

PCS Parents:

As so many of you now know, “Zoom” is suddenly the new buzz word around homes and across the country during this time of staying at home! However, some of you also may have seen the warning the FBI released about Zoom recently, and we thought our parents might appreciate a few tips and tricks about using Zoom in their homes. Because teachers are using security controls when they create Zoom meetings and students do not need accounts to participate, our main concern now is that our students have set up free Zoom accounts and are zooming with their friends without a teacher present. Here at Panama, we understand their desire and need to socialize with their friends but also realize parents should be aware of the dangers and issues zooming without a teacher could create. Please take a look at the tips below from an article on www.kinzoo.com to help your child navigate this new area. Hopefully you can use these tips to help your family decide on some rules in your home regarding Zoom, so an adult always knows when and who a child is zooming with. Stay Healthy, Stay Safe!

Zoom’s safety concerns for parents and teachers

Sadly, there are some bad actors in the world—and wherever there are children on the internet, they seem to follow. In the past few weeks, many school learning sessions and other online events were “zoombombbed,” where strangers joined the call, took over the screens and shared racist and graphic content to unwitting participants. Zoom meetings are particularly vulnerable to this because, by their default settings, they are open to the public and anyone in the call can share their screens. In fact, zoombombing has become so prevalent that the FBI released a public warning about it. But luckily, the company has updated its default meeting settings to safeguard them—and there are additional steps that educators and parents can take to make their Zoom calls more secure.

How to secure Zoom calls for kids

If you’re setting up a Zoom meeting for yourself or your family, here are some ways to help protect yourself and other participants. And, if you or your family plan to join a Zoom meeting, ask the host if they’ve secured the meeting using these tips below.

Password protect your meetings:

As of April 4th, Zoom updated their default settings so all new meetings are password protected, but it’s a good idea to double-check your settings and review defaults for meetings you created previously. Password protection helps ensure that strangers can’t join your meeting uninvited.

1. Sign into your Zoom account online
2. Click on the Settings tab on the left side of the screen
3. Make sure that “Require a password when scheduling new meetings” is enabled, along with “Require a password for instant meetings” and “Require password for participants joining by phone”
4. If you want to be extra safe, disable “Embed password in meeting link for one-click join” and simply manually share the meeting password with all invitees. This way, you’re still protected if your meeting URL falls into the wrong hands

Control who can chat or share their screens:

If you password protect your meetings, hopefully everyone in the call will be a familiar face. But just in case, it’s a good idea to restrict who can share their screen or chat.

1. Sign into your Zoom account online
2. Click on the Settings tab on the left side of the screen
3. Disable “Chat” to prevent meeting participants from sharing chats that are visible to the whole group
4. Under “Screen Sharing,” restrict who can share to “Host Only,” or disable it entirely if you won’t have a need to share your screen with other participants

Enable the waiting room feature:

This is another feature that Zoom recently made a default setting. With the waiting room enabled, you as the host must give an attendee permission to enter the meeting. This gives you an extra line of defense against unwanted intrusions. As with the password protection, you can double-check your settings and have a look at any meetings you created before April 4th.

1. Sign into your Zoom account online
2. Click on the Settings tab on the left side of the screen
3. Enable “Waiting Room.” Note that this also means that attendees can’t join the meeting without you, so nothing untoward can happen before you’re also in the meeting

Zoom is not a perfect platform by any means, but at a time like this, it’s certainly helping us to work remotely, carry on learning and stay connected with loved ones, so it’s up to each family to determine if the benefits are worth the risks. While changing your Zoom settings can help secure your account, it’s also a good idea to supervise kids while they’re using the platform. This is the best way to protect them from any potential intrusions—and spend a little quality time with them in the process.

<https://kinzoo.com/blog/child-safety-online/should-kids-use-zoom-what-every-parent-needs-to-know/>