



**How to**

**HOST A VIRTUAL EVENT**

**Panda Ambassadors**



Host an event to bring your community together around an idea, activity or advocacy issue. Whether face-to-face events aren't the best idea at the time or you simply want to bring together people from many different locations, virtual events are an excellent opportunity to get people to take action and to build community.

## Step 1. Decide what kind of event you want to host

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Panda Ambassadors have hosted documentary screenings, presentation, networking events, yoga classes, crafting sessions, and more. Decide what kind of event you want to host based on what you want to accomplish and who you want to attract. Do you want to introduce people to a few basic concepts of environmentalism and WWF's work? Do you want to have a meaningful discussion about a certain issue? Do you want to get to know people who are already active in your local environmental community? Do you want to teach people something that will help them lower their emissions or be a smarter consumer?

For your first time hosting an event as a Panda Ambassador, try thinking of a fun activity that will pique some interest within your community. You can also look at the pre-made Presentations in the [Panda Ambassador Toolkit](#) to use or for topic ideas. As a reminder here are the Presentations that are available to date:

- WWF 101
- Oceans
- The Arctic
- Forests
- Zoonotic Diseases/Pandemics
- Freshwater
- Forests
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- IUU Fishing
- Priority Species
- Wildlife
- Wildlife Crime

You can also take advantage of the [How-to guide on giving presentations](#).

## Step 2. Plan out the logistics

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You've got your *what*, *who*, and *why* figured out, so now it's time to work on the *when*, *where*, and *how*. Run through the event in your mind and make a list of everything—including people and experts—you'll need to make sure it's a success. If you'll need certain experts or people for your event, contact them before you do anything else and make sure they are willing and available to help.

Then, think about what platform would work best for the purposes of your event. If you want to give a presentation, host a discussion or community activity, or even provide space for attendees to take action together, apps like [Zoom](#), [Webex](#) or [Skype](#) will work best. These will allow each participant to feel that they are "entering the room" as they would at an in-person event, rather than just watch a livestream. Note that each of these platforms has a limit to how many participants can join a room using the free version. Remember to keep WWF informed throughout your planning process in case there are additional resources we can provide.

If you want to watch videos or a documentary with your attendees, the above platforms are not a good idea as they don't support smooth video streaming. For films which are on Netflix, you can use the browser extension [Netflix Party](#) to watch the same stream simultaneously (each participant will need their own account). For YouTube, Vimeo or Dailymotion videos, check out [Watch2Gether](#) which also allows participants to turn on their audio and video. Other useful free apps include [Kast](#) and [Tutturu](#).

If you want to share a shorter presentation or message, especially if you have a built up following or audience that tend to engage with your social media posts, you could also just go live on any of your social media accounts and use the built in tools there to communicate with your viewers.

Be sure to plan your event as far in advance as possible—at least a couple of months out for your first event. This will give you plenty of time for promotion and preparation.

For the *how* of the equation, make a plan for any materials, equipment, or expertise you'll need. If you want to host a documentary screening, for example, you'll need permission to show the film (this shouldn't be an issue, as most documentary filmmakers encourage the public to hold screenings; just check the documentary website for more info). You also might want to invite the filmmaker or subject matter experts to discuss the film after the showing. Consider how to make your event [accessible to all](#).

And perhaps most importantly – you'll want to make sure you have a good internet connection!

### Step 3. Contact WWF

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Once you have the basics of your event planned, fill out a [project submission form](#) to let us know what you're thinking and what supplies, materials, and support you could use from WWF. We'll look at your information and get back to you in a couple of days.

### Step 4. Promote your event

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Decide who the perfect audience is for your event—think about what places they go to, what websites they look at, what social media apps they are most active on, and where they get their information. Those are the places you'll want to promote your event.

Creating an event page on Facebook is always a good place to start, but don't stop there! Design a digital flyer using a free website like [Canva](#) with all of the event information (including Zoom meeting info or a short URL to the Facebook event; make it easy to follow). Tag your friends in promotional social media posts. Contact local blogs and community websites and ask them to include your event in their calendars. Ask local environmental, civic, or school organizations to promote your event in newsletters and on their websites.

Come up with an invitation list—including local VIPs if appropriate—and invite them to your event. Send them an email, or consider sending a formal invite through the mail.

### Step 5. Prepare and Practice

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While you're promoting your event, work on your detailed plan for how the session will go. Collect your materials and confirm (and confirm again!) with your experts and special guests.

**Sketch out a script for your event.** Virtual events can feel like there is more to handle all at once because of all the different things you need to keep track of with your event platform, and because once participants “arrive”, you only see their expectant faces rather than their relaxed body language which would normally let your brain read the room much better. However, even just a loose script can help you feel much more comfortable and confident. Note down your different cues, like making sure your mic is unmuted but everyone else is muted, or when you’d want to advance your slide, or perhaps when you’d want to ask the audience a question.

If you are using a webinar platform like Zoom, enlist a friend to help you with the technical aspects, so you can focus on running your event. While you speak, your friend can make sure the recording button is pressed or that any important comments in the chat box are flagged.

**Get familiar with the platform you’re using.** Do a test run and learn what its different features are – it’ll make everything a lot more breezy during your event!

**Think about how to keep your audience engaged.** Open with a question that everyone can answer in the chat, like asking people to introduce themselves with their name, gender pronouns and location, or perhaps asking everyone what their favorite animal is. Think about creating engaging polls that can pop up at different moments during your event (most webinar platforms have built-in poll tools that you can set up in advance or on the spot). These can be fun ice-breakers or smart ways to get a read of your audience. They’re also great ways to make sure everyone is paying attention. For example, if your presentation is about forests, you can do a pop up quiz with a basic fact, or ask people when the last time they visited a large forest was. You can also ask people to use the “raise your hand” function to if they believe in a statement that would get them to feel more connected with your topic (e.g. “Raise your hand if you think the world needs stronger action against climate change!”).

**Be innovative.** If you want to go even bigger, think about creative ways to get your attendees to feel connected to the theme of your event. Are there other apps or websites you can use during your event? For example, you could use an app like [Mural](#) or simply Zoom’s whiteboard feature to get everyone to brainstorm together or create an artistic piece together. You could also stream your webinar to social media for a larger reach. Can your audience benefit from discussing the topic at hand in smaller groups? Test out Zoom’s feature for break-out groups! Or maybe, for smaller events, you can send your participants a small packet of materials that they can use during and after your presentation in order to be most impactful (e.g. postcards they can send to legislators, or a worksheet that they can fill out as they follow along).

On the day of the event, test your tech in advance and run through your script. Once it’s time to go live, don’t stress it! Your participants are excited to be there.

## Step 6. Make the most of your event

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Hosting an event takes a lot of hard work and can be stressful, but don’t forget to enjoy yourself. You’ve prepared everything; you’ve got this! Stick with the plan and have fun. Interact with your attendees and thank them for coming. If you hit any bumps in the road, roll with them. Improvise solutions and keep

the event moving. Your participants will be especially understanding because hosting virtual events is new to all of us!

One thing you'll want to do, either formally with a virtual sign-in sheet or informally in the chat, is to collect attendees' contact information if you don't already have it. This is so you can invite them to future events or let them know about other WWF engagement opportunities. Maybe you can connect with them on social media or have them fill out a Google form if they're interested in your future events.

Remember that the connections you make with your attendees will matter, even if they aren't in person!

## **Step 7. Thank anyone who helped**

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After the event, send a thank you to anyone in your community who helped make your event a success. This includes your subject matter experts, the owners or managers of the space, anyone who helped with preparation or on the day, and any VIPs who attended. Sending a real thank-you card in the mail is the best option. Let them know how much you appreciated their time and help, and that you'd love to keep working with them on future projects.

## **Step 8. Share your experience**

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Log on to the Panda Ambassador Facebook group and let everyone know how it went. Was the attendance level what you were expecting? Did people seem to enjoy it? What would you do differently next time? What worked particularly well? Share your experience and see if you can answer questions from any Ambassadors who are planning a similar event.