Video conferencing FAQ

Note: The features mentioned in this article are available in all packages except the Light package.

mailbox.org offers users a secure video chat functionality. The software for this runs entirely on our own servers in Germany- securely and compliant with data protection regulations (GDPR).

Over the first few weeks of running the service, we will be monitoring general usage to gather more experience about the extent to which video conferencing is used by our customers. This is necessary to enable us to optimally provision and scale the computing capacity that is required for videoconferencing. The service will start in a beta phase at first, with a limit on the number of participants that can be in a single session. As we gain more experience, we will be able to adapt and expand the offer in the medium term.

It is currently possible to have up to 10 users per session. The participants who get invited by the host can be external and do not need to be mailbox.org customers. Access is provided through a link and a password.

Since the operation of video chats has certain technical and organizational requirements that must be met, we have compiled the following overview for you:

Quality matters

Video conferencing will always be a burden for older computers, since the rendering and display of multiple video streams at the same time is computationally demanding - no matter which provider you are with. This could cause display issues with low-performing hardware, depending on how many participants have their camera turned on at the same time. Video transmission also requires a higher network bandwidth than other media types, which may be a issue for cell phone connections, especially if there is a weak carrier signal.

Other factors that can affect the quality of video conferencing include:

- A poor Wi-Fi connection, which may happen if the device used is far away from the Wi-Fi access point.
- Lack of bandwidth due to other people in the same household using the Internet at the same time to watch videos, play games, or for other data-heavy applications.
- Poor network reception and slow data transfer speeds when you use your smartphone on the go.
- Slow transfer speeds due to high general Internet demand in the neighborhood (for example, in a suburb at the weekend).
- Wrong configuration of the device used (compare with another device, if possible).
- Low-performing or wrongly configured VPN connection

Please keep in mind these factors should you happen to experience issues with video conferencing quality.

Which browsers are supported by mailbox.org video chat?

Many web browsers have the technology that is required for video conferencing built in, but not all implementations are equally good. Please use only recommended browsers, especially as third-party browsers on mobile devices tend to have poor support for video conferencing. In our experience, Chromium-based browsers work best. We tested our service with the following releases:

Chrome 85
Brave 1.14.84
Vivaldi 3.3.2022.47

The Firefox browser provides the best data protection features, and any of the major releases (ESR versions) handle video conferencing well enough. Firefox 81 had some issues with video artifacts or did not always work in some of our tests.

A few tips for moderators and participants

How to prepare effectively for a video conference:

If you are hosting your own video conference for the first time, this checklist may help you prepare yourself and your organization and avoid common issues.

1. Is the operating system of your device up to date? You want to avoid a situation where the system asks to install queued-up updates or wants to reboot just as the session is about to begin.
2. If your conference is held via a web client: Is your web browser up-to-date?
3. Does your headset work? Do you have a pair of headphones as a minimum fallback solution, in case you experience any interference when using the speakers that are connected to your machine?
4. If you are planning to use a laptop and there is neither a headset nor an external microphone available:
   a. Do you have an external keyboard and a mouse that can be used instead of the laptop’s keyboard and touch pad? The internal microphone of a laptop is often prone to recording typing and clicking sounds, which are then transmitted during the session to the annoyance of the other participants. Using external peripherals can ease this issue.
   b. If your laptop has an active or otherwise noisy CPU fan, please try to obtain an external microphone or headset, because the internal microphone will most likely pick up the fan noise.
5. For video conferencing: Does your camera work reliably?
6. Also think about the space you will be sitting in during the conference. Very large rooms can affect sound quality in that reverberation may occur, which can be more dominant than the speaker’s voice, making it difficult for the other participants to understand what is being said.
7. If you already have your session invitation, do a connection test in advance. That way, you can familiarize yourself with the interface and the controls beforehand. Do you know how to mute your own microphone and how to turn off the camera, if necessary?
8. Make sure you have a stable Internet connection. For more details, see the section on “Technical Requirements”.
9. Tip: If there are multiple speakers lined up for a session, the moderator should consider making them aware of their speaking time slot well in advance. This will allow everyone to prepare in advance and be ready to unmute their microphone just before it’s their turn to speak.

Frequently asked questions

Who can use the secure video conferencing?

We offer this service in different configurations for these groups:

- private customers
- business customers
- teachers and schools

Video conferencing for business customers - details

Business customers who use mailbox.org/business are usually larger organizations that have different requirements for video conferencing than private users.

Currently business customer have two options:

1. We can offer business customers secure dedicated video conferencing systems on request, which support conferences with over a hundred participants. These systems are based on a different videoconferencing technology than the one we use for private video conferencing.
2. Jitsi based videoconferencing with up to 25 participants are available for our business customers, if they set the account to the 2,5 € tariff (MailXL). This account may open two videoconferencing rooms. Should the company require more rooms, simply upgrade more accounts to the 2,5€ tariff.

These videoconferences are provided GDPR compliant out of our German data centres.

Is it possible for business customers to enable or disable the video conferencing feature, as required?

Currently, the new „Video conference“ feature has been disabled by default for all mailbox.org business customers and their related inboxes. Should you prefer to use this feature, it is of course possible to activate it centrally for all accounts. If you wish to do so, simply log in to access the business account administration console. ([https://setup.mailbox.org](https://setup.mailbox.org))

Are there any offers for schools and teachers regarding your secure videoconferencing system?
Yes, our secure video conferencing is now available for usage in class size. All GDPR compliant, for online teaching during the Coronavirus quarantine.

We’ve put together a special offer for schools, but also single teachers:
You may use our secure video conferencing with no time limit and for up to 50 participants.

This offer is available free of charge in the 1,- € tariff until 30 APR 2020.

We offer this package upon individual request to our support team. They can enable your account if you mention the name of your mailbox.org account and the name of the school you’re teaching at. Please refer to this support e-mail address: eduvideo at mailbox.org

Do I need to install any software for mailbox.org video conferencing?

No, our solution only needs a common web browser and can be run from any Internet connection.

On mobile devices (Android, iOS), some people might prefer to install the app "Jitsi Meet" for convenience, but it’s not mandatory to do that.

Please bear in mind, that software from App- and Play-stores can contain trackers. Using the browser is always more privacy friendly.

You may find the apps here:
for Android via F-Droid App Store
for iOS in Apple Store

How can I create a video conference room?

In the mailbox.org Office, go to Settings > mailbox.org > Video Conferencing to create the rooms. Currently, up to two password-protected video rooms can be created. Room names must not contain any special characters but can have uppercase and lowercase letters as well as numbers. Further, each name must be between 3 and 32 characters long. Your password must be at least 8 characters long and contain a combination of numbers as well as upper case and lowercase letters. Create your own video conference room by clicking on the option “Create a new video conference room”. The maximum number of participants is limited to 10 people (including the host).
Can I create a room that does not use a password?

No, this is not possible. The password is required to protect both your data and our infrastructure.

Can the creator of a video conference room exclude multiple attendees from a meeting?

No, this feature is not enabled. Make sure to only share the invite link with those people you want to have access to the session. The only alternative solution is to set a new password for the room and share that with the people you want to have access.

Update 08 JAN 2021: When I enter a video conference, I cannot see or hear anybody. I can only see people’s initials. Why is that?

In order to improve data protection, we have introduced this new feature. Like this every participant can freely decide at what moment they want to share their microphone or camera. Like this confidential conversations before the start of the video conference won’t get divulged.

Is there a moderator role with special permissions?
No, all participants have access to the same moderation features. However, it is good practice to formally appoint a moderator to ensure an orderly meeting. With the permission of the other participants, the moderator can then mute all participants and nominate people to speak, as required.

**I am experiencing video and sound issues. What could be the reasons for this?**

There are usually three main reasons:

- You use an outdated browser or a browser version that is known to be unsuitable for video conferencing
- Your PC hardware is a bit dated and overwhelmed with the rendering and display of many simultaneous video streams
- Your Internet connection has low bandwidth and/or is unstable

Please also refer to the above section about "Quality matters".

**How do I choose a microphone or camera to use?**

Go to "More actions" > "Settings" > "Devices" (see screen shot below) to select a microphone or a camera to use for video conferencing.

Please note that these devices must be granted the relevant browser permissions. After joining the video chat, the browser will ask for access permission. Make sure to confirm that the browser may use your camera and/or microphone.

I am unable to activate my camera or can’t see the camera video.

Make sure the camera is properly connected to the computer. It is also possible that an application is already using your camera, such as another video conference in a different browser.

My sound is distorted, too loud, or too quiet
Go to the settings, where it is possible to adjust microphone recording levels and speaker volume. Try different levels to achieve better results.

**Is it possible to use keyboard shortcuts?**
Yes, see "More actions" > "Shortcuts" to see which shortcuts are available.

**How can I change the language setting?**
Go to "More actions" > "Settings" > "More" to change the display language for your session.

**The sound volume of another meeting participant is too high**
In your settings, you can adjust the playback volume of other meeting participants. When tile view is turned off, look at the thumbnail of the participant in question. Access the volume controls by hovering over the three dots in the bottom left corner with your mouse.

When I try to enter a video conference room I am constantly being asked for a password, but the password I enter does not appear to be working!

There are three main reasons for this:

- The video conference room no longer exists or has never existed under this name. When someone tries to enter a room, our system will apparently always ask for a password by default, even if that room does not exist.
- Double-check if you may have misspelled the name of the video conferencing room in the URL – room names are case-sensitive!
- The owner of the video conference room has changed the password for that room.
How are conference data encrypted?

All connections to our systems are encrypted with HTTPS as usual and run exclusively on our systems, encrypted with TLS 1.2 or 1.3 and our SSL certificates plus DANE validation, of course. There is an additional end-to-end encryption feature but it is currently disabled in this beta version.

Is there a chat feature?

Yes, there is. Find the chat function under "Open/close chat". Any new messages will be indicated via Push.

Is it possible to send private messages to individual users?

Yes, click on the three dots in the individual participant window to send private messages to them by selecting "Send private message".

Can I turn off the pop-ups that appear at the beginning and the end of a meeting?

Update 08 JAN 2021: Those pop-ups have been disabled by us in order to allow for a better overview and usability.

What is the video resolution at which conferences run currently?

Currently, we use a resolution of 427x240 screen points to save bandwidth and run conferences smoothly, and to make sure even somewhat older client hardware will work, too. If there are only two people in a single session, the video resolution will be higher. We will be monitoring performance on our systems over the next few weeks to find out if there is capacity to improve the quality and resolution further.

Screen sharing of documents, webpages or spreadsheets will always be in the original resolution of the sharing device.

Related articles

- Videokonferenz FAQ