ID** by default.

Under the **Password** heading, you can specify a **custom meeting password**, in the field containing the numeric password generated by **Zoom**. I recommend always using a **Meeting Password**.

The image shows the 'Schedule Meeting' dialog box in the Zoom mobile app. The dialog has a title bar 'Schedule meeting' and a close button. The main heading is 'Schedule Meeting'. Under the 'Topic' heading, there is a text field containing 'John Krout's Zoom Meeting'. The 'Start' field is set to 'Wed April 8, 2020' and '11:00 PM'. The 'Duration' is set to '1 hour' and '0 minute'. There is a checkbox for 'Recurring meeting' and a 'Time Zone' dropdown set to 'Eastern Time (US and Canada)'. Under the 'Meeting ID' heading, the 'Generate Automatically' radio button is selected and circled in red. The 'Personal Meeting ID' is '515-178-5072'. Under the 'Password' heading, the 'Require meeting password' checkbox is checked, and the password field contains '017499' and is circled in red. Under the 'Video' heading, 'Host' is set to 'On' and 'Participants' is set to 'On'. Under the 'Audio' heading, 'Telephone and Computer Audio' is selected. There is a 'Dial in from United States' link. Under the 'Calendar' heading, 'Outlook' is selected. At the bottom, there is an 'Advanced Options' dropdown and two buttons: 'Schedule' and 'Cancel'.

Illustration 8

At the bottom of the dialog box, click the **Schedule** button when you are satisfied with the contents of the dialog box.

The dialog box closes. After a few seconds, the **Zoom app** will change the **Meetings** display to include the newly scheduled meeting. See an example in **Illustration 9**.

Note that you can see the new random Meeting ID in two places in the scheduled meeting info. Both are circled in **Illustration 9**.

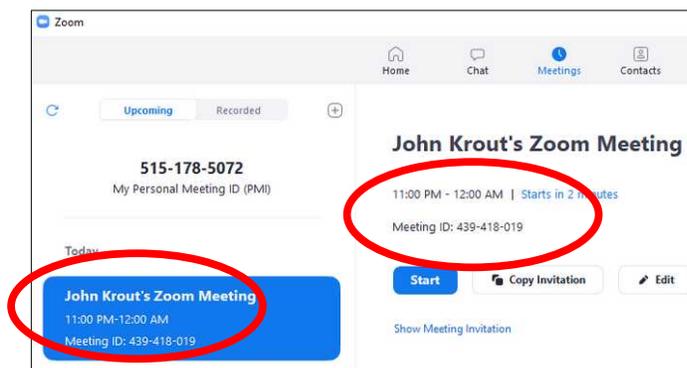


Illustration 9