MS Teams: Using Breakout Rooms in a Meeting

During a Teams Meeting, you may want to organise participants in smaller groups so they can have discussions in breakout rooms, and then call them back to the main room to feedback to the larger group.

This quick guide steps you through setting up and using breakout rooms in an MS Teams Meeting. We recommend you read through all the steps before you create your first breakout rooms.

> **Accustomed to using Breakout Groups in Collaborate?** Please be aware that there are some differences between the two solutions. While the basic functionality is similar, not all features available in Teams are available in Collaborate, and vice versa. See Appendix for comparison.

Note: All participants, including the meeting organiser need to be using the latest version of Teams on Windows, Macs, iOS and Android.

Before you start

- The maximum number of participants for a meeting containing breakout rooms is **300**.

- You must be using the Teams Desktop app. The ability to create breakout rooms is not currently available for Teams Web or Mobile apps.

- Make sure you are using the correct version of the Teams Desktop app. The minimum required is 1.3.00.24755. To check, click the three dots to the left of your profile picture and select **About** > **Version**. You will see the version number at the top of the window.

Getting started

1. To set up breakout rooms, you must be the **Meeting organiser**.

2. You must have scheduled the meeting in advance and have invited all participants.

3. As the Meeting organiser, you must be present throughout the entire meeting in order to facilitate and manage the rooms.

4. Make sure you are using the new Teams meeting experience[1]

Creating the breakout rooms

We recommend that you create breakout rooms once the meeting has started and participants have joined. You can then assign participants to rooms automatically or manually, as described below.

You can create breakout rooms in **scheduled** private meetings (including recurring meetings) and **Meet now** private meetings.

1. Click the **Create Breakout Rooms** icon in the meeting toolbar.

2. The Create Breakout Rooms dialog opens.

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[1] Click your profile picture and tick the **Turn on new meeting experience** checkbox under **Settings** > **General**.

3. Choose how many rooms you want to create. You can create up to 50.

4. Select **Automatically** if you want participants randomly and evenly distributed between rooms, or **Manually** if you want to assign them yourself.

5. Click **Create rooms**.

   - Note: If you opted to assign participants manually, click **Assign participants**, tick the check box next to a participant's name, click **Assign** and select the room you want to move them to.
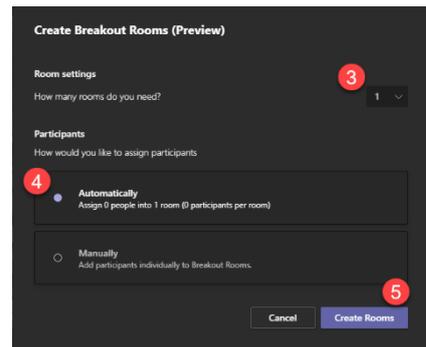
6. The **Breakout rooms** pane opens, displaying your breakout rooms.

7. By default, all rooms are **closed** to participants, and will remain so until you open them.

8. By default, rooms are named Room 1, Room 2, etc., but you can rename them – see Room options.

9. Once you have created the rooms, you can easily add more (one at a time) using **Add Room**.

Room options

Set room options via the **Breakout rooms** pane. There are different options for individual rooms and for all rooms:

For an individual room

Click the ellipsis (**…**) to the right of room name – you may need to hover over the room name to see the ellipsis – for the options:

1. **Open room/Close room**

2. **Rename room**

3. **Delete room** – If the room has participants in it, they are automatically moved to the main room where you can reassign them.

For all rooms

Click the ellipsis to the right of the **Breakout rooms** heading at the top of the pane for the following options:

1. **Recreate rooms** – deletes all existing rooms and displays the **Create Breakout Rooms** dialog again.

2. **Remove rooms** – deletes all existing rooms.

3. **Rooms settings** – options to let you:

   − move participants to rooms automatically when you open a room.

      o If the toggle is *on*, participants will be presented with a 10 second countdown when you open their room before they are automatically joined into their breakout room.

      o If the toggle is set to *off*, participants will be presented with a pop-up box when you open their room asking if they want to join. They will need to acknowledge/accept the prompt.

   − allow participants to return to the main meeting at any time.

   − set an automatic time limit for all rooms so that you don't have to close them manually.

      o **To set time limit**: toggle **Set a time limit** on and click the down arrows to select the number of hours or minutes as required.

      o **To switch options on/off**: toggle the button to the right of each option.
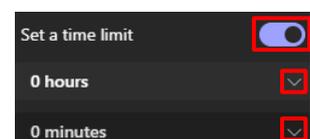
Open Breakout rooms and disperse participants

As the organiser, you can see who is in each room from the **Breakout rooms** pane.

To open the rooms and disperse participants into them, you can either:

- Click **Start Rooms** to open all the rooms at once, *or*

- **Open** rooms one by one by clicking on each room's ellipsis in turn, and selecting **Open Room**.

What participants can and cannot do in a breakout room

Participants can join breakout rooms from web, desktop, and mobile apps but the features available to them will vary depending on the device they are using and whether they are signed in or are joining as a guest. Guests have limited functionality, so we recommend that participants should sign in where possible.

Once participants have joined their breakout room, they can:

- Share/present content, files, and whiteboard.

- Chat in the breakout session.

- View all chat and items shared during the breakout meeting.

- Record – only if signed in. Guests cannot record.

They cannot:

- Invite other participants.

Switch participants between rooms

1. Click the **triangle** to the left of the breakout room icon in the Breakout rooms pane.

2. Click the **checkbox** alongside the participant's name

3. Click **Assign** and click the room you'd like to assign them to
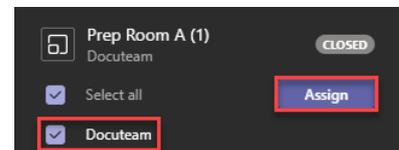
Breakout room management: Broadcast, communicate, and record

As the organiser you can:

1. Broadcast an announcement (e.g. updates, changes, news) to all breakout rooms via meeting chat.

   - To create an announcement, go to the ellipsis in the **Breakout rooms** pane and click **Make an announcement**

   - Type your announcement in the pop-up box and click **Send**

   - The message is flagged **IMPORTANT** in the breakout room chat so anyone in the room can see and respond to it, for example @ mentioning the organiser to get their attention if required.

2. Access the chat for each breakout room via the chat icon in the Teams app bar. You don't necessarily need to join a room to take part in a conversation.

3. Join any breakout room at any time. You *cannot*, however, be in all rooms at once.

   - To join a breakout room, click its ellipsis, and select **Join room**.

     Note: There is no warning that you are entering the room. It is considerate to announce that you have joined so everyone knows you are there. Or to send a chat message before you join.

4. Record a breakout room session.

- To start a recording in a breakout room, you need to be in it. In the meeting toolbar, click the ellipsis, then click **Record**.
- There is currently no way to set all breakout rooms to start recording automatically upon opening.

5. Access all chats, files, and recordings from every room. Only you have permission to do this.

Close breakout rooms

To bring all participants back to the main meeting when the breakout period is over, click **Close rooms** in the Breakout rooms pane. This will notify all the meeting participants that they are being asked to leave the breakout rooms.

> ⚠️ You should close the breakout rooms BEFORE ending the main meeting. If you don't, the meeting rooms will remain active.

After the meeting is over…

Participants who signed in (not Guests):

- can still see the breakout room chat, but will not be able to add to it.
- can see any files shared within the breakout room.
- can find whiteboards shared in the breakout room via the Whiteboard app.

Persistent meeting rooms and assignments

Rooms and participant assignments are **persistent**, meaning that once set up, the organiser can keep the same rooms and allocations for a series of recurring meetings. Once the organiser has created the rooms and made the initial assignments, the same settings will apply in each meeting until the organiser changes them.

Further information and help

- Create and manage breakout rooms during class meetings – Microsoft support
- Overview of Breakout Rooms – Microsoft Teams Blog
- Breakout rooms in Microsoft Teams – video introduction
- How to use the New Breakout Rooms in MS Teams – video tutorial
- Guide to Teams breakout rooms

For further guidance on using MS Teams, visit our MS Teams resource on Toolkit, or contact the IT Service Desk: https://myit@abdn.ac.uk

Please remember

Information or files you post on a Teams site may be available to other team members. Teams is for communication related to your job role and should not be used for personal chat not related to your work. Information you record on Teams could be disclosed in response to a freedom of information request or to someone you refer to in Teams chat. Consider the appropriateness of what you record; only record what is relevant and necessary; and do not share anything that impacts on the privacy of individuals. If you are unclear about how and where to appropriately record information, please contact the Information Governance Team at dpa@abdn.ac.uk.

Appendix

Collaborate/MS Teams comparison

	Collaborate	Teams
Term	Breakout Group	Breakout Room
Limits	For < 250 attendees Up to 20 groups	Up to 50 Breakout Rooms
Set number of groups/rooms	Yes – 2 groups default – add others	Yes – asks for number
Control	Can have multiple moderators with control over Breakout groups	Only the one organiser
Rename rooms	Yes	Yes
Allocation	Automatic or manual	Automatic or manual
Allocation differences	Can allocate yourself to a group Auto allocate is similar except that if you change number of rooms attendees are auto allocated again. [If groups change people are reallocated automatically rather than having to do manually]	Auto allocate only works when people are already in the main meeting. If others join, you have to manually add them to rooms. If you add another room it won't automatically re-allocate
Start	Start	Start rooms Can open/close individual rooms
Delay	Minimal pause when move happens	There is a delay opening rooms There is a delay closing rooms
Once attendee is moved	It is clear to attendee which room they are in	Attendees can see the room name at the top of the window (or by tapping the screen on a mobile device)
Movement during meeting	Can allow attendees to switch groups Organiser can move attendees or remove completely	Organiser can move attendees between rooms
Share slide with…	Share panel – share with groups – share with all groups or just individuals Files: PPT; PDF or image	Not so easy to share a file directly. Have to go into each room to share file or give instruction in a different way. Can't share same presentation to multiple groups – would have to delegate.
Visit each and main room	Join group (door icon) Join Main room to go back	Join room Return to come back to main room Or click other rooms (if open) and choose Join Room.

	Collaborate	**Teams**
Guests	Guests can be added to a collaborate room via a link and can be allocated to breakout groups	Guests can be added to a Teams meeting via a link and can be allocated to breakout rooms
Attendees can…	Breakout groups are designed for group collaboration. Every attendee in the group is a presenter. This means that all attendees (including guests) can share the whiteboard, files, and applications with the rest of their group.	Every attendee in the group is a presenter. This means that all attendees can share the whiteboard, files, and applications with the rest of their group. Permissions are independent from those in main room – so might just be attendee in main room but in breakout room will be able to present. Guests cannot use whiteboards.
Recording	Groups are not recorded	Depending on device, attendees can record in breakout rooms. The recording sits in Chat history.
Chats	Everyone chat Individual chats Moderator only chat Group chats	Main room chat Breakout room chat
Announcement	Chat panel	Make Announcement
End	End breakout groups using Stop icon in share panel or in attendees panel	Close individual room – 10 sec warning Or Close rooms Note: End Meeting **does not** close breakout rooms so make sure to close rooms first!
Afterwards	Files need to be saved back to main from group at end. From Share Files - Move to main room files	Organiser and attendees can find files that were used in room in chat. Whiteboard can be found in Whiteboard app by attendees. Attendees can also take image of whiteboard worked on before leaving breakout room.
Support	- Blackboard help - CAD training package	- Microsoft Help - Microsoft Tech Community Blog