

# How to Make the Most of Online Gatherings

By Boran Göher

As we enter the month of December and approach the end of the year, most of us will be taking some time in this month to reflect on our experience of 2020. And I know for a fact that we all will say that it has been quite the crazy year, even if you discount the elephant in the room, a.k.a the pandemic. Well, if your experience has been anything like the average, you will probably notice that you have not interacted with your friends and family as much as you would have liked to. Since December is also a month for celebration, we all wanted to spend our celebrations with our friends to make up for all the fun we could not have during the year. However, with the second wave of the pandemic having started to show its effects, we will likely not be able to do that in person. In turn, some of us have turned to online gatherings to replace in-person entertainment, some bigger groups and organizations have also followed suit and are also planning online gatherings to celebrate the Christmas and New Year's Eve. So, I have compiled some of my top tips for you to enjoy these gatherings to the fullest.

Point one, choosing the right group. As is the case with in-person gatherings, for you to have fun, you need to be among the right group of people. Despite the ease of joining any group in this time of online gatherings, I advise that you do not join groups that you do not know well or that you feel will not provide you with enjoyable company. Do not feel pressured to try to join every event you can possibly join simply because you have the Zoom link. My advice is to reserve one period of time for a more "general" group, like your colleagues or your classmates, in order to keep with your acquaintances and fulfil your mandatory socialization with the people that are not quite your close friends, and reserve another and longer period for your closest friends. This way you can both fulfil your social obligations and get the enjoyment much necessary in these trying times. Of course, as stated earlier, if a particular event or group is not up your alley, choosing to abstain is a very valid choice.

Now, If you are in any position to approve or suggest events, this step is crucially important. If you are hosting a lot of people, I advise that you try to incorporate tried and tested party games into an online environment. Some of the more physical games are hard to adapt, but you can probably get away with playing two truths one lie without too much prep work. For a smaller group, there are many beautiful video games to have some quality time. Among Us and gartic.io are the first two to come to mind, but these games are a dime a dozen since they are very easy to develop, excluding the game design part of things. This also means that you can get them for very cheap (or even for free!), and they can run on most hardware with ease, making them ideal for a medium-sized group. Finally, if you've got a smaller sized group, you can delve deeper into gaming with Minecraft or Terraria, alternatively, you can use a simultaneous video watching site like Watch2gether to watch some online videos as a group. Or you might choose to watch a movie together via PrimeVideo.

Another important thing is to choose the right setting. What I mean by setting might not exactly be clear as the physical setting is already set and immutable: You have to be at home. But you might be able to change your setting in different ways. This year, finding the

right setting is synonymous with finding the right software to host your meetings. It can be a daunting task to find the perfect software to host online gatherings when so many factors are at play. My own algorithm is as follows: If the event is going to host many people or be at least semi-formal, I prefer using Zoom or Google Meets, as most people are familiar with these apps. If keeping videos on will not be necessary such as when playing games or watching videos, Discord voice channels are a quick solution. If one friend in the group has an overwhelming technological advantage, it may be an interesting approach to try and have them live stream while you keep up with them via the chat function. Twitch is the most suitable platform for this. If instead, at least one person in the group is very old, you should consider using Skype as that is what old people have the most familiarity with.

Whether you had a say in the meeting's design or not, does not matter for this next point. Try your best to create the appropriate atmosphere for whatever you are doing. If you are joining a theme party, do not be scared to dress up for the occasion, even if you are simply getting a set of clothes to work with the color scheme. Do not be afraid of a little roleplay appropriate to your costume and the setting of the party, it is the little things that make the fun.

Lastly, above everything else, remember to be nice to others and always strive to have fun. Nobody can have fun if people are not nice to each other, and do not forget that you can always find something to enjoy as long as you are in the right mindset. With these essential rules and what I have been preaching throughout the article, you are set to have the best possible online enjoyment in the last month of 2020, I hope in the earnest that you will have great fun using my tips, adieu!