# Best Practices for Classroom Engagement

Plan to be on camera

- Pick an appropriate teaching background, such as a bookcase or office, while hosting
- Look at the camera, just as you would look at students in class
  - Zoom is optimized for video communication
  - Make sure your audio is on and you use appropriate tone (not too soft or too loud)
- Dual screen setups let you share one desktop with students and keep Zoom controls on the other one. You can use your TV or another monitor as second screen. It works just like plugging into a classroom projector. You have to set this up in your monitor preferences while you are connected to your second screen
- Be careful of what you have on your desktop if you plan to share the entire desktop so that students can see multiple applications at once (i.e.,, slides and Excel) but not things you don't want them to see (i.e., text message from your friend about lunch)
- Slides should be simple, without animations
  - connection lags affect screenshares the most
  - I like to pdf my slides because I typically show slides and another window, rather than full screen slides.
- Use a solid network, such as your home internet or a hardwired internet connection.
- Consider using a headset (particularly if you are using PC. Macs tend to have fewer issues, in general)

- **Facilitate classroom control with appropriate default settings in Zoom**
  - Sign in to utexas.zoom.us with your eid and eid password and look under Settings to find your controls
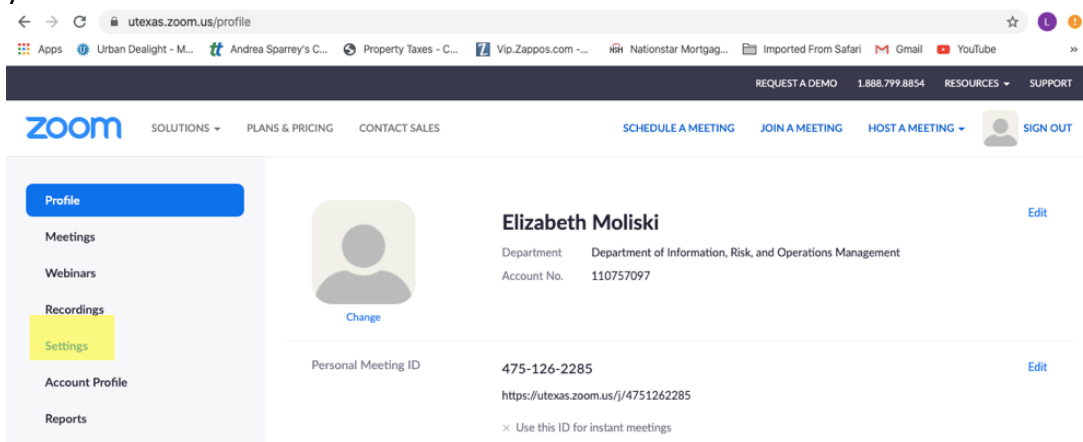

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  - Have students enter with mics muted and video off
    - this is the default
  - Enable breakout rooms and/or Zoom polling if you plan to use them
    - also a default
 - Disable private chat unless you plan to use it for quick group work

- o By default they are enabled
- o If you do allow private chats, inform students that you can see their private chats.
- Enable multiple hosts if you have a TA or are planning group presentations
  - o This is the default
- Allow hosts to remove students if you are teaching a large class if they are disruptive
  - o This is the default
  - o You may want to be able to kick students out permanently if they continue to be disruptive; there is a setting for this, but it is not the default
- Turn on auto record if you are forgetful about recording. Always record!
  - o This can be set from each meeting's controls as well
- As your TA to attend to help with answering questions in chat and managing students if you have a class with more than 40 or 50 students.

- **Set participation expectations for students before class**
  - Several days before your first class, send students an email telling them that this will be a Zoom class and that you will be using video and audio.
    - o A default email goes out when you create a meeting in Canvas. You can edit it in settings or write a custom email if you create your meeting from utexas.zoom.us.
  - Encourage students to have cameras and mics available.
    - o Most newer (less than 5 years old) laptops come with these features
  - Tell students that they should be on a reliable network, such as a home, UT, or business network. Public wifi usually works, but it is not as reliable. In a pinch, cell phones can be used as mobile hotspots
    - o There is a Zoom phone app, which works reasonably well, but the screen is small and student on phones cannot use breakout rooms, which are problematic for group work and in class exercises.

- **Establish procedures at the start of the first class**
  - Check your audio before you start the meeting and remind students to do the same before they enter.
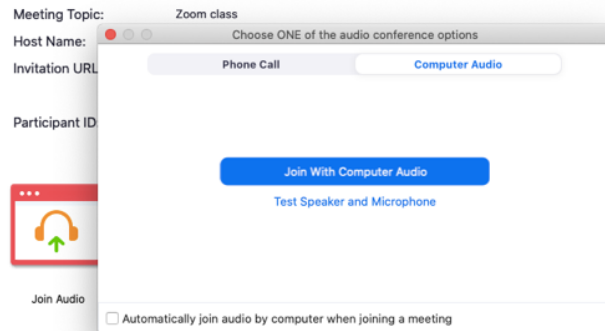
- Always have your Zoom controls visible. There is a zoom.us menu option for this.


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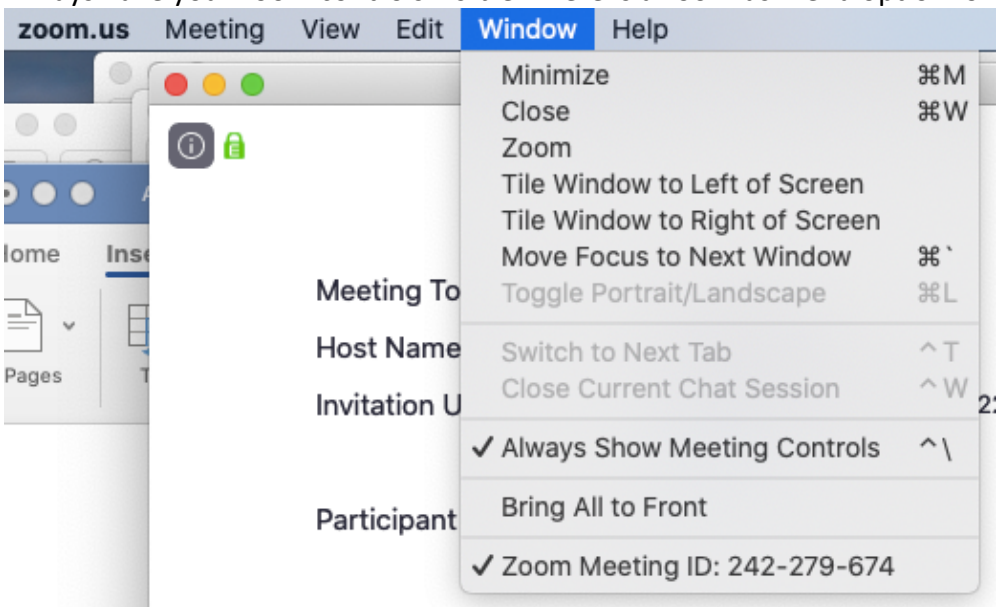
- Keep the participant and chat windows open. They are on the Zoom controls and the View menu in zoom.us
- You can have a number (5 or 6 is easy) of open mics at once in Zoom, but if you start to hear audio distortion, cut off all mics except yours using the participant window mute button.
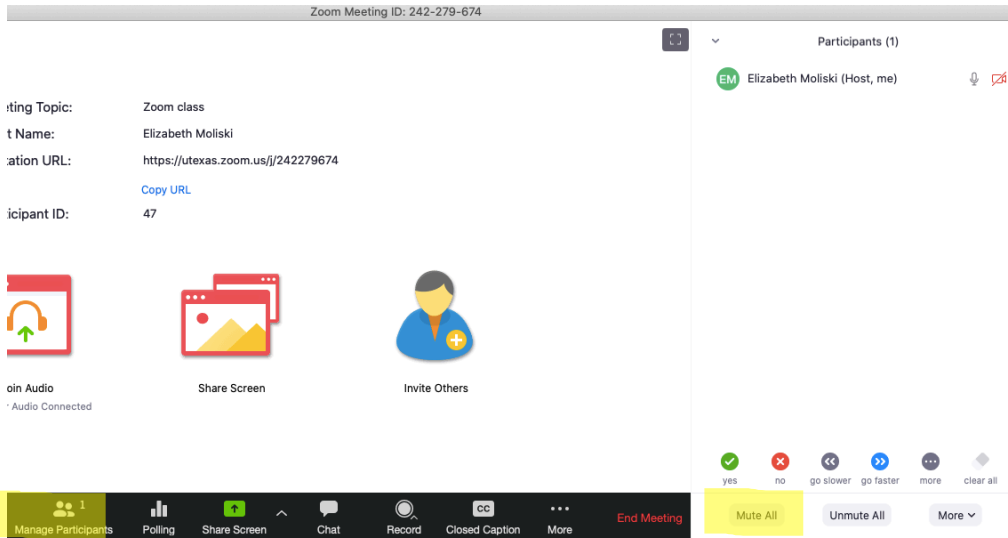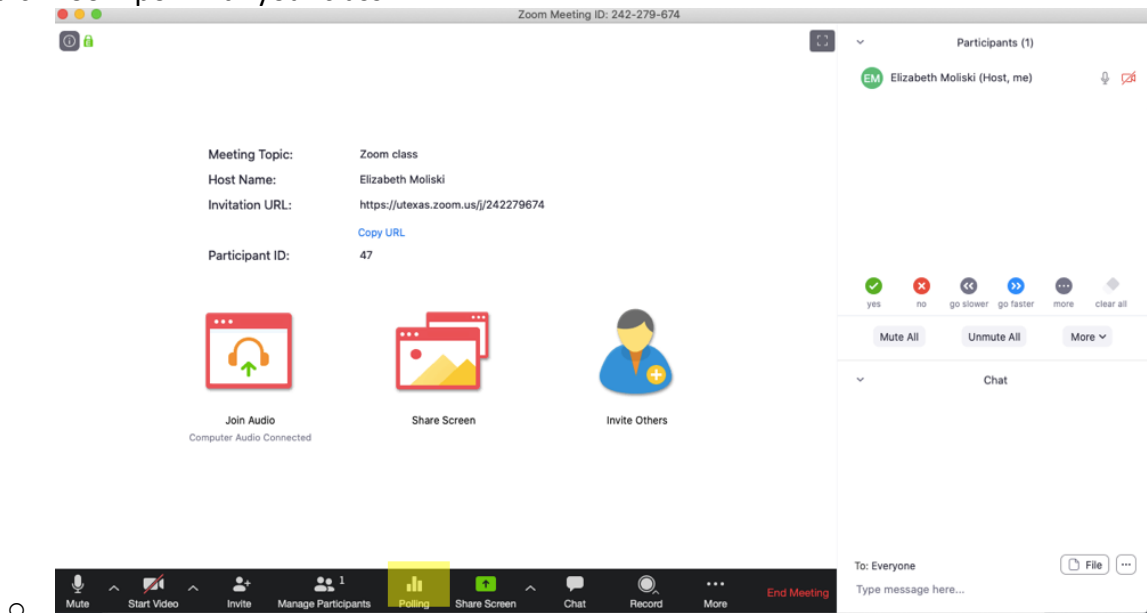
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- Teach students to use the participant window and the chat window
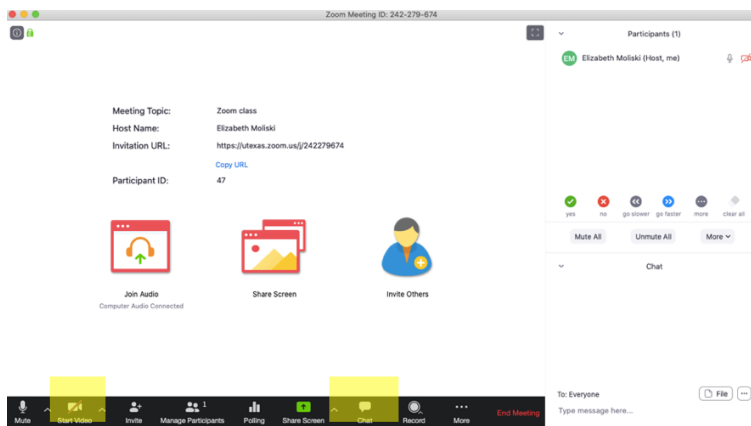
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- Teach them to use the buttons under more in the participant window. The break time button is very important if they step away so that you don't call on someone who isn't there

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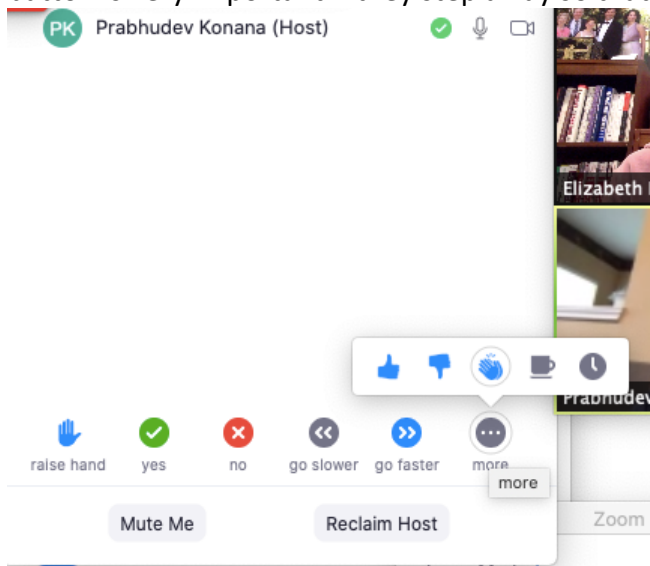
- Do a quick Zoom poll with your class

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- Call on students and have them raise their hands and ask them to come on the mic.
  - o Raised hands will bubble to the top of your participant order and students will be listed in the order that they raised their hands.
- Send students a handout (maybe just the revised syllabus) via chat so that they know how to download files you send out. This is on the lower right, in the chat window

- **Guidelines for larger (i.e., n > 40) classes**
  - The better behaved your class is, the larger you can handle without a TA, but at first even 15 students will feel like a lot.
    - o 60 is about my limit alone even with years of experience and a TA still makes that much easier
  - Make the TA and any student chat managers your co-hosts by hovering over their names in the Participant window and using the menu dropdown
    - o The setting for default alternative hosts is currently disabled in Canvas
  - Have the TA manage chat so that you don't become distracted
    - o The TA can answer questions and raise a hand or come on mic if a student has a question that you should answer.
  - The TA can warn and/or eject students who are excessively distracting

- **The Participant Window**
  - It lists names of attendees and allows students without cameras to raise their hands
    - o Students with raised hands are moved to the top of the window
  - You will have to scroll to see your whole class
  - It allows you to easily change a student's settings (audio, video, host privileges, send to breakout room, temporarily remove from class)

- **The Chat Window**
    - Students can ask and answer each other's questions in chat
    - Chat can be distracting when you are teaching
        - A TA can help by answering questions in chat and raising a hand to bring important questions to your attention
    - Private chat can be helpful for quick groupwork, but it can also lead to chaos
    - Chat can be saved
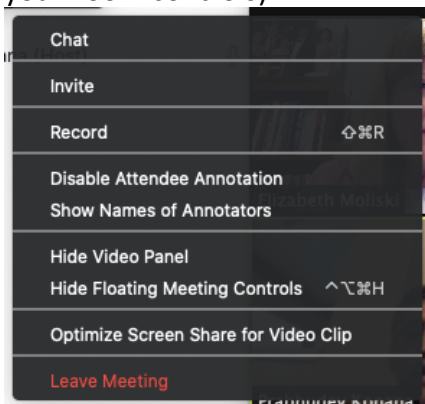   - The UT default is not to allow students to save chat

- **The Whiteboard**
    - The whiteboard is under Share (right after the desktop)
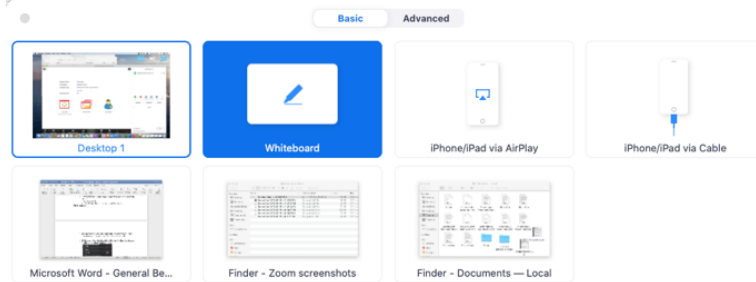
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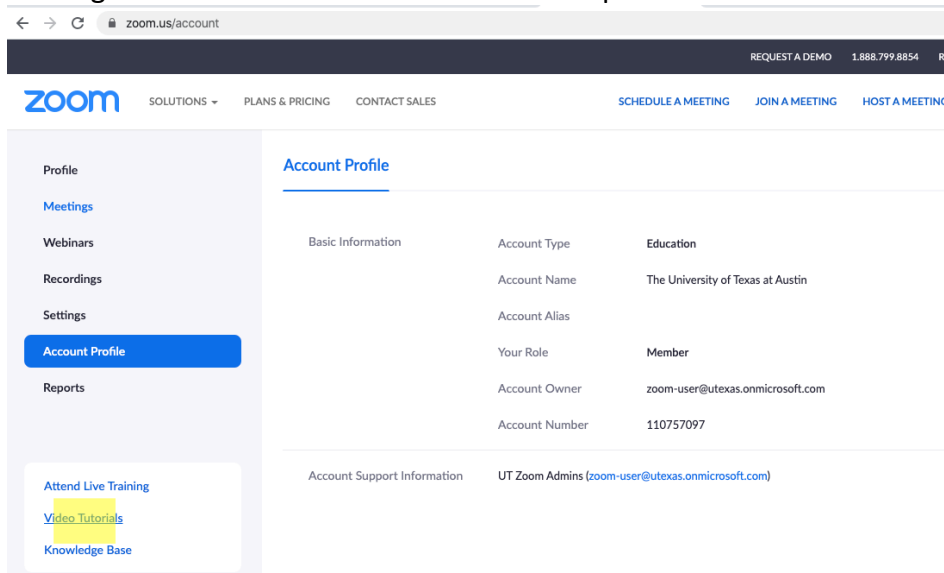   - You need the whiteboard controller open to use the whiteboard
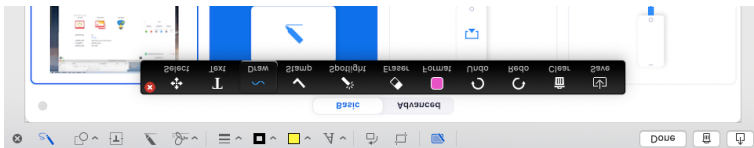
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    - Students can annotate your whiteboard unless you disable annotation (under More … on your Zoom controls)

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- o You tell students not to do that though when you teach them how to engage, and can erase their drawings without erasing your own
- A stylus makes it easier, but a finger with a trackpad will do, especially if you mostly use the text typing tool
- You can save the whiteboard

- **Breakout Rooms for group work**
  - o Create breakout rooms and either have zoom randomly assign students to them or manually assign students.
  - o You can send students to breakout rooms and bring them back
  - o Students can exit breakout rooms on their own, but cannot enter on their own
  - o Students can get on the mic, share their screens, and use a shared whiteboard without distracting anyone outside of the breakout room.
  - o There is a good short Zoom video with a short help document on this under Video Tutorials
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  - o Warn students about the following before using breakout rooms
    - Breakout rooms cannot be used from the Zoom mobile app
    - Breakout rooms are not recorded unless someone in the room records

- **Group presentations**
  - o Multiple students can be on the mic (6-7 are usually fine) and one can share the presentation screen with the class. The others can talk and the presenter can advance the slides.
  - o Make presenters co-hosts (along with you) during their presentations so that they control the participant window and can handle raised hands and unmute other students to take questions.
  - o Insist that presenters be on mic and on camera.
    - Students without cameras should at least be required to have a Zoom profile photo of themselves
    - Encourage groups to use headsets or headphones with mics if possible.

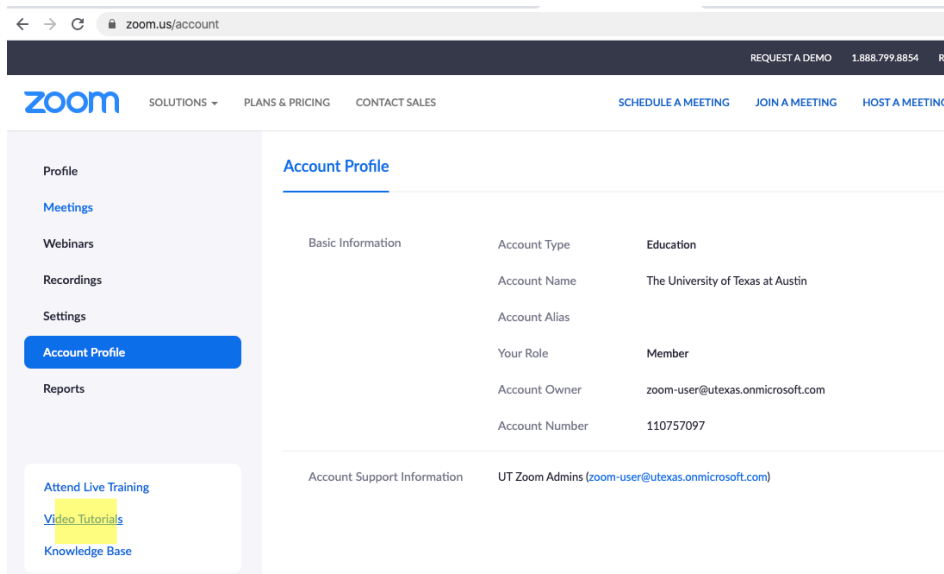- **Practice with Zoom controls so that you are comfortable!**
  - o Create practice classrooms in utexas.zoom.us because every class that you create in Canvas results in an email being sent to the people in that class.
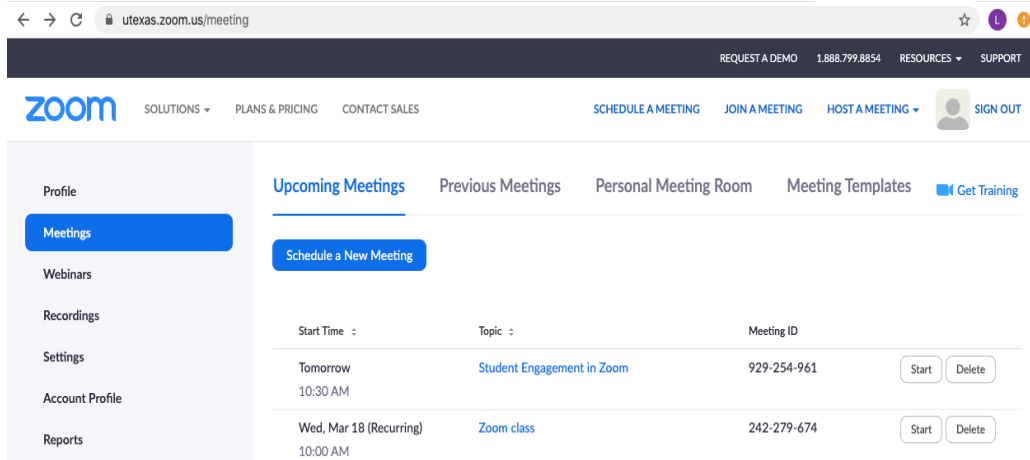
  - o Colleagues, TAs, and even friends, and family can be your test students
  - o Have your TA attend class at least until you are fully comfortable.
  - o A dual monitor setup is very nice because you can share one desktop with the class and use the other for Zoom controls.

- **Zoom teaching support**
  - o The first line of support is the Zoom manuals. There are very helpful short videos and directions accessible under Video Tutorials from your utexas.zoom.us account.
    - ▪ There are good short Zoom video with a short help documents on this under Video Tutorials

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  - o Canvas also has Zoom tutorials up under the Get Help button

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- o Prabhudev Konana, Liz Moliski, and Jeorg Becker are also available to help you during this transition.