

Zoom Meetings for Musical Gatherings

Video conferencing software is generally optimized for voice conversations, suppressing other sounds in the room. Unfortunately, if the person singing is also playing a musical instrument, recorded music, or karaoke, the music will probably be at least partially filtered out.

Of the popular video conferencing platforms, it appears that Zoom is the only one that has a setting to Enable Original Sound, meaning it will not try to suppress or exclude sounds

Equipment

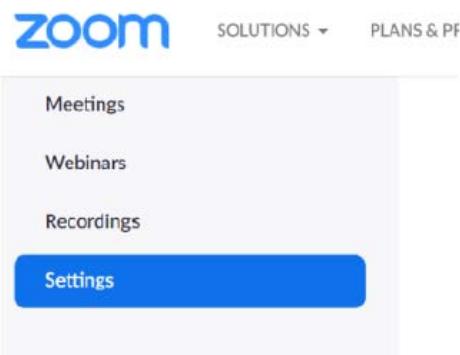
For the best quality and settings, the host and participants should use a computer, but they can also join using a tablet or phone. Some options may not be available on mobile devices. Encourage participants to load the Zoom app onto their devices ahead of time as the app provides more options than simply joining a meeting on the Browser.

If you are adding an external microphone or a Web cam with microphone attached, keep in mind that for playing an instrument, recorded backing music, or karaoke while singing it may be best to use an **omnidirectional mic**. Unidirectional (or cardioid) mics, pick up sound directly in front of the microphone, suppressing other sounds in the room, such as those coming from the sides and rear. Omnidirectional mics capture sound in 360-degree fashion, so may better capture sounds of musical instruments or other musical accompaniment along with the voice.

Host Set Up

As the host, there are some settings that are only available to you on the Zoom Web site and not on the Zoom app on your computer or mobile device. Log in at: <https://zoom.us/profile>

In the left side menu panel, under *Personal*, choose *Settings*



Then, in the right-hand panel, scroll way down to the section headed **In Meeting (Advanced)**:

In Meeting (Advanced)

Lots of settings there! You may want to enable breakout rooms if you want separate rooms for different groups. But we'll look at the settings for sharing music/karaoke. Scroll down to the Screen Sharing options.

Screen Sharing: turn on these settings for sharing:

Show Zoom windows during screen share 



Screen sharing



Allow host and participants to share their screen or content during meetings

Who can share?

Host Only All Participants 

Who can start sharing when someone else is sharing?

Host Only All Participants 

Allow Users to select original sound: The Original Sound Setting is crucial to get balanced sound when playing music and vocalizing at the same time:

Zoom tries to automatically normalize for voice and suppress other “background” sounds. We need to enable original sound to allow music and voice to get picked up together and balanced when the person is singing along with karaoke or recorded music or playing an instrument while singing. The host has to set up to allow the participants to do so.

Allow users to select original sound in their client settings



Allow users to select original sound during a meeting

Stereo Audio: When a participant is using original sound, they may want to transmit their sound in stereo. To allow it, that option needs to be enabled here in your host settings. Caveat: Using Stereo Audio may hog too much bandwidth; per Zoom, it can take bandwidth away from all participants, so keep an eye on this and ask participants to turn off that setting if it is a problem.

Allow users to select stereo audio in their client settings



Allow users to select stereo audio during a meeting

Participant Set-up for Karaoke/Caroling/Sing-Arounds

Devices: If you have a computer with a Web cam and microphone that will probably provide you with the best video and audio, but you can use a phone or tablet. If you have a computer without a Web cam, you can join the meeting with your phone or tablet and sign in again on your computer so you can see the meeting on a bigger screen, share your screen, etc.

Zoom Software: You can download and install Zoom ahead of time from
https://zoom.us/download#client_4meeting

For Android phones and tablets get Zoom Cloud Meetings from Google Play Store:
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=us.zoom.videomeetings>

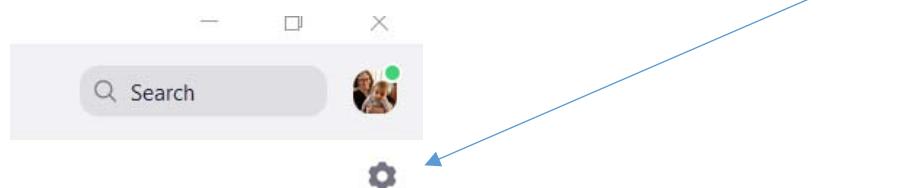
For iPhones/iPads get it from the Apple app store: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zoom-cloud-meetings/id546505307>

Settings for best sound and screen sharing

Zoom is generally optimized for voice conversations, suppressing other sounds in the room. Unfortunately, if the person singing is also playing a musical instrument, recorded music, or karaoke, the music will probably be filtered out unless we adjust some settings

On Computer:

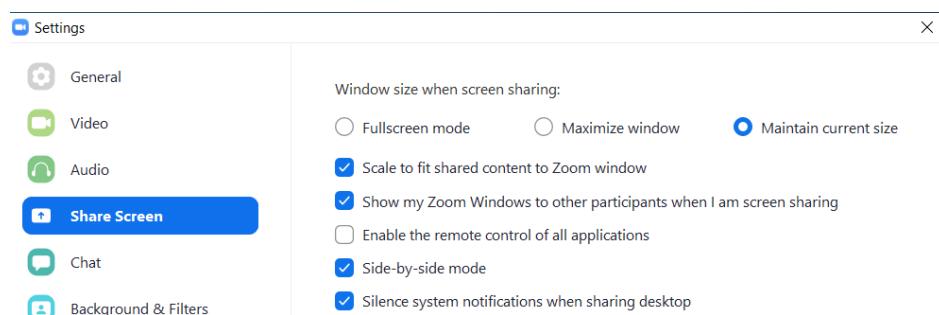
On Windows machines, Settings are accessed by clicking the little gear icon in the upper right below your profile picture:



On Macs, Settings are accessed by selecting Preferences from the top menu:



Screen Sharing: Select Share Screen and enable Side-by-Side mode, Show Zoom windows during screen share; settings should look similar to this:

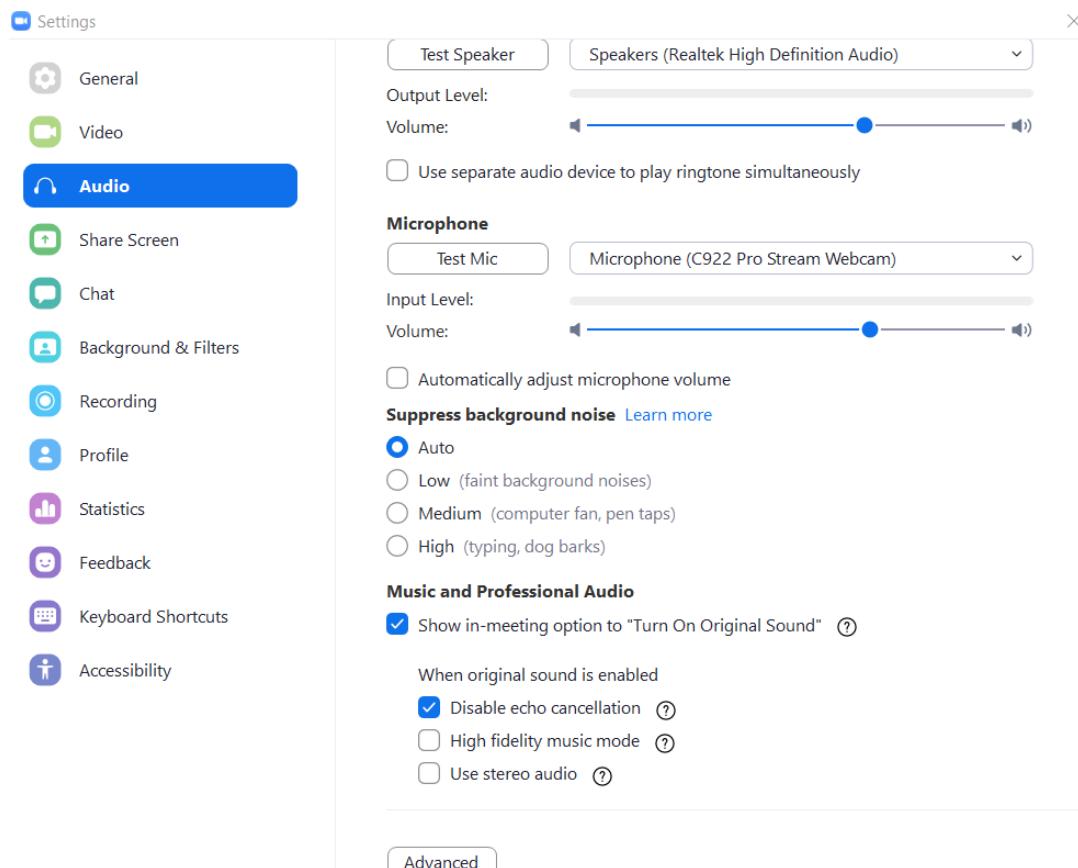


Audio: On Settings screen, select Audio and adjust these settings:

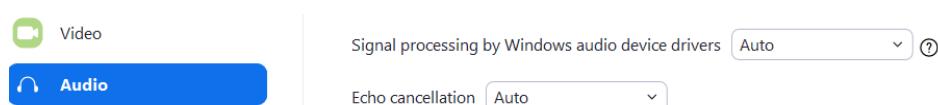
- **SUPPRESS BACKGROUND NOISE:** generally, the Auto setting is best for this, as it should filter out noises like paper rustling, dogs, etc. but Zoom says it will detect music and will not treat it as background noise, so should work well for singing/playing music:
- **Music and Professional Audio:**

Show in-meeting option to “Turn On Original Sound” – Check this box! This is a very crucial setting for allowing you to sing and play music at the same time, whether it is karaoke, other recorded music, or an instrument

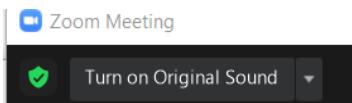
The 3 sub-options below it only apply when original sound is enabled. These settings can vary depending on your equipment. Click the little? icon next to each one. I find that “Disable echo cancellation” is usually a good thing. Note that “High fidelity music mode” and “Use Stereo Audio” do use up more bandwidth.



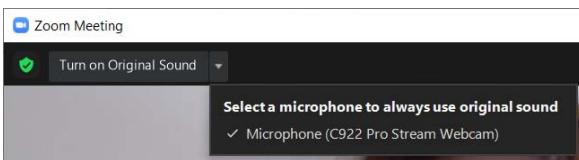
Next click the Advanced Button:



Final Step for Enabling Original Sound – Mic Selection: After you join the meeting, you should see a button in the upper left of the screen that will either say “Turn on Original Sound” or “Turn off Original Sound”. Click to toggle between the 2 settings. **Start the meeting with it set to “Turn on Original Sound”**; that means that original sound is off!



Click the little down arrow on the right edge of the button and make sure your microphone has a checkmark in front of it



Sound Setting on Android Phone/Tablet or iPad

In the Zoom App, access the **settings** by clicking the little gear icon in the lower right of the screen on Android, upper left of screen on iPad

On the setting screen select *Meeting*

Scroll down and find **Use Original Sound**; turn that on

Plan your Karaoke Presentation:

It's helpful to find 2 versions of your chosen song, one with the original singer, so you can get familiar with their inflections, timing, etc. and a second version that is for karaoke. Example: Brenda Lee sings “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” and there is a Karaoke version that follows her rhythm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=is4NQkUN3AI>

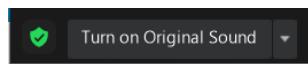
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dETgVcucAxo>

Presenting your Song:

Everyone except you needs to be muted

Singing a Capella:

- Original Sound should be off! So the button is in this state:

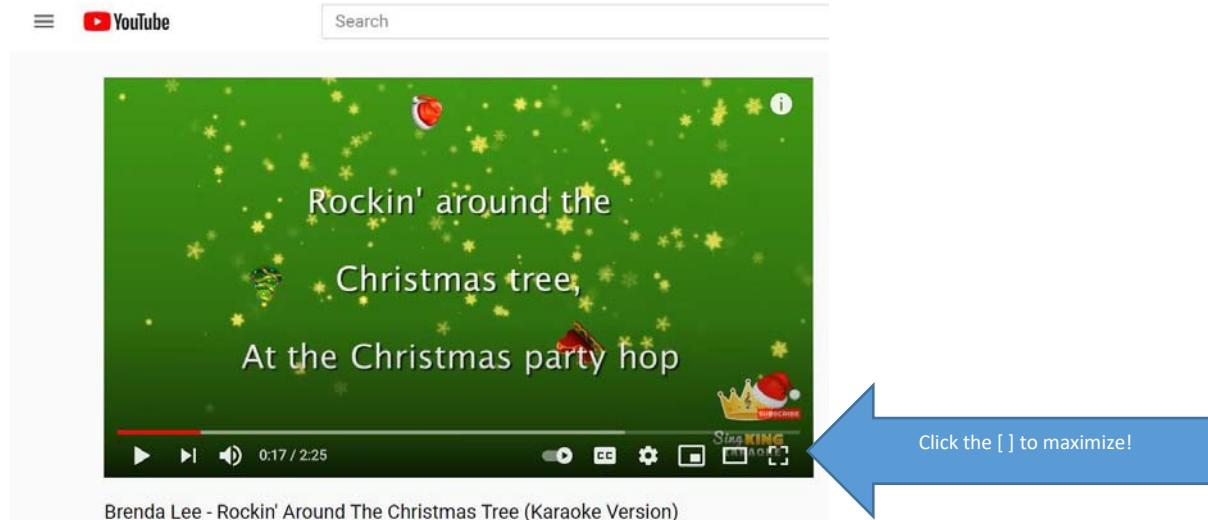


Playing an Instrument:

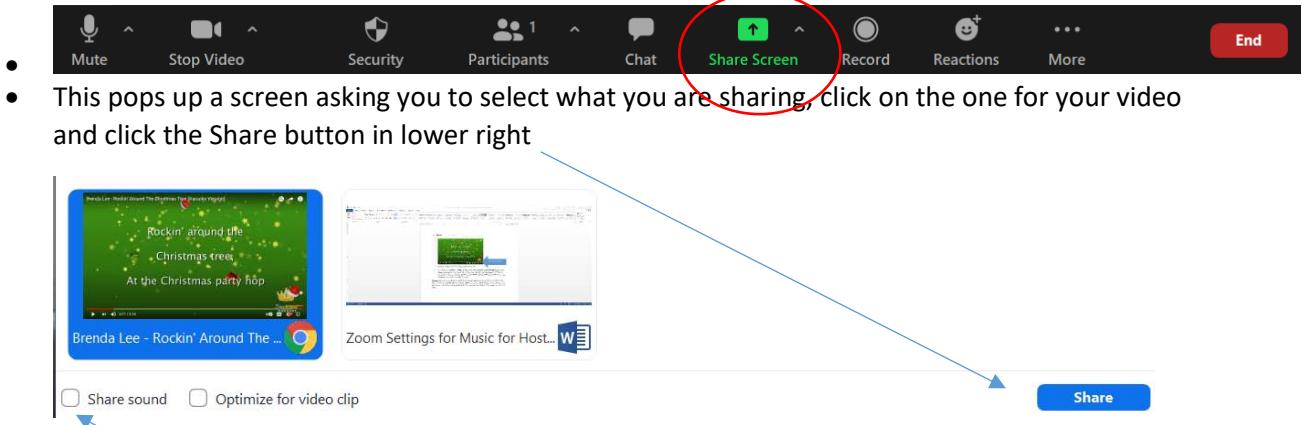
- Original Sound should be on! So the button is in this state:
- Exception: If you use a microphone with a direct input for your guitar cable, for example, you may get better results with Original Sound Off

Karaoke or Sing-Along:

- Original Sound should be on! So the button is in this state:
- Open the YouTube video (or other source) for your Karaoke or Sing-Along version. Maximize it.



- Click the “Share Screen” or “Share” button on the bottom of the Zoom meeting screen so the audience can see your scrolling lyrics and hear your backing music.



Note about the “Share sound” checkbox: I have found that with my equipment (no headphone) it works best not to check that box because my speakers are playing the sound and that is what my mic picks up along with my voice. The Share sound option could send listeners a separate, duplicate or out of sync signal. This selection can vary for your equipment.

- **Do a brief sound check** and ask the audience for thumbs up or other signal. You may need to turn up your speaker volume and/or the volume control on the YouTube video so that the listeners can hear your music in balance with your voice.

Listeners: When someone is presenting their song, please mute yourself to eliminate feedback and echoes. The host may mute you too. You may want to reduce the size of the shared screen so that you can see more of the happy faces; just grab the line separating the 2 halves of the screen and drag it to adjust.