

Navigating hybrid work: A Google Workspace handbook

Amit

Best practices for supporting a hybrid work culture.

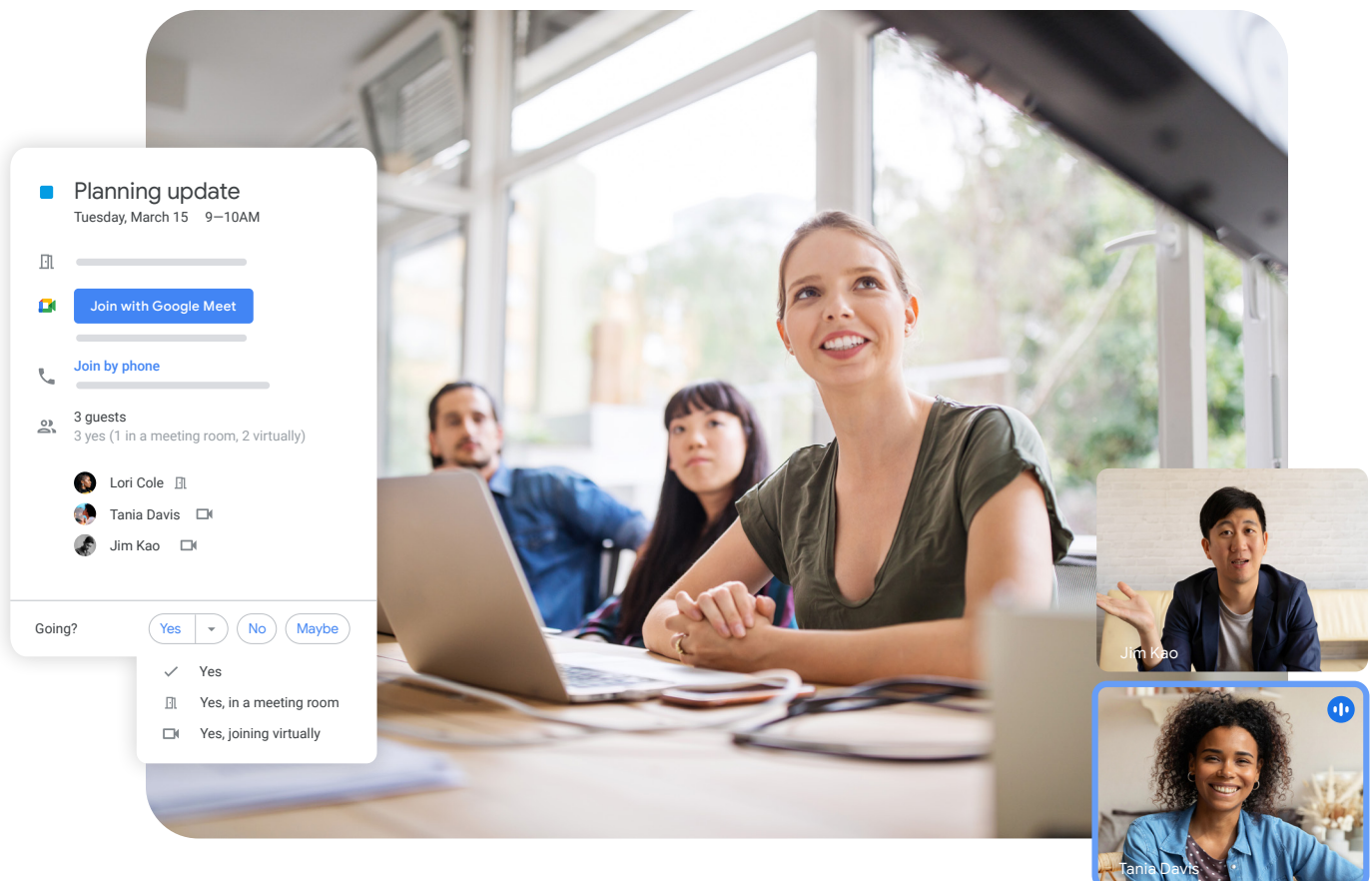


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Hybrid: it's about more than where you work. ▶


As millions of organizations emerge from more than a year of remote work, a hybrid work model is rapidly becoming the new normal. But hybrid is about more than just where you work.

- How do people working "somewhere else" stay connected with those in the office?
- How can all employees better manage their time and attention?
- How can technology support wellbeing so everyone can maximize their impact?

Although hybrid work has some unique challenges, Google Workspace has been focused on empowering anywhere, anytime collaboration for well over a decade. In the pages ahead, we share what we've learned about hybrid work in collaboration with our customers. This handbook focuses on tools, spaces, and best practices that seamlessly connect in-office and remote teams.

Key challenges of hybrid work:

-  Work is no longer a place
-  Human connection is critical
-  Time is more precious than ever

 **74%**
of companies intend to shift some employees to remote permanently¹

This guide highlights existing and soon-to-be released features in Google Workspace to help you plan and implement your hybrid work journey today. [Sign up to stay informed](#) on Google Workspace product and features updates.

What does success look like?




As organizations around the world embrace hybrid work, they're looking to level the playing field across all work and collaboration touchpoints. They want to know how to build connections with their teams, and how to ensure everyone can participate fully no matter where or how they join a meeting or a brainstorm session.

When we recently surveyed Google Workspace customers, they reported their top hybrid work concerns:

- Keeping people productive and engaged, even when they're away from the office
- Preventing the sort of meeting fatigue that happened during the pandemic
- Making the hybrid work experience equitable for all employees
- Ensuring the in-office experience promotes collaboration

Google has spent much of the past year solving for these challenges. Our mission is to enable a hybrid work experience that enhances collaboration, strengthens human connection, and increases wellbeing for every employee — wherever and however they work.

Key attributes of hybrid work

-  **Productivity** through anywhere, anytime collaboration
-  **Collaboration equity** across all hybrid work touchpoints
-  **Wellbeing** through strengthened social connections, team culture, and a healthy work-life blend

Strategies for success

- ✓ **Smart, flexible technology:** using both software and hardware solutions to seamlessly connect teams
- ✓ **Reimagining the office for hybrid:** creating an inspired and inclusive work environment
- ✓ **Building a hybrid work culture:** establishing best practices that promote a “hybrid first” mindset

Best practices ★

Based on Google's own experiments and research, we've put together a set of best practices for hybrid work success. Our approach blends culture, software, hardware, and conference-room layouts based on meeting types. While technology can't solve everything, there are concrete ways we can help people use tools to build stronger connections with each other, better manage their time and wellbeing, and achieve more — together.

Boosting productivity through anywhere, anytime collaboration

Hybrid collaboration is fast-moving and fluid. It doesn't just happen in scheduled meetings that span locations; it happens in countless everyday moments, from spontaneous discussions over chat to shared brainstorming documents. Tools must be flexible enough to support both [real-time and asynchronous hybrid collaboration](#). The ability to seamlessly move between modes of communication — like jumping between a shared document in Spaces and a video call with one click — is crucial.

✓ HOW IT'S DONE WITH Google Workspace

Collaboration happens everywhere, anytime.

A team builds a project plan in a **shared Doc** and uses @-mentions with [smart canvas](#) to bring in relevant people, content, and events.


As team members collaborate, they use a dedicated **Space** where all the relevant content for the project is organized and discussion happens.



An informal hallway chat in the office between two colleagues continues and broadens through group chat or over **Google Meet**.

A team shares its weekly update in a topic-based **Space** to keep their co-workers informed and get feedback.

A group chat seamlessly evolves into a **Google Meet** call.

 **83%**
of executives expect to support some level of hybrid (70%) or all remote (13%) work¹

💡 Did you know?



Turning on your video camera during virtual team meetings **creates a better connection, while minimizing your self view alleviates meeting fatigue**. The pandemic gave us greater empathy for everyone's unique circumstances. People love it when pets and kids make guest appearances. You have the option to resize, move, and minimize your self view in Meet.

Creating a dedicated space for teamwork and collaboration

Distributed teams need a dedicated, shared space to bring their projects to life by connecting the right people, content, and conversations.

Spaces in Google Chat provide a dedicated place for organizing people, topics, and project. Spaces offer a streamlined and flexible user interface that helps teams stay on top of what's most important. Powered by new features like in-line topic threading, presence indicators, custom statuses, expressive reactions, and a collapsible view, Spaces seamlessly integrates with files and tasks, becoming a new home in Google Workspace for getting more done — together.

💡 Did you know?

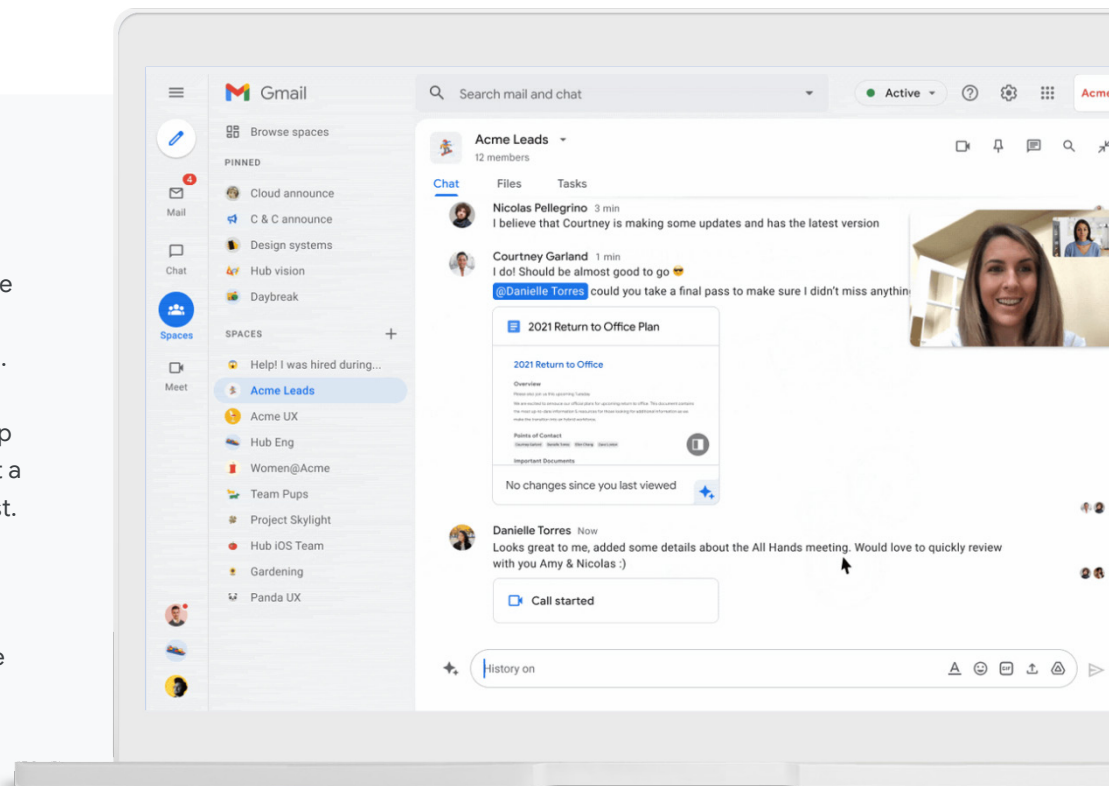
Customers can have their admins [turn on Google Chat](#) and Spaces if they are not currently available. [Learn more about Spaces.](#)

✓ HOW IT'S DONE WITH Spaces

Organize a project: Keep the project team aligned and moving toward a shared goal.

Curate a conversation: Keep co-workers informed or start a dialogue on a topic of interest.

Organize people: Evolve ad hoc conversations into a persistent team area to share knowledge and stay connected.



Making meetings hybrid friendly

Google Meet and [Meet hardware](#) already include many features that support hybrid work. With Meet hardware features like occupancy detection and voice-activated controls, admins and operations teams can help ensure social distancing and safety protocols in the office. And to keep the focus on what matters most in the meeting, [TrueVoice noise cancellation technology on Series One hardware](#) removes unwanted sounds in the room while crystallizing human voices.

✓ HOW IT'S DONE WITH

Companion mode

[Companion mode](#) is designed to seamlessly connect those in the conference room with their remote teammates, giving everyone access to advanced participation features, while leveraging the best of in-room audio and video conferencing capabilities. Users can share their screen or see presentations up close on a secondary device, and they can chat within the meeting, hand-raise, vote on a poll, post a question in Q&A, or enable captions and translations in their language of choice.

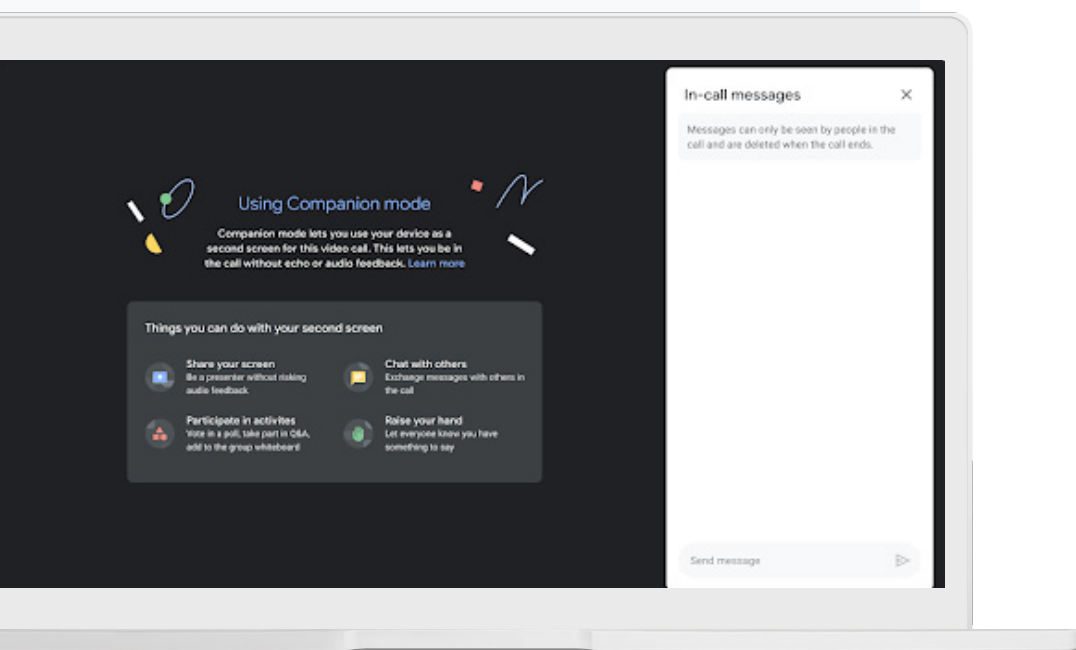
“People have been changing the way in which they work; they’ve been blending their work and non-work life. Our people and culture director calls it work-life integration. When you don’t have to cram everything into a normal work day, people seem more comfortable with starting earlier or working later and segmenting their time so they can be most productive in both their personal and professional lives.”

— Linda Humphrey, Global ICT Services, WWF International

WWF

💡 Did you know?

Research shows that once you have **7 people in a decision-making group**, each additional member reduces decision effectiveness by 10%.² Learn more about conducting better [video meetings](#).



5 meeting blueprints for hybrid work success

Virtual meetings were the glue that held many [remote teams](#) together during the pandemic. As businesses and employees make the shift to hybrid, they need to ensure that every meeting connects all the participants into a single immersive experience with collaboration equity for all.

Based on our own experience at Google, and the experiences of our customers, we've optimized five common meeting types for a hybrid work world:

1. **Relationship building:** One-on-one or small group team-building sessions
2. **Working session:** Real-time collaboration, often using a document
3. **Review:** Presenting content and facilitating discussion
4. **Brainstorm:** Real-time idea generation and problem solving
5. **All hands:** Information sharing with a large group of people

Did you know?

To minimize distractions for the whole team, **mute your audio when you're not talking**, and make sure noise cancellation and [speech enhancement technology](#) is turned on.



Blueprint #1: Relationship building

Ideal for **small groups** or **one-on-ones**, relationship building meetings are a great way to connect around shared work or personal updates and interests. Use them to stay connected with colleagues and customers, or to get to know a new team member, or for team-building events.

Participants: 1:1 or 3-15
(broken into small groups)



1+
Working
from office



1+
Working
from home

Software:



Meet



Calendar



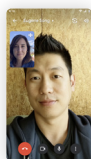
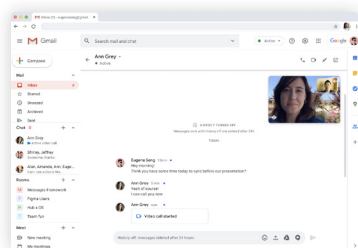
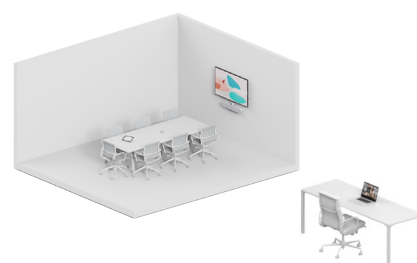
Docs

Room and hardware

Laptop, mobile, or tablet for each attendee to actively participate.

Series One Desk 27 for individual remote or for small shared spaces.

Series One small, medium, or large room kit or Meet-certified hardware for in-room participants.



Organizer

Organizers can use attendees' RSVP join locations in Calendar to coordinate time and place. In hybrid and remote meetings, participants can join from whichever device is most convenient — laptop, phone, tablet, or Nest Hub Max. **Direct call from Gmail** is fast for one-on-one meetings, and **breakout rooms** are ideal for splitting up larger groups to encourage small group connection and discussions.

In-room participants

Participants can join directly from the meeting room via **Google Meet hardware** with auto-zooming for perfect framing. Since the main purpose of this type of meeting is relationship building rather than active work, being able to clearly see one another's facial cues and body language is paramount.



Join by phone

(CH) +41 43 430 94 54 PIN: 877 340 213#



4 guests

3 yes (1 , 2) , 1 awaiting



Lori Cole



Edward Wang



Jeffery Clark



Ethan Lattimore

Going?

Yes

No

Maybe



Yes



Yes, in a meeting room



Yes, joining virtually

Remote participants

Joining from anywhere is seamless, no matter the device or OS, with a Meet code or direct call from Gmail. When on-screen collaboration isn't required, walking meetings using Meet's mobile apps can be a good option to help combat meeting fatigue.

Blueprint #2: Working session

Working sessions are typically best with **small-group collaborations** — often for the purpose of discussing a document. This can be done by sharing and editing content in a meeting or by joining a meeting directly from within Docs or Sheets.

Participants: 1:1 or 3-5

Software:



1+
Working
from office



1+
Working
from home



Meet



Calendar



Docs



Sheets



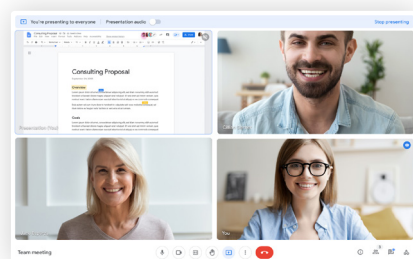
Chat

Room and hardware

Laptop, mobile, or tablet for each attendee to actively participate.

Series One Desk 27 for individual remote or small shared spaces.

Series One medium or large room kit or **Meet-certified hardware** for in-room participants.

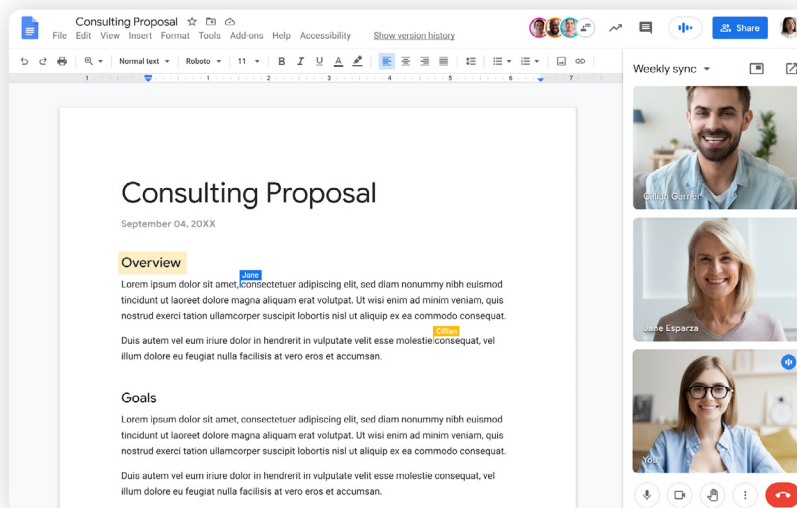


Organizer

Whether the meeting organizer is in-room or remote, they can **present the working doc** in the meeting so everyone can follow along.

In-room participants

During a meeting, participants join directly from the meeting room via **Google Meet hardware**. They can use **Companion mode** to share the links over in-meeting chat for real-time collaboration. Alternatively, they can share the links and attachments in Spaces to continue asynchronous collaboration between meetings, and easily find them in the Files tab in Spaces.



Remote participants

Remote participants can **use the sidebar*** to see meeting participants while editing the Doc or split-screen the meeting and the Doc. Remote participants can also **unpin presented content** during the discussion to see more participants.

Come prepared

To help get the most value from a working session, **share relevant documents** with participants to review prior to the meeting via **Google Chat** or by posting to a Space.

Blueprint #3: Review

When the main objective is to **present content and facilitate discussions**, review sessions are recommended. This setup works well for presenting documents, slides, spreadsheets, and other forms of content for small to mid-sized groups.

Participants: 3-5 or up to 20
(varies by company size)



3+
Working
from office



1+
Working
from home

Software:



Meet



Calendar



Slides



Chat

Room and hardware

Laptop, mobile, or tablet for each attendee to actively participate.

Series One Desk 27 for individual remote or small shared spaces.

Series One medium or large room kit or Meet-certified hardware for in-room participants. **Series One Board 65 and additional large display** (optional).

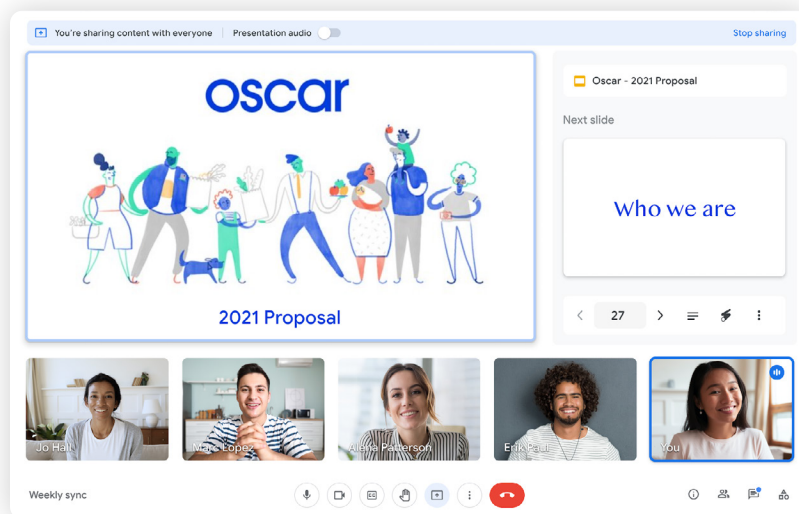


Organizer

Organizers can kick off the meeting with the agenda and ground rules, using the hand-raise feature to **facilitate turn taking**, in-meeting chat for comments, as well as posting and up-voting in Q&A to ensure that the most popular questions are answered. They can also **initiate a recording and/or a transcript*** to make it easier to summarize and capture action items.

In-room participants

For best audio and video quality, in-room participants can **join directly from Google Meet hardware**. In-room participants can use **Companion mode** so that their raised hands, chat comments, and poll responses are associated with their names. This makes facilitation and follow-ups more efficient.



Remote participants

Remote participants can use their laptops to participate via in-meeting chat, hand-raise, and reactions and polls. Remote presenters can use **Slides in Meet*** to see their audience's reactions as they present their work.

After the meeting

Share documents, **meeting notes and action items** in a Space for post-meeting follow-ups and to help include teammates with different working hours.

Blueprint #4: Brainstorm

Brainstorms are all about creative collaboration. When real-time **idea generation and problem solving** are on the agenda, follow this type of meeting setup to make the most of everyone's time.

Participants: 10-20



3+
Working
from office



20+
Working
from home

Software:



Meet



Calendar



Jamboard

Room and hardware

Laptop, mobile, or tablet for each attendee to actively participate.

Series One large room kit or

Meet-certified hardware.

Series One Board 65 for

interactive white boarding.

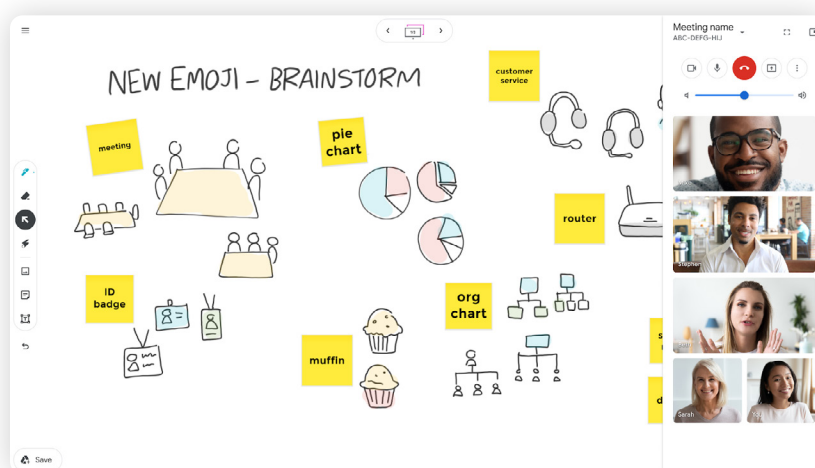


Organizer

Organizers can opt to **use polls** to get lightweight feedback from participants in the midst of brainstorming. **Breakout rooms** are ideal for splitting the brainstorm into smaller groups, then rejoining the larger group to share ideas.

In-room participants

For the best audio and video quality experience, in-room participants can **join directly from the meeting room via Google Meet hardware**, and use auto-zoom so remote participants can see them up close. Individual laptops allow for more options: Companion mode to participate in activities, or the **Jamboard app** to participate in a virtual brainstorm.



Remote participants

On individual screens, remote participants can **pin the meeting room's video feed** and open the **Jamboard app** in split-screen view to participate in a virtual brainstorm. They can also use **background blur/replace and noise cancellation** so that they look and sound great to others in the call.

Blueprint #5: All hands

When sharing information with a large group of people, an all hands meeting is the way to go. It's ideal for **bringing larger teams together** to share information and create alignment.

Participants: varies by company size



3+
Working
from office



30+
Working
from home

Software:



Meet



Calendar



Slides

Room and hardware

Laptop, mobile, or tablet for each attendee to actively participate.

Series One large room kit or Meet-certified hardware. Large display to view presentation and people on separate screens.



Organizer

Prior to the meeting, the organizer can set up the event as a livestream in Calendar. During the meeting, they can **share poll results in real time**, and see and **moderate hand-raises and Q&A**. They can also use moderation controls, such as mute or eject, to keep the meeting safe and on track. After the meeting, they can **review the attendance report, poll results, and Q&As** along with the recording and transcript. Organizers can also enable livestreams for up to 100,000 viewers, both within their organization and for guests in other trusted Workspace domains. Captions in English, German, French, Spanish and Portuguese also make these events more accessible and inclusive.

In-room participants

Via individual laptops, in-room participants can open **Companion mode** to participate in activities (chat, Q&A, polls, etc.) and have the ability to **turn on translated captions** to follow along in a preferred language.

In-room speaker

For the best audio and video quality experience, they can **join directly from the meeting room hardware**. If the speaker is in a large room of people, they can turn on their laptop camera on **Companion mode** so that they can see their facial expressions and gestures more clearly.



Remote participants

On individual devices, remote participants can **pin relevant content** such as the room video feed and speaker tiles. From their device, they can easily participate with chat, Q&A, and hand-raise.

Managing time, attention, and wellbeing

Before the pandemic, many of us had well-established routines for our working hours and how to interact with colleagues. With hybrid work, there's an opportunity to take a fresh look at new work habits to better optimize for productivity and wellbeing.

Start by communicating expectations about availability and working locations across your team. You can set your working location by day, or adjust your availability with [segmentable working hours in Calendar](#).

Additionally, when accepting meeting invites, you can select your location so meeting organizers can plan ahead, knowing who'll be in the room or joining virtually.

In addition to communicating work hours and locations in Calendar, you can also schedule regular blocks of **Focus Time** for important tasks while minimizing distracting notifications.

Time Insights lets people assess and adjust how they're spending their time against their own priorities, and the results are only visible to them — not their managers.

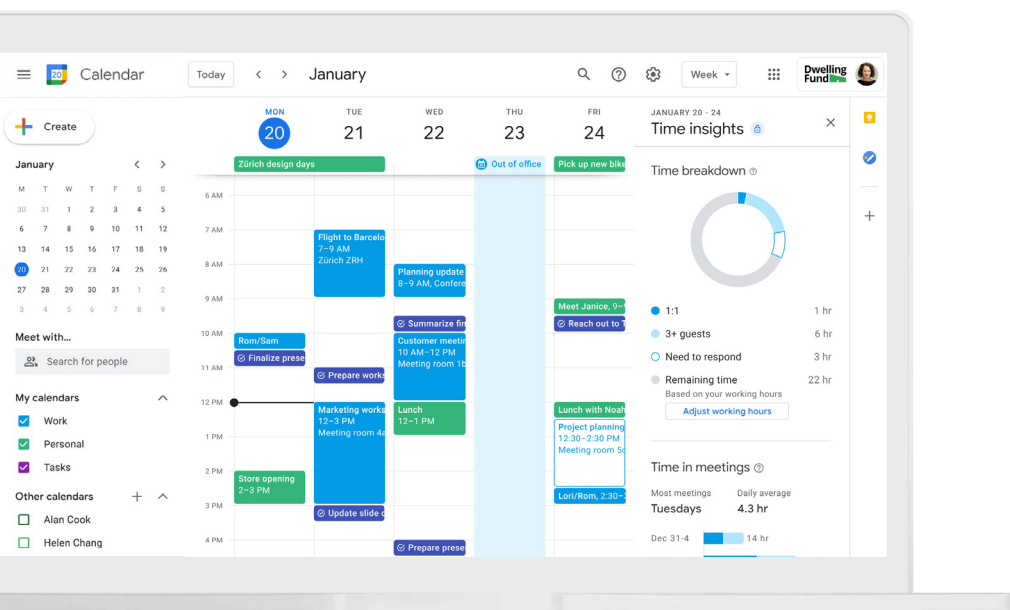
💡 Did you know?

Back-to-back meeting fatigue was a major concern during the remote work phase of the pandemic. Give people a few minutes to reset by scheduling meetings to end 5-10 minutes early. In your Calendar settings window, scroll down to **Event settings** and click the **Speedy meetings** box.

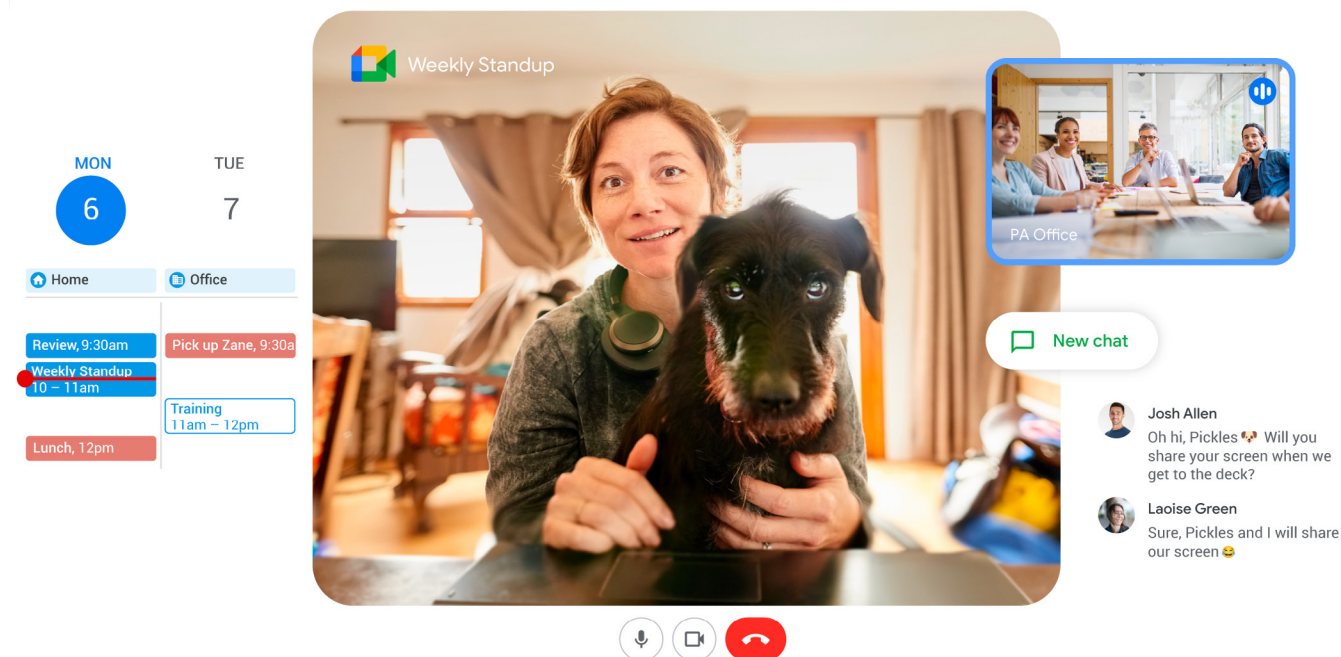
“We saw employees using chat to help one another — a bunch of new rooms and groups were popping up around topics such as advice on remote working, tips for mental health, as well as jokes, memes, and other light hearted topics that helped bring people together. We want to do everything we can to support that.”

— Andy Yates, Head of Strategy, TechOps at ThoughtWorks

 **thoughtworks**



Making hybrid meetings more inclusive



Scheduling meetings

With so many distributed teams and time zones, scheduling a meeting window that works for everyone can be a logistical challenge. Follow a few guidelines to maximize participation:

- ✓ Encourage team members to [add their working hours](#), location, and [focus time](#) into their Calendars so scheduling can take into account things like wellbeing, personal commitments, or childcare.
- ✓ Include only those people who need to be a part of the conversation, but cast a wide net. When in doubt, invite people as optional and ask if they'd like to attend.

- ✓ Choose a date and time that will work for as many people as possible. When scheduling with regions in far-flung time zones, alternate which teams have to stay late or start early to make the call happen. You might also choose one day a week when global meetings happen so people can plan around that day.
- ✓ Encourage people to specify their location when they respond to the Calendar invite. If they accept, they can do so by choosing “in a meeting room” or “joining virtually.” This helps everyone, including the organizer, know what to expect.
- ✓ Provide an agenda in the Calendar invite at least 24 hours in advance to ensure people can decide whether to join and have a chance to prepare accordingly. Include the goal of the meeting in the agenda, for example: “This meeting will be successful if we leave with four great ideas from the brainstorming session.”
- ✓ Consider rotating the role of facilitator and note taker. This not only lessens the burden on one person, it also gives other people a chance to participate more fully.

Preparing for meetings with Spaces

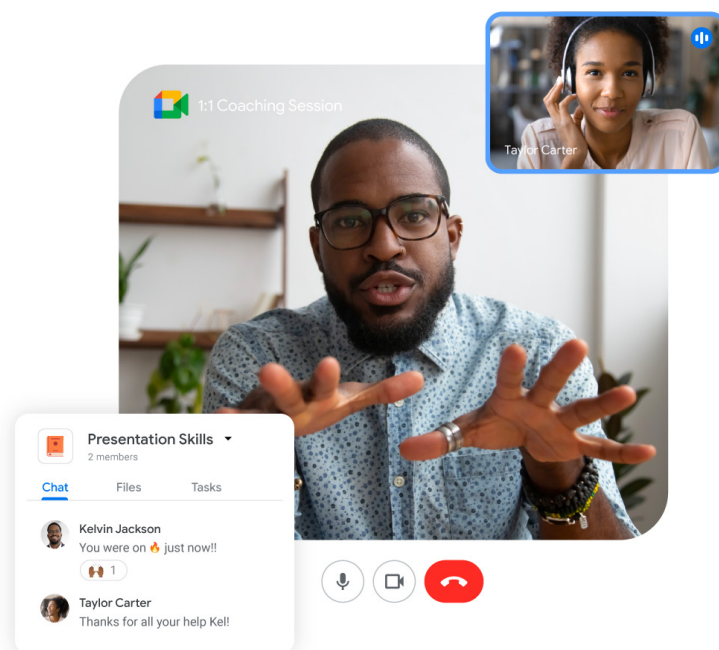
Spaces are especially helpful when it comes time to prepare for a meeting. Participants can review any background documents or presentations asynchronously, working at a time that suits their geography and working style, and follow up in the Space with questions or suggestions for the team. All that information and discussion is then preserved for future reference.



During the meeting

When done well, hybrid meetings don't feel like two different conversations that happen in the room and remotely. To keep them feeling like a single inclusive experience, do the following:

- ✓ Acknowledge virtual team members when they join a meeting and use the first 5 minutes to connect with the team and check-in. Some teams at Google kickstart their meetings by playing an interesting or inspiring YouTube video or by asking a question of the team (e.g., What was the favorite thing you ate this weekend?)
- ✓ Encourage attendees in conference rooms to use Companion mode and use the hand-raise feature in Google Meet before speaking in meetings of 3+ people.
- ✓ Avoid "in the room" side conversations that may exclude virtual team members.
- ✓ Use the Jamboard app instead of a physical whiteboard in the conference room, so everyone can view and contribute.



- ✓ Have the designated note taker create and use a pre-populated [notes Doc from the Calendar invite](#) and then share it with the attendees. If key participants are unable to attend, consider recording the meeting for them.
- ✓ Even with Companion mode, it can be difficult for remote participants to break into the conversation in the room. The facilitator should make space for remote attendees to weigh in frequently.
- ✓ Provide multiple ways for people to provide feedback. Not everyone is comfortable speaking up in a group meeting, so be sure to solicit feedback in the agenda doc or through Chat, Q&A, and polls.

After the meeting

To make sure meeting attendees feel like their time was well spent:

- ✓ Send a follow-up note to thank everyone for their time and ask for any additional feedback.
- ✓ Consider posting all meeting artifacts to the relevant team or project Space, allowing team members who were unable to attend to contribute.
- ✓ Include notes/recordings, action items, and decisions to all relevant parties, especially those unable to attend.
- ✓ For recurring meetings, poll people once a quarter using Google Forms and ask them how the meeting could be made more productive and inclusive. You might even consider an anonymous poll that asks if meetings should change in terms of duration or frequency or even focus.

💡 Did you know?

You can create meeting notes directly from the Google Calendar invite. [See how.](#)



Evolving the workplace and culture for success

Establishing a “hybrid first” mindset won’t happen overnight. But by recognizing the need to adapt current working norms and embracing these easy-to-implement measures, hybrid collaboration will eventually become second nature. Below are a few ways Google is reimagining the physical office and some of our best practices for creating a hybrid first work culture.

What is Google solving for?

Our evolving hybrid workplace is about making Google the most effective, creative, and enjoyable place to work. We want to enhance productivity and creativity, strengthen connection and belonging, and increase health and wellbeing. We view designing our hybrid work future as a journey, not a quick fix for a single point in time. Testing and experimenting is a key part of our approach, which we'll continually adapt based on what we learn works best for employees along the way.


💡 Did you know?


Hand-raising helps keep a meeting on track.


Especially if you're remote, it's hard to cue others that you'd like to speak. Hand-raising also helps to avoid interrupting someone.





Key priorities for Google's hybrid workplace:

 Empower equity of experience and participation in hybrid collaboration that connects people who are in-person and remote. We're experimenting with solutions such as new Meet features, [Starline](#), and a new meeting room called Campfire, where those in the office are interspersed with vertical displays that immersively bring remote participants into a meeting.

 Transform offices into "collaboration hubs" with expanded types of reservable team spaces with various layouts and movable furniture, whiteboards, and storage to allow teams the flexibility to work together in a way that best supports their activities.

 Create more outdoor collaboration spaces (in strategic locations where context and weather permit), like open-air tents and lawns, where gatherings can happen while preserving airflow and social distancing.

 To support people who may not need a permanent desk in the office, we're experimenting with a prototype desk that automatically adjusts to an employee's preferences with the swipe of their corporate badge.

 We're turning some smaller conference rooms into private work spaces that can be reserved, ensuring that people can have dedicated time and space for individual work when they're in the office.

"Airbus has spent the past year thinking about what it actually means to return to work and we're looking to support greater flexibility. In 2020, we held 5.6M virtual meetings and we now have more than 70,000 shared drives where people collaborate. We have changed the way people work at Airbus and that will continue as cloud-based collaboration empowers the hybrid work reality."

— **Andrew Plunkett**, Airbus Vice President Digital Workplace

AIRBUS

¹Based on an internal Google Consumer survey among US full-time information workers; fielded March 25–April 12, 2021.

²"Decide & Deliver, 5 Steps to Breakthrough Performance in Your Organization," 2010

Fostering human connection in a hybrid world

Hybrid work doesn't have to be the next great disruptor. It can be a natural evolution of tools and approaches that have served distributed teams for decades. But by ensuring seamless collaboration between those in the room and those working remotely — in meetings and across all the ways that people collaborate — everyone can stay included, connected, and deliver greater impact, together.

Google Workspace helps hybrid teams of any size connect, create, and collaborate, from anywhere, and on any device.

To learn more about how Google Workspace can benefit your team or organization, [contact sales](#) or [start your free trial](#) today.

