



A guide to virtual meetings for BLUF event organisers

This document is intended to help BLUF event organisers make the most of the virtual meeting facilities that are being added to the BLUF website. As this is an evolving situation, please note that things may change, so check for updates to this document from time to time.

This is NOT a guide to using specific virtual meeting software. You should use whatever tools you feel comfortable with, but note that two tools for which we provide the most support are Jitsi Meet and Zoom, which will be explained in more detail later in this document.

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Introduction

Thanks to the closure of many leather venues caused by the pandemic, lots of groups around the world are using virtual meetings as a way to keep in touch.

So far, a relatively small number of BLUF-specific meetings have been held online, but it would be good to see this increase.

To help with this, and to help support the broader community, we have made a number of changes to the BLUF site to better support virtual meetings, whether organised by us or by someone else.

Those changes take two principal forms.

Firstly, we have made changes to the way the BLUF calendar works, to improve support for virtual meetings, and secondly we have added some additional tools designed to make it easier for BLUF members to join meetings that have been organised by our volunteers.

Changes to the calendar

The calendar now has a new category, 'online', for virtual meetings. This allows members to see easily which meetings they can attend. A list of online events can be seen at bluf.com/events/category/online

Additionally, for events that have been marked as being in the online category, we now show the start time in a different format, designed to make it easier for people around the world to know when a meeting is happening.

Next to the scheduled start time, we display the city name, eg Montréal. Then, we display the UTC day and time. Finally, if the calendar entry is being viewed by someone signed in to the web site, we display the day and time in their timezone.

For instance, a meeting in Montréal at 8pm local time on the 10th of July would appear to someone in Paris like this:

Friday 10 July, 20:00 Montréal

Online event: Saturday, 00:00 UTC (Saturday, 02:00 your time)

This additional information also appears in the BLUF Navigator app.

BLUF Live

Version 4.3.11 of the BLUF platform, and version 1.4.4 of BLUF Navigator introduce a new menu option called BLUF Live. This is intended to make it as easy as possible for members to join live events, without having to remember complicated meeting IDs or type in links.

BLUF Live is found on the Community menu of the website and in the Events section of the app's main menu. Members can also be directed to it by tapping a meeting notification message. When selected, it will direct the user to a page at bluf.com/zoom

As the name suggests, BLUF Live is built around some new integration with Zoom, and cannot at present be used with other virtual event platforms.

From the user's point of view, if a meeting is ongoing, when they visit the BLUF Live page, they will see either the event information, or the host of the meeting (if it's an ad-hoc meeting, rather than a scheduled event), followed by a brief code of conduct and a "Go To Zoom" button.

Clicking the Go To Zoom button should launch the Zoom app on the member's device and take them to the meeting, which for the moment is held in a recurring meeting room, so the address doesn't change.

This means, for now, that BLUF Live has to be used with one of the BLUF official accounts hosting the meeting. For more details, see later in this document.

Tools for meeting organisers

The principle new tool for meeting organisers is the Launch Meeting tool. This has two functions. Firstly, for all events that have both the 'online' and 'BLUF' categories, a BLUF notification can be delivered to the inbox of all members who have the event in their Travel Plans. For example:

Your online BLUF meeting 'Another test meeting for Nigel' is starting. Please click the link (tap this message in our mobile app) and then use the password 1234

meet.jit.si/BLUF-2020-05-08-3535

This allows members to access your meeting directly from the notification with just one or two clicks. The tool allows you to enter the link for the meeting, and optionally a room or meeting ID, and a password, ensuring that members have all the information they need for the meeting in one place.

At present, we only support these notifications for events that have been marked as official BLUF events. Remember that members will have to have the event in their Travel Plans to receive the notification, so it is advisable to promote online meetings via our mailshots in the same way as for ordinary meetings, and encourage people to add them to their plans, to ensure they receive all the information.

You can of course include all the details in the calendar, if you wish. See the notes in the next section.

Via the Launch Meetings page you can also access tools to launch meetings using Jitsi Meet and Zoom. For event organisers who are not familiar with setting up online meetings, this provides a very simple way to create an online meeting and invite BLUF members to join it.

Jitsi Meet launcher

The launch tool will create a unique name for the meeting room, and start it in your web browser, directly from the BLUF Admin pages. It will also allow you to add a password, and then send the meeting link as a notification.

Members who have the Jitsi Meet app installed on their mobile phone will be able to go straight to the meeting by tapping the notification in our apps. Those using a phone who

do not have the app installed can access it in their app store with one click. Members using a web browser on their desktop or laptop will go straight to the meeting.

If you wish to host a meeting with our Jitsi integration, all you have to do is add your event to the calendar and then, at the appropriate time, click a button to launch it, decide on a password and click another button to notify BLUF members.

Zoom launcher

The Zoom launch tool works in a similar way to that for Jitsi meet, allowing you to send a notification to people who have added the event to their travel plans, which they can click to go to the BLUF Live page. If a meeting is not marked as private, non-members will be able to access it easily at the link bluf.com/zoom

The Zoom tool will walk you through steps - an example is shown later - to check out a BLUF Zoom account, set a password for the meeting and then launch Zoom, and notify users that the event is running, before checking the Zoom account back in, so that someone else can use it.

As well as using the tool to launch a scheduled meeting, you can launch an ad-hoc meeting.

When the Zoom launcher is used to start a meeting, it will also be flagged on the Today screen, as 'BLUF Live' with a link to take people to the launch page.

At present, meetings using the BLUF Live system cannot overlap.

BLUF Zoom accounts

To make it easier to host meetings with the widely used Zoom software, BLUF now has two paid for accounts on the zoom platform. One is for admin use, with access to billing information, and the other is intended to be shared between event organisers, allowing them to start meetings using the BLUF Live platform.

If you want to host meetings using Zoom, you will need to ask for access to the BLUF zoom account, and follow the instructions later on in this document.

Adding virtual meetings to the BLUF Calendar

Broadly speaking, adding a virtual event to the BLUF Calendar is the same as adding any other event. If you are not familiar with how to do it, please refer to the Event Handbook, or send details of your event to events@bluf.com by email.

For a virtual meeting to use the new features, there are some additional points to bear in mind when adding your event to the calendar.

1. Always specify a country and a city.
You may think that because it is a virtual meeting, it doesn't need this information. However, it still needs to be supplied, because it gives people additional implicit information. Firstly, the city name helps people work out when your meeting takes place. Some people just instinctively know "Paris is one hour ahead of London" and so on. The country name may also help people with both time information and in some cases language. If an event is listed in France, it's likely to be in French, and so forth.
2. You must supply the UTC offset.
This is the time difference between where the meeting is happening, and UTC (sometimes referred to as GMT). This will be used to calculate the UTC day and time of the meeting and, for people signed in to BLUF, the time and day in their local timezone.
Please remember that UTC is not always the same as London time, because of daylight savings. For example a meeting in Paris at 1900 in the winter will have a UTC offset of +1, but in the summer the UTC offset is +2. Los Angeles is -7 in the summer, but -8 in winter, and so on.
3. You must tick the 'online' category
The UTC day and time are calculated only for events that are marked as being in the online category. For in-person events, the time is always assumed to be local, and so does not need to be adjusted.
4. Tick the BLUF category to make the event 'launchable'
At present, notifications can only be sent for events that are marked as official BLUF online events, so both 'online' and 'BLUF' must be ticked for your event to appear as a choice on the Launch Meeting screen. You should not, however, mark your event as an official BLUF event just to do this; it will be frowned upon.
5. Indicate the event platform in the Location box
Use the Location for the event to specify the platform being user. For example *Online via Zoom* or *Online via Jitsi* or *Online via Go To Meeting*. This gives people a clue about what they may need to install beforehand. To be able to launch a Jitsi meeting using the launch tools, the word 'Jitsi' must be included in the Location
6. For a BLUF Live meeting, add the url bluf.com/zoom in the URL box.
If you do not, the meeting will not appear in the list of options for the Zoom launcher
7. Add the UTC time to the summary text
The BLUF Events tweetbot publishes information about events at noon each day UTC. To include your event, make sure the 'Tweet summary' box is ticked and the description includes the UTC start time, so people everywhere can work out when it is. For example *BLUF London online social via Jitsi, 1800 UTC*.

Launching Virtual Meetings

The virtual meeting launch tools provide two functions, as mentioned previously. You can use them to send a notification with meeting details to members who plan to attend, and you can also start a Jitsi meeting.

The tools are accessed via the Events menu in v4.3 Admin. At present, the only permission required is 'admin-menu'. If this changes in future, and you still require access to the tools, please contact webmaster@bluf.com.

Launching a meeting outside of BLUF

If you are not using Jitsi Meet or BLUF Live, then you cannot directly launch the meeting from v4 Admin, but you can send a notification to members who have added it to their Travel Plans.

You will need to know the URL of your meeting, any room or meeting ID that people need, and the password, if required.

Note that for Zoom meetings, the invitation URL that you can copy from the Zoom app or website usually includes the meeting ID, so you don't need to enter it again.

Start the meeting on your chosen meeting platform (Zoom, Go To Meeting, Discord, etc), and then sign in to v4 Admin. Select Launch Meeting from the Events menu, and you will see this screen (the events listed will differ):

Launchable events

Welcome to the BLUF event launcher. Via this page, you can select an event from the BLUF Calendar to launch as a virtual meeting using Jitsi, or notify members of the details of an event being held on another platform.

Events appear on this page if they have the 'online' and 'BLUF' categories ticked. The first list includes those that mention Jitsi in the location.

Jitsi meetings

To start a Jitsi meeting, select it from the list, and then click Launch. Follow the instructions on the next screen.

LAUNCH

Other virtual meetings

For meetings that have been created using a different platform, select a meeting from the list. Then enter the URL that members need, plus any optional meeting name/ID and password, then click Notify. A notification will be sent to members who have added the event to their Travel Plans.

Link to join meeting

Meeting or room ID

Password

NOTIFY

BLUF 4.2.29 (2020-05-07) © BLUF Limited.

Select your meeting from the list below 'Other virtual meetings' and then copy and paste the URL of the meeting into the box marked 'Link to join meeting'. This must start with http or https.

If the link does not take a visitor directly to the meeting, and an ID or meeting name has to be entered, type that in the box marked 'Meeting or room ID.' As noted above, this is usually not required for the URLs copied from Zoom, which include the room ID.

If there is a password for the meeting, enter that in the Password box. Ensure that you have entered all the details correctly, and then click the Notify button.

A BLUF Notification will be sent to all members who have the meeting in their Travel Plans, allowing them to click or tap to go directly to your meeting. You do not need to remain signed in to v4 Admin once you have sent the notification, and can return to your meeting app to manage the meeting there.

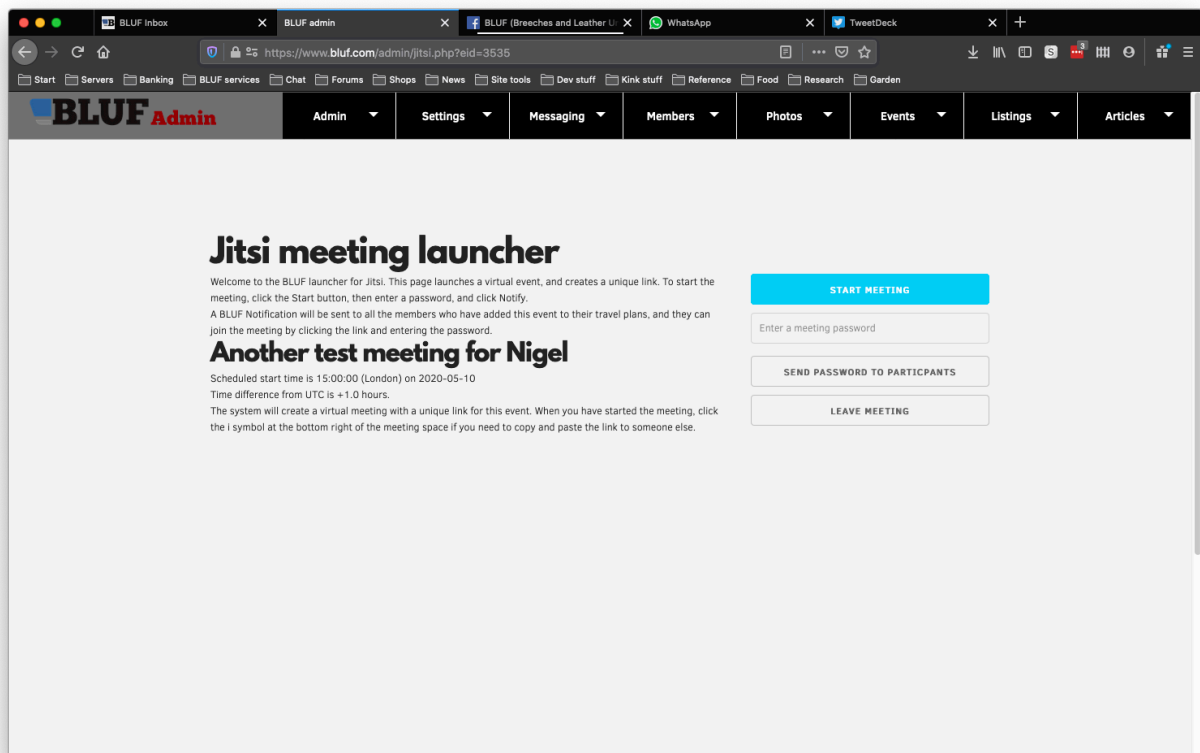
Launching a Jitsi meeting

To create a Jitsi meeting, simply make an entry in the BLUF Calendar as described above, and ensure that as well as the BLUF and online categories, the Location includes the word 'Jitsi'

Then, sign in to v4 Admin, and select Launch Meeting from the Events menu. You will see the screen shown on the previous page, and your meeting should appear on the drop-down menu under the Jitsi Meetings heading.

You need to be using an up to date browser for Jitsi, such as Chrome or Firefox.

Just before the meeting is scheduled to start, select it from the drop-down and then click on the button marked Launch. You will see this screen.

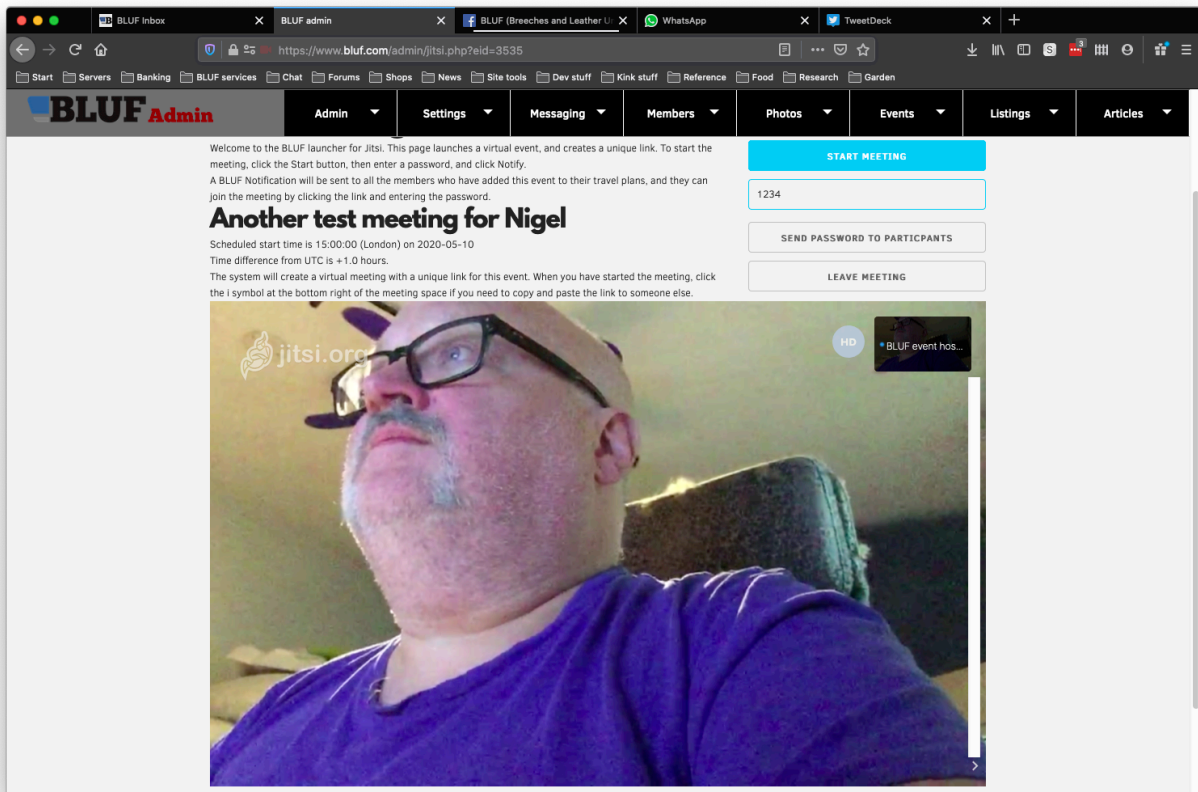


Check that the correct meeting is shown, and that you are starting it at the right time, then click the Start meeting button. The page will update and the Jitsi meeting section will load, below the control buttons. You may be asked to grant permission for access to your

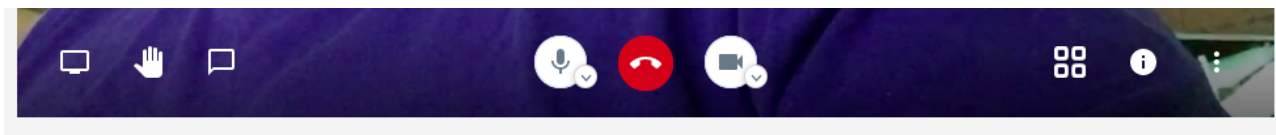
computer's microphone and camera. If so, click to give permission, otherwise people will not be able to hear or see you.

Now, decide upon a password for the meeting, and type it into box below the Start meeting button, then click Send to participants. A pop-up will confirm notifications have been sent. Click OK to dismiss it.

You are now in the meeting, and other participants should arrive shortly. The screen will look a little like this:



When you move the mouse over the Jitsi meeting, a row of icons will appear at the bottom.

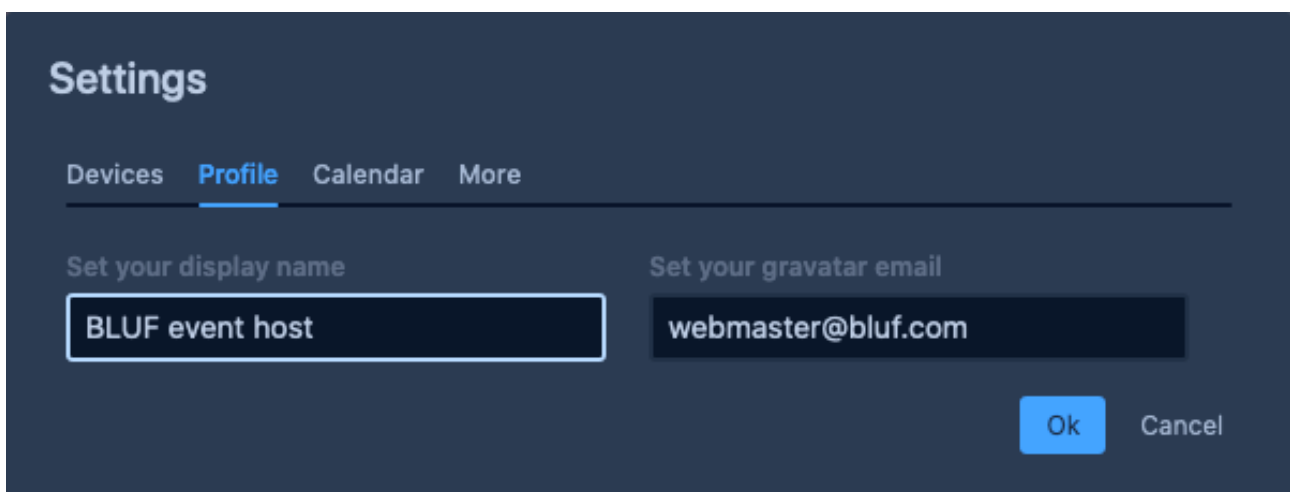


From left to right these are:

- Share computer screen, to allow people to see what's on your screen.
- Raise hand, to get the attention of other people.
- Open/close chat. This allows text messages to be sent to other participants.
- Microphone control. Mute or unmute you microphone.
- Hang up. Leave the meeting.

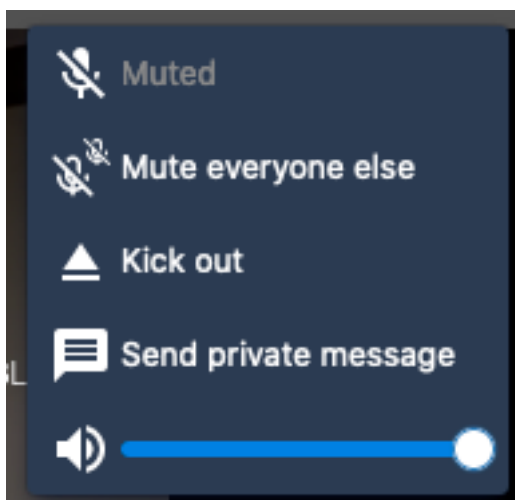
- Camera control. Start or stop your camera.
- Toggle tile view. This swaps between a view showing just the current speaker, or tiled view of all participants
- Info. Room information. This is where you can find the link to the meeting, for example if you need to copy it into an email or instant message
- Options. The three dots pop up a menu with additional choices and settings. The most useful one to change here is your name. At the top of the menu you will see 'BLUF Event Host,' which is the default name you will be given when you start a meeting from BLUF admin.

To change your name, click the three dots icon, select BLUF Event Host and then this box will appear on screen:



Enter the name you wish to use, for example *Nigel #3*. We recommend including your BLUF number, so people can look you up easily on the site or in apps.

When other members join the meeting, you can click on them, and three dots will appear in their window. Click those dots, and a menu will pop up allowing you to mute them, send them a message, or kick them out of the room, if they are being disruptive.



Other useful options on the main settings menu allow you to use your whole computer screen for the meeting, to manage video quality and to share a YouTube video with the meeting. You can also view a list of keyboard shortcuts.

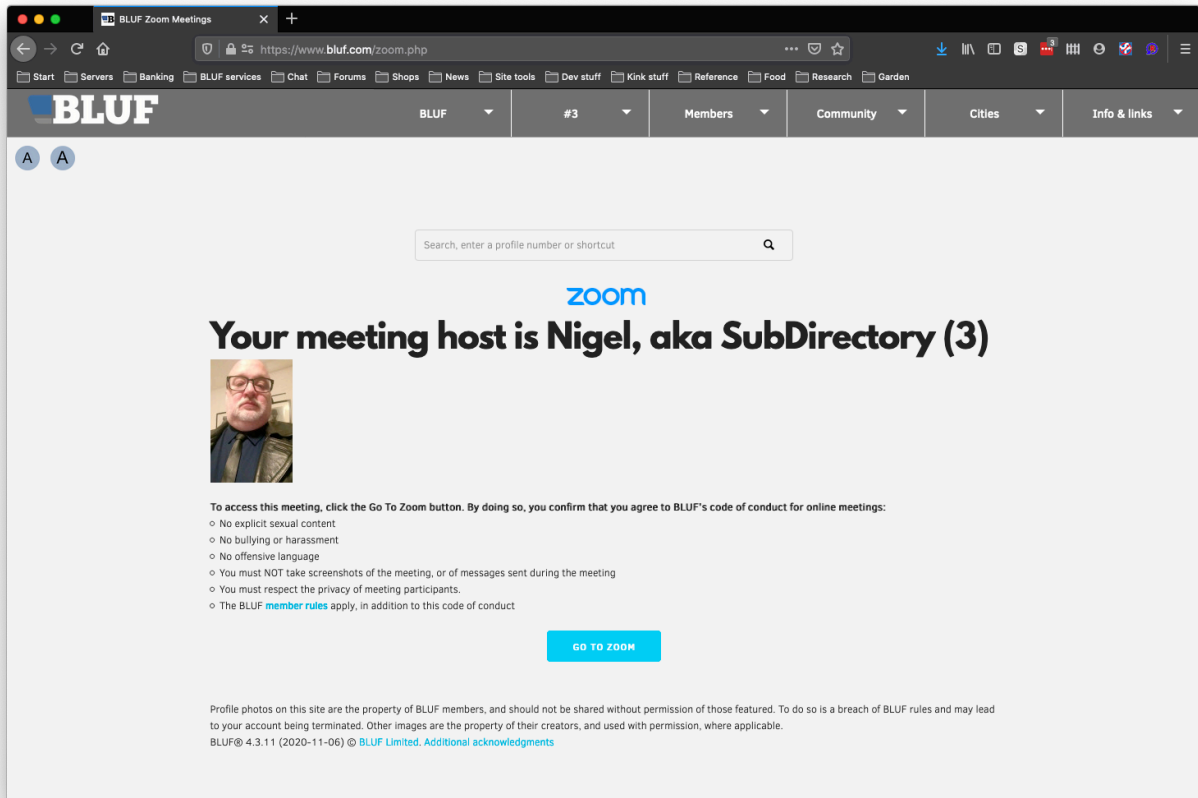
A Jitsi meeting ends when the last participant leaves, so we recommend you make sure you leave last, then click the red button at the bottom of the screen to exit. Finally, click Leave meeting to remove the Jitsi meeting from the web page.

Launching a BLUF Live meeting

Note: this section is not intended to be a detailed user guide for Zoom. Some basic familiarity is assumed.

To use the BLUF Live functionality, you will need a specific permission added to your BLUF account, which allows you to 'Check out' the BLUF Zoom host account.

You can host an 'ad hoc' meeting, which will simply be listed on the BLUF Live page like this:



Or you can host a meeting for a specific calendar event. To do that, you must make sure that the event is in the calendar, with the BLUF and Online categories marked, and that [bluf.com/zoom](https://www.bluf.com/zoom) is given as the event URL.

For such an event, instead of your name and photo, the event description will be displayed on the BLUF Live page.

The meeting host (for ad hoc events) or the name of the event will be displayed on the Today screen while your meeting is running.



Step by step guide

Start by signing in to BLUF Admin, and then from the Events menu, choose Launch meeting. You will see a screen like this one (with other events below)

Launchable events

Welcome to the BLUF event launcher. Via this page, you can select an event from the BLUF Calendar to launch as a virtual meeting using Jitsi, or in the main BLUF meeting room, or notify members of the details of an event being held on another platform. **NB.** To use the Jitsi and BLUF Zoom tools, you may need additional permissions. *Events appear on this page if they have the 'online' and 'BLUF' categories ticked.*

Jitsi meetings

To start a Jitsi meeting, select it from the list, and then click Launch. Follow the instructions on the next screen.

If your event does not appear in this list, make sure that "Jitsi" appears in the Location

LAUNCH

BLUF Zoom meetings

To start a meeting hosted in the main BLUF Zoom room, select it from the list, then click Launch and follow the instructions on the next screen. You can also launch an ad-hoc meeting, which will appear on the Today screen as "BLUF Live" followed by your name. Click the Ad-Hoc Meeting button

If your event does not appear in this list, make sure that the URL is set to bluf.com/zoom

LAUNCH **AD-HOC MEETING**

The difference between an ad-hoc meeting and a scheduled meeting is whether or not it is possible to send notifications to members, and the title given to the meeting.

For an event in the calendar, you should select it from the drop-down list, and click Launch. For an ad-hoc meeting, just click the bottom. The steps on the next page will be the same.

Check out

The first step in launching a meeting is checking out the Zoom account. There is only one account, and it can only be used by one person at a time. If you do not check it back in, no one else will be able to use it. Begin by clicking the Check out button.

BLUF Zoom tools

The tools on this page allow you to host meetings in the BLUF recurring meeting room, using the official BLUF Zoom account, zoom@bluf.com. Please read the notes carefully before you begin, to make sure you understand the process.

How it works

1. If you are hosting a scheduled event, enter it in the calendar. The URL for the event must be set to <https://bluf.com/zoom>
2. Check out the BLUF Zoom account. This gives you exclusive access to the zoom@bluf.com account, and a password will be created for you to use.
3. Enter a password that you would like participants to use for the meeting. If you do not set a password, the default **finland** will be used
4. Click the Start Zoom button on this page, to access the Zoom meeting room, and set any options you would like to change.
5. Launch the event via the button on this page. This opens the bluf.com/zoom link for people to access. If the meeting is for an event, it will also send a notification to people who have added the event to their Travel Plans.
6. When the meeting is over, remember to check in the BLUF Zoom account. This will reset the account, ready for someone else to use.

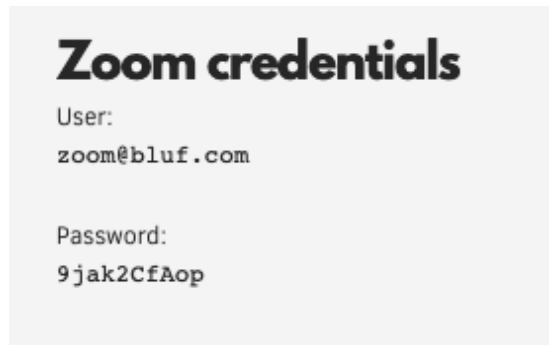
Step 1 - Checkout

To begin, you need to checkout the BLUF Zoom id. This will prevent anyone else from using the account until you check it back in again. Do not keep the account checked out for longer than necessary.

CHECK OUT ZOOM ACCOUNT

If the account is available, you will see a display to the right, telling you the password that has been assigned. This changes each time you check out the account, and this is the only place it will be displayed. *If you navigate to another page and return, you will not be able to view the password again.*

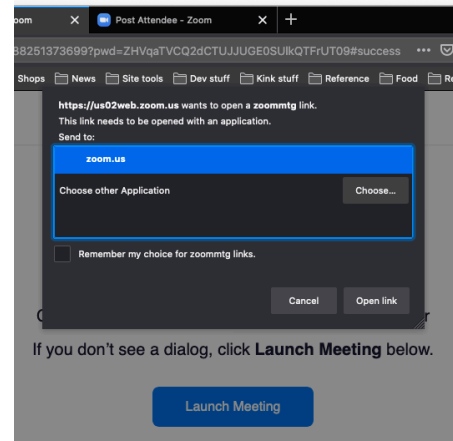
If the account is not available, you will see a message telling you who it is currently allocated to.



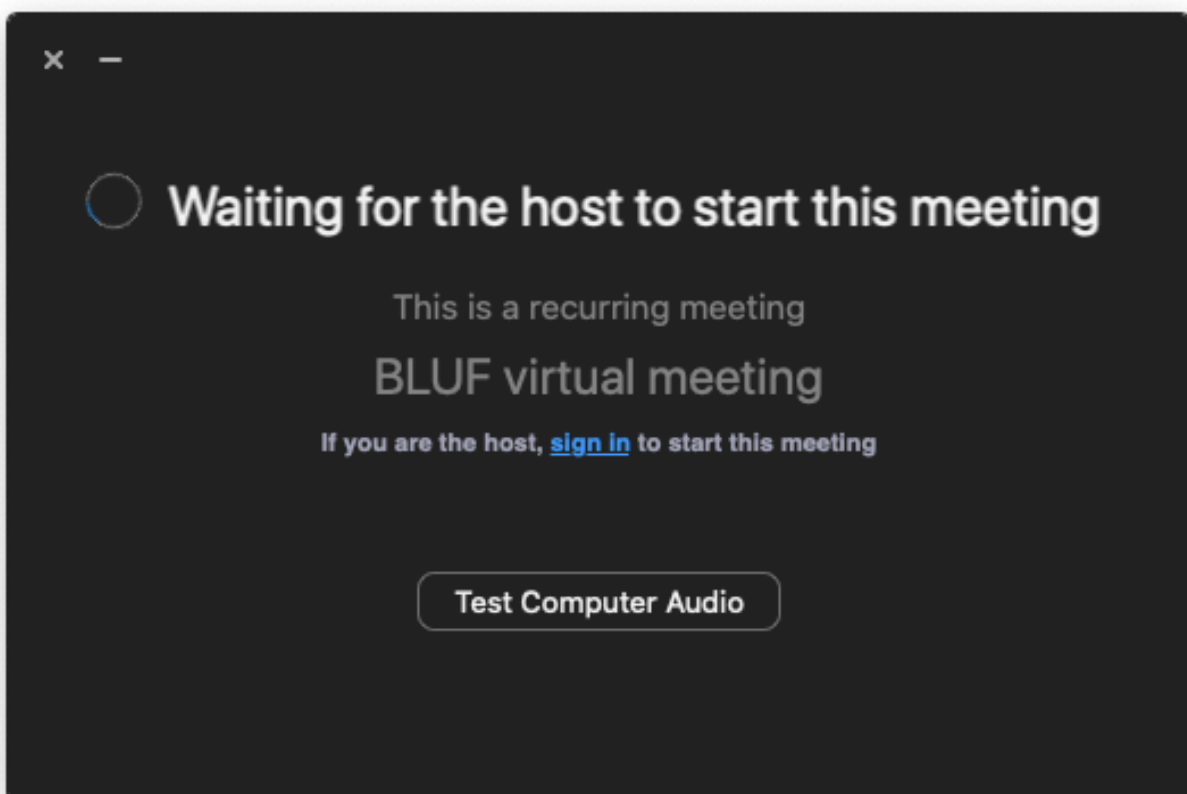
Set a meeting password & start Zoom

At Step 2, you need to enter a meeting password, or leave the box blank to use the default password **finland**. It is strongly recommended to use a different password to protect each meeting.

Now you will see a 'Ready to go' message, with a Start Zoom button below it. If you have your own Zoom account, you should sign out of it. Click the Start Zoom button. You may be asked by your web browser if you want to open the link with Zoom. The example here shows part of the screen using Firefox on a Mac, but it will look similar on other system.



Click to open the link in the Zoom application and you should then see a screen similar to this one, telling you that the meeting is waiting for the host.



Click the Sign in link, and then sign in to Zoom using the email address zoom@bluf.com and the password that was displayed to you on the launch page. There is no point ticking the 'Remember me' box, as you will be given a different password next time.

After a few moments, you will see the chat room. You should not need to alter any of the options. At this stage, you are the only person in the room. You should typically aim to reach this stage a few minutes before the start time for your meeting.

Launch the BLUF Live meeting

Although the meeting is now running, the BLUF Live page will not display it until you click the launch button on the website. Switch back to the window with the launch page, and you will see this display:

Step 3 - Launch

To open the meeting to other participants, click the Launch button.

If the event is in the BLUF calendar, members who have added it to their Travel Plans will be notified. The event summary will be shown, along with the Code of Conduct, on the BLUF Zoom page at bluf.com/zoom

If the event is marked as Private, the BLUF Zoom page will not show it to people unless they are signed in to the site

If the event is not linked to the calendar, your photo will be show as the meeting host on the BLUF Zoom page

LAUNCH

Click the Launch button and your meeting will be flagged in the BLUF Live section of the Today screen, and will be available to people who visit the page at bluf.com/zoom

If the meeting is for an event in the BLUF Calendar, then it is at this point that everyone who has added it to their Travel Plans will receive a notification. On the website, the notification will include a 'Go to BLUF Live' button, and on the app, tapping the notification will ask the user if they want to go to the Live event.

Now, just hold your meeting using Zoom. At the end of the meeting, sign out of Zoom, then return to the launch page and click the button marked 'Check in Zoom account.' This will release the account for other people to use, and it will also set a new password, which will sign out out of Zoom if you have not done so already.

Feedback and comments

If you have feedback or comments, please send them by email to webmaster@bluf.com.