

Prevail Blue Comparing free webinar options (please advise us of errors or omissions – prevailblue@gmail.com)

Provider	Free service plan offered	Attendee limit on free plan	Free length limit	Record on free plan	Integrated White-board	Screen Sharing	Tech Support on free plan	1 st level paid \$ per mo ⁽¹⁾	Access method
DUO (Google)	Yes	10	No limit	No	No ⁽¹¹⁾	No ⁽¹¹⁾	Online manual	\$3/user	Browser, mobile app
ExplainEverything	Yes	8 ⁽⁵⁾	No limit	1 min	Yes	Yes	Email	\$7	Browser, mobile app
Facebook ⁽¹³⁾ Messenger Rooms	Yes	50 ⁽¹⁴⁾	No limit	No	No	No	No	n/a	Facebook Messenger
FreeConference	Yes	5 ⁽⁸⁾	12 hrs	No	Yes	Yes	Chat, forum, web form	\$25 ⁽⁹⁾	Browser, PC/Mac app, mobile app
Freeconferencecall	Yes	1,000	6 hrs	1GB cloud storage	No	Yes	Email, chat, phone, live	A la carte ⁽¹⁾	Browser, PC/Mac app, mobile app
Google Meet ⁽⁴⁾ (was Hangouts)	Yes	100	60 min	No	No	Yes	Web form	\$6/user	Browser, mobile app
GoToMeeting	Yes	3	40 min	No	No	Yes	Online manual	\$12	Browser, PC/Mac app, mobile app
Houseparty	Yes	8	No limit	No	No	No	No	n/a	Mac/Chrome app, mobile app
Microsoft Teams ⁽²⁾	Yes	No limit	No limit	No	No ⁽¹²⁾	Yes	No support	\$5/user	Browser, PC/Mac app, mobile app
Qiqochat	Partially ⁽⁶⁾	No limit	No limit	Built on Zoom	Yes	Yes	Phone	1c per user per minute	Browser
Skype Consumer ⁽²⁾	Yes	25	No limit	Storage terms unclear	Yes	Yes	Web form	\$2 per user ⁽³⁾	Browser, PC/Mac app, mobile app
Webex	Yes	50	40 min	1GB cloud storage	Yes	Yes	Email, chat, phone	\$13.50	Browser, mobile app
Webwhiteboard	Yes	No limit	21 days ⁽⁷⁾	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	\$8	Browser
Zoom ⁽¹⁰⁾	Yes	100	40 min	Local on PC	Yes	Yes	Email	\$15	Browser, PC/Mac app, mobile app

* This is the first level charge to add new features.

1 Features can be added a la carte for varying fees.

2 The free system is a peer system, no administrative functions. It is directly integrated into the Windows 11 User Interface.

3 Pricing and features are complicated with several limitation dependencies.
<https://bit.ly/2QSgzPX>

4 Google Hangouts was retired, April 2020 and replaced by Google Meet, which is integrated into Gmail and other Google offerings.

5 ExplainEverything recommends a maximum of eight users per sharing session. Computer audio can be shared. You are allowed three projects, presenting one slide in each. You can record 1 minute of voiceover for each project. The vendor recommends to show the white board through a 3rd party product such as Zoom or to page back and forth between the whiteboard and the webinar. You can upload whiteboard templates, or use ones in the library. Presenters are recommended to use two PCs.

6 Qiqochat is likely the richest system in development for online activist collaboration. At 1c per minute per user for the audio/video integration, *it can get expensive*. The system is complex, and involves an intricate functional hierarchy and vocabulary. Group/whiteboard participants must manually start and stop multiple Zoom sessions. You can't control attendance limits in breakout sessions.

7 Whiteboards are accessible at a URL and are stored for 21 days. Paid plans add security access controls. To use with a webinar, have attendees launch the whiteboard at the start of a presentation then page back and forth between the whiteboard and the presentation. There is no limit to the number of whiteboards you can create. You can upload your own whiteboard templates.

8 The free account is limited to five online web users, and 1000 audio only.

9 The first tier is not worth paying for, not enough online users allowed. \$25 is the second tier.

10 Dialup audio not included in free plan, computer audio only.

11 Not listed on the site, probably via 3rd party and other Google suite integration

12 Collaboration in Teams is done using Microsoft Office apps and Office 365 apps.

13 Sessions are not encrypted end-to-end.

14 By default, any of your Facebook friends will see that you have a session running, and can join. This can be changed. Also, non-Facebook users can be invited.

More reviews of web white boards: <https://zapier.com/blog/best-online-whiteboard/>

More reviews of webinar systems: <https://video4work.com/>

Not included in the table:

Amazon Chime provides a free plan but it does not appear that free users can be meeting Admins. Dial costs extra. Regular users are charged on a pay per use bases.

Apple FaceTime is proprietary and only works on Apple platforms, and is not a good tool for widely sharing meetings.

Bluejeans is a comprehensive business solution. There is no free plan. Actually their 150-attendee paid plan at \$9.99 could be compared to Zoom Pro (\$15/month). Among several tested apps, it was noted that Bluejeans persists in active memory even when not in use.

Mural.co is an extensive whiteboard collaboration system. 30 day trial, but no free plan.

Airmeet has a limited free option that is really a trial for a purchased plan. If you want to arrange a huge keynote meeting in a virtual ballroom setting where attendees are at named "tables" and can be visited, this is an interesting tool to consider.

Danware NetOp, TeamViewer and similar products are help desk systems, generally not used for, nor intended for group meetings.

Security and Privacy Considerations for Webinar Systems

All shared conferencing systems mentioned here provide encryption between servers and end users. Authentication steps of varying strength can be required for entry into meetings, or waived. To avoid unauthorized attendees, extra security steps are always recommended. In general, you should assign a meeting password, and if available, a second authentication factor.

FRECONFERENCE

Meeting moderators can choose to be notified by text anytime someone connects to their account, if they are not present on the call.

We recommend: do not allow a call to start without the host being present.

<https://www.freeconference.com/faq/secure-conference-call-service/>

FRECONFERENCECALL

Meeting attendee names, emails and phone numbers are recorded as part of the call logs shown to the host. The call host can choose to hide the attendee list details during the meeting, although attendees of course will have visible names associated with their pictures if they choose to activate video. Hosting 1000 attendees on a free plan is a distinguishing feature of this vendor. Payments for the basic services are voluntary. Another nice feature is getting a full attendee list without advance registration.

We recommend: Use as a Zoom *alternative* because it's not as well known.

Do not allow a call to start without the host being present.

HOUSEPARTY

It is billed purely as a casual social networking platform and is targeted at small groups of phone users. There are some included online group games. Invites can be sent to your phone contacts list, and by SMS. Various articles have published ways to crash meetings. The terms of service suggest that the company may monitor meetings to look for content that violates their terms of service. Various articles warn of user privacy issues including password and account harvesting. App reviews on Google Play claim that Houseparty uses a lot of data and makes phones run hot.

We recommend: Use other services. Lock the meeting when the expected people have joined.

<https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/science-technology/1262472/Houseparty-Warning-Video-Chat-iPhone-Android-Dangerous-Flaw-Login-Data>

<https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/science-technology/1262739/Houseparty-Safe-Delete-Phone-App-Hack-Warning-Netflix-Spotify-Password>

WEBEX

Cisco Webex is a frequent choice for enterprises. If you intend to work with companies, setting up a free account and getting some experience is recommended. There was a security issue shortly before the pandemic started but it was fixed. Note that policies for personal and business use can get mingled in the client app.

We recommend: assign a password to every meeting.

ZOOM

Zoom is highly popular because it has features that everyone needs such as breakout rooms and screen sharing, and because it has fun features that people like including virtual backgrounds and full sound support in screen sharing mode. Many guests can be seen at once in a "Hollywood Square" gallery view. Meeting hosts can ban a person from a meeting and then that person's device is locked out and cannot rejoin. The lockout feature has implications: Zoom achieves the lockout by capturing details about attendee devices including make, OS, network settings and network location.

As the pandemic first hit, Zoom had to move quickly to bolster the product and improve security, and has resolved issues of scaling, security and privacy.

We recommend: assign a password to every meeting, and implement waiting rooms.