



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

Internet Safety Tips and Best Practices for Online Ministry

We are grateful for the technology that enables us to continue our ministries remotely during this time of pandemic. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance that we keep our students safe by observing healthy boundaries and maintaining open communication during internet use. While it may not be possible to fully comply with the [Diocesan Policy on Electronic Communications](#), we encourage teachers, catechists and other instructors to observe the following internet safety tips along with best practices as they conduct online faith formation and classroom sessions.

Online Class Session/Meeting Etiquette:

- **Send Notification to Parents** – whenever possible, inform parents beforehand and provide them a schedule so they are aware of the proposed meeting dates and times. Allow parents the option to “opt out” and make the necessary accommodations for those families.
- **Send Instructions and Materials Prior to the Meeting**- always send the pertinent meeting information and details including any materials the students will need for the session.
- **Be on Time and End on Time** – punctuality for your meeting is important, remember, most all meetings, classes, gatherings and appointments are being done online. Be respectful of people’s schedules.
- **Be Prepared**- have your agenda prepared or your lesson plan ready with any activities you plan to share.
- **Situate Yourself in a Suitable Place**- this will help to avoid distractions or interference with background noise.
- **Dress Appropriately**- dress as if you were meeting your group in person.
- **No Eating during the Meeting**- try to eat before or after your meeting. Eating during the meeting can be distracting.
- **Be Aware of Your Surroundings**- if you are meeting on a mobile device, please be cautious where you go and what you do while you are meeting. Remember, everyone meeting online can see you and your immediate surroundings.
- **Be Cognizant of your Audience**- be mindful of who you are addressing and be attune to the needs or struggles that each person might experience. If meeting online is not the best means to meet with some individuals, find alternative ways to incorporate them into the

group. Also, present age appropriate materials that are conducive to their learning experience.

Technology Tips:

- **Check your Meeting Settings, Camera and Check your Sound-** before the meeting begins, ensure the necessary security features are in place. (See Safety tips below on how to do this). Fix your camera so it points at your face and not the ceiling or wall. Make sure there is good lighting and finally, check your audio/sound settings.
- **Mute your Microphone-** when you are not talking to avoid feedback. Mute student's microphones when you are speaking.

Internet Safety Tips:

If you are using **ZOOM** for online meetings, please make sure you are following best practices:

- Do not make meetings or classrooms public. In Zoom, there are two options to make a meeting private: require a meeting password or use the waiting room feature and control the admittance of guests.
- Do not share a link to a teleconference or classroom on an unrestricted publicly available social media post. Provide the link directly to specific people.
- Manage screen sharing options. In Zoom, change screen sharing to "Host Only."
- Ensure users are using the updated version of remote access/meeting applications. In January 2020, Zoom updated their software. In their security update, the teleconference software provider added passwords by default for meetings and disabled the ability to randomly scan for meetings to join.
- Check these sites for additional information:
 - [School Administrator's Guide to Rolling Out Zoom](#)
 - [How to Keep Uninvited Guests Out of Your Zoom Event](#)

Protect your Digital Identity and Reputation:

- Ensure that no personal information is shared on line by you or your students.
- Keep personal matters offline. If the meeting has a sharing component, please ensure that it is done appropriately and on topic.
- Your username(s) should be professional and profile pictures or any other photos appropriate.
- Accountability is important, hold a professional standard with all participants. This includes but not limited to: language, gestures, humor, discussion and online behavior.
- Be careful of using Copyrighted material. Check your sources before sharing.