



Market Screener

Microsoft : Planning virtual office parties? Microsoft Teams introduces holiday-themed Together mode scenes and backgrounds

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Office holiday parties and team celebrations look a bit different this year. I've heard from customers that you're looking for new ways to connect as a team and celebrate in the holidays, even if you can't be together in-person. To make virtual office holiday parties and meetings more festive, we're announcing new experiences in Microsoft Teams including **new holiday-themed Together mode scenes** and **custom backgrounds**. We're also **announcing the availability of breakout rooms**, which make it easy to mix and mingle during a virtual holiday party, and sharing our tips for making virtual holiday gatherings more fun.

New Together mode scenes

Together mode in Microsoft Teams reimagines meeting experiences to bring people closer together even when you're apart. Back and forth conversation feels more natural, and our [research](#) shows Together mode reduces meeting fatigue. Our new winter wonderland Together mode scenes add a dash of holiday spirit that's perfect for hosting a virtual holiday party with your team.

In addition to new holiday scenes, we are also announcing the availability of a new set of Together mode scenes, rolling out now, that you can use any time of the year that transport your team to a variety of settings including a **coffee shop, conference room, classroom, and more**. Halo fans can even gather for their next important meeting in the United Nations Space Command. With these new scenes, it will feel easier than ever for your team to do everything from tackling a tough problem to hosting a holiday party.

To [get started](#), once you are in your Microsoft Teams meeting, **select Together mode** from the drop-down menu, then **click the small pencil** in the left-hand corner of the screen to choose a scene (Together mode requires at least five people in your meeting).

New custom backgrounds

We've also created a set of new holiday-themed custom backgrounds for standard meetings and video calls. To add a new custom background, simply download the backgrounds you like-[holiday backgrounds are available here](#). Then, while you're setting up your video and audio before joining a meeting, select **Background effects**, click **Add new**, and then select a background to upload from your computer. More detailed guidance [can be found here](#).

Breakout rooms

We are also excited to announce breakout rooms will be available in Microsoft Teams this week. Breakout rooms make it easy to divide your meetings into sub-groups to facilitate smaller discussions, brainstorming sessions, learning groups, and even holiday mixers.

Organizers can jump in between meetings on their own, deliver announcements to all breakout rooms at once, and bring everyone back to the main meeting at any time. And unique to Microsoft Teams, breakout rooms can be initiated both in Microsoft Teams channels and in Microsoft Teams meetings to give you flexibility on how you want to meet. Breakout rooms are especially great this time of year for mixing and mingling and playing games during a virtual holiday party. [Learn how to get started with breakout rooms here.](#)

Tips for a great virtual holiday party

Now that you've set the scene for a great holiday gathering in Microsoft Teams, I also want to share some tips from our in-house remote work expert, Marissa Salazar for a great virtual holiday party. Marissa started working remotely for Microsoft Teams long before the rest of us in March. In that time, she's developed a knack for making online meetings more fun. I also included tips inspired by some of our customers who are using Microsoft Teams to stay connected this holiday season in unique ways.

1. Festive attire: Part of the fun of a holiday party is dressing up. This doesn't have to be forgone just because the party is virtual. In your invite, suggest a dress code. Maybe your office vibe is to go all out with a more formal look, or if going more casual, ask the team to wear their favorite ugly holiday sweater.

2. Food and drinks: Ahead of your party, send your team the recipe-and the ingredients if you're feeling extra festive-for a food, cocktail, or mocktail you can enjoy together during the party. You can also turn this into an activity by making a special drink or meal together over Microsoft Teams, led by one of your talented chef or mixologist teammates.

3. Photobooth: To recreate the classic holiday party photobooth in Microsoft Teams, ask the team to go on a scavenger hunt at their home or office for a few fun items to use as props-a hat, sunglasses, feather boa, their daughter's princess tiara-the crazier the better. Ask the team to pose, then take a few screenshots to share in your Microsoft Teams team to commemorate the moment. For a cohesive look, you can ask team members to choose the same custom background, or better yet, use our new winter wonderland Together mode scene in Microsoft Teams.

You can also consider [using Snap Camera](#) and its festive lenses for digital photobooth props.

4. Games: There are a variety of great online party games that are easy to play with your team using screensharing in Microsoft Teams. Kahoot offers engaging quizzes and challenges. Jackbox Games are the makers of several party games that are great to play together virtually. From speech games like Talking Points to drawing games like Drawful- there are a wide variety of games to suit every taste. Learn more about using [Kahoot and Jackbox Games in Microsoft Teams](#).

5. Breakout into small groups: Holiday parties are often a chance to mix and mingle with people outside of your immediate team. To do so virtually, use new Breakout rooms in Microsoft Teams to split up into smaller groups and get to know each other. To help break the ice, we recommend jumping on a popular trend, the PowerPoint Party. Have the team break out into groups of three or four and ask them to create the funniest, most insightful, or interesting presentation they can think of in just 15 minutes. Then present to the team in just three minutes and the best presentation gets a prize. [Learn more about hosting a virtual PowerPoint party](#).

6. White elephant gift exchange: Take your white elephant gift exchange virtual using [White Elephant Online](#). It's a simple way to reimagine the age-old tradition in a Microsoft Teams meeting. It brings the fun of buying a wild and wacky gift and stealing gifts from your teammates, all from the comfort of your home.

Happy holidays from the Microsoft Teams team. We hope these new experiences and tips bring joy to your workplace and make meetings and office parties more festive this holiday season. And we'd love to hear how you're celebrating the holidays on Microsoft Teams. Share your holiday spirit and ideas using #HolidaysWithTeams.

And if you haven't tried Microsoft Teams, check out our [free version](#). You can host unlimited meetings and holiday gatherings for up to 24 hours¹-so there's no need to cut your holiday fun short.

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