

Running The Marriage Course Online



If churches are not able to physically run The Marriage Course (TMC), we recommend moving it online! Running TMC online can be an incredible way to reach more couples, both in and out of the church, as we are not bound by a physical location.

All the same principles of a regular Marriage or Pre-Marriage Course apply when you are hosting it online. There might be some things we can only experience face-to-face, but there are also new possibilities in the digital space that can possibly enhance our experience of the course.

Step 1

Choose your video conferencing platform

Step 2

Schedule your sessions

Step 3

Select your team

Step 4

Invite guests to your course

Step 5

Set your weekly agenda

Step 6

Host a training session for your team online (and send them training videos)

Step 7

Start your course!

Step 8

Follow up

Step 1

Choose your video conferencing platform and decide whether to buy a proper camera, lights and other equipment. We'd recommend using Zoom Pro over the other programmes; learn more about how to use Zoom on the final page of this guide.

SAVE

Google Hangouts, Skype
Laptop's inbuilt webcam *
Good and stable Wifi
Natural lighting *
Webcam at eye level *
Laptop's internal mic

SPLURGE

Zoom – Pro account *
720p resolution webcam
LAN cable or 5G hub *
Ring lights
Tripod and camera
External mic (<600 ohms) *

* We recommend

Step 2

Schedule your sessions. If you are in the middle of your Marriage or Pre-Marriage Course and transitioning to online, then we would recommend sticking with your current time and date.

If you have yet to launch your course, you might find the best time for your online TMC to be different than a live group gathering. For couples who are parents, hours when their kids are napping or sleeping might be good times to meet.

If you have a big enough team, you might choose to offer multiple times throughout the week to host TMC, which is an added benefit of a virtual space.

Step 3

Select your team.

Hosts: This is the same as an in-person course. You will need a host couple (or individual) who can welcome the group online and facilitate the evening conversationally. The hosts' energy is essential and makes the experience uplifting and fun!

Tech: This is someone who is able to help administrate the zoom call, from setting it up to sharing their screen to play the TMC videos, pausing for conversations, playing music and a countdown clock during conversations and providing any helpful information in the chat box on the side of the call.

Prayer team: It's helpful to have a few people on the call either before or during the session to provide prayer support for the session. Interceding to God to make sure everything runs smoothly and that couples are having poignant conversations is probably the most important job out there!

Step 4

Invite guests to your course. This can be via email, Whatsapp, text message or on social media.

We also recommend that you register and publish your course on our Marriage Course Finder: themarriagecourse.org/find-a-course

When communicating the details of your online TMC, always remember to include the unique video conferencing call link along with the date(s) and time(s).



Step 5

Set your weekly agenda. We recommend you include the following key elements:

- Team briefing & prayer
- Start the video call for guests
- Encourage each couple to do something special with their room—whether that’s lighting a candle or having a meal or snacks on hand while they’re watching the series
- Ensure the couples have their Guest Journals
- Watch the session episode together, sharing your screen to play the video
- Pause the video at the set times to allow couples to have their conversations
- Set countdown timer then resume playing the video
- End on time but linger online for anyone who might want to reach out to you
- Follow up with an email (see Step 8)

Sample weekly agenda:

7:30pm	Team briefing and prayer
7:45pm	Welcome guests
7:50pm	(Optional) Fun ice breaker or an interview with a couple
8:00–9:40pm	Play episode, pausing for conversations (the new remake episodes will tell you how long to pause for)
9:40pm	End session and remind guests to do Continuing Conversations later in the week

Step 6

Train your team. We want all course leaders and helpers confident in their ability to use whichever video conferencing platform you choose. A few key tips:

- **Host or Tech:** Have all your resources ready on your computer desktop; make sure the episode is downloaded and ready to play, your music is ready, and you have a timer on hand
- In your weekly team briefing and prayer, ensure helpers have conference call links, session talks and conversation prompts
- Hosts and helpers to ensure good and stable internet connection, look presentable, declutter your environment checking what the camera will pick up in the background, and close all other applications on your computer
- Encourage couples to be on the same screen if possible and to ID themselves (eg. Janice and Luke)
- Hosts **unmute** all guests at the beginning to facilitate some natural conversation between the group but then **mute** everyone throughout the entire session to ensure conversations are kept private
- Use the chat feature to aid discussion and create connection points



Step 7

Start your course! Many of the same principles for hosting a TMC course apply online, but there are some nuances to the online space that we want to highlight to give everyone the best experience.

- Your energy as the host is essential! Welcome everyone verbally as they join the group. Ask: "How are you?" Make it friendly and personal. Don't worry if people are late. Say: "So glad to see you!"
- Make the point that because this is being conducted online, there could be a chance that the quality of the call will not be as good. Ask for guests' patience and grace.
- There is no meal time online, but you can still have couples set the mood in their own homes. Make sure they are comfortably seated close together and try to highlight and celebrate if anyone's done something to create a special ambience for their date night together.
- Assume guests don't understand technology and expect to over-communicate about how to turn on their video, when to mute or unmute, how to use the chat, etc.
- Be sure to take advantage of the chat feature. Share additional comments on the video, GIFs, emojis, etc.

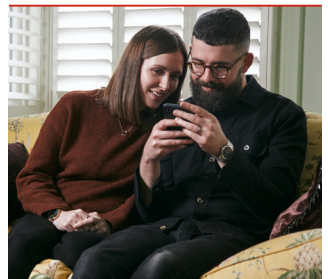
INSIDER TIP

Running TMC online might result in guests having a lower commitment level because it doesn't cost them anything to participate. You might want to think about gifting and mailing them the physical guest journals. It communicates, 'We are investing in you, so we hope you will invest in this journey.'

Step 8

Follow up with your guests. Thank the group for their time, remind them to do Continuing Conversations before the next session, and include the call link for the next meeting. You might also want to share the episode with the guests so that couples can review it by themselves again later in the week.

We are praying for you and your Marriage Course! Have other questions? Please contact us at hello@themarriagecourse.org and we will be happy to help



Tips for being a Support Couple online

Introduction

We've put together some quick tips for how to be a Support Couple remotely, to help you make it a great experience for your guest couples and for yourselves.

Watch the video of Nicky and Sila sharing the tips [here](#) – alternatively, simply check out the summary below.



1. Watch the latest training

Make sure you've watched the new support couple training videos. All these same principles apply as much for connecting remotely as they do for doing it face-to-face and the videos will help you prepare. You can see these videos on The Marriage Course Builder.

2. Choose an online platform

There are lots of different free video conferencing platforms, such as FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype. Decide which works best for you and your guests.

3. Explain the plan

Email your guest couples to explain that you will go through the couple survey results remotely. Arrange a call of around an hour and a half. Encourage them to get drink or snacks for the call, to help make it feel special.

4. Do not share the report itself

The results of the Couple Survey Report are only to be viewed by you as a support couple to guide your conversation. Sharing the report can have a negative impact on your guest couples.

5. Share couple survey statements

Share the couple survey statements in advance. Your guest couple can either print them out or view them digitally on a screen.

6. Sit close together on screen

On the call, be sure to sit close enough so that you are both visible together, and also make sure they do the same. It might be important for you to see their body language during the conversation.

7. Introduce yourselves

Start by introducing yourselves if you haven't already met them and then make small talk. Ask questions to get them talking. If only one of them is talking, direct your questions to the other.

8. Have survey statements to hand

As you start to discuss the Couple Survey report, check that they have the list of the Couple Survey Statements in front of them, either printed out or on a separate device.

9. Get them talking

Your main aim is to get them to talk to each other about issues that either they haven't discussed or where they have different views.

How to run The Marriage Course online using Zoom Pro

Scheduling your session

1. Sign up for a Zoom Pro account (you will need it in order to host a meeting over 40 minutes long)
2. Schedule a meeting – see screencap here ▶
3. Once you hit the 'Schedule' button below, Zoom will offer you an invitation link which you can then copy and paste into an email or a message to send to your guests

My Meetings > Schedule a Meeting

Schedule a Meeting

Topic: The Marriage Course (online)

Description (Optional): We invite you and your partner to join us for The Marriage Course online. Watch from the comforts of your own home. Be sure to have your guest journals ready for conversations with your partner.

When: 03/25/2020 7:00 PM

Duration: 2 hr 0 min

Hosting on Zoom

1. Prior to the call

- Be sure you have your video pulled up as well as a platform to play the music you want during the conversation times.
- Make sure your computer is placed at a good angle with good lighting

2. Begin the call

- Click the zoom app from your computer
- Go to the meeting you have scheduled, click 'Start'
- Click the upwards arrow on the right side of the 'mute' button. Click 'test speaker and microphone' to make sure your mics are working correctly.
- People may begin coming into the call. If the guests don't know each other well, we recommend keeping their mics muted but if they are friends, we recommend unmuting them for a few minutes of banter
- Introduce yourselves and start the session

3. Play video

- To play the video, click the green 'share screen' button and then select the video from your desktop.
- Click 'share computer sound' so that it is only playing the sound that comes from your computer and not from your room
- Play the video

4. Pause for conversation

- Once the video hits a Conversation mark, press Pause and switch over to your music app to play music. Ask everyone to turn off their video and make sure they are muted and start the timer
- Once the time is up, switch back to video on your share screen and press play

5. End the call

- Finish off by saying goodbye, share a reminder for the next TMC Online session
- Click the red 'End Meeting'

For a more detailed guide on how to use the specific features of zoom, please click here:

[Zoom Video Tutorial](#)