

VIRTUAL EVENT SAFETY

Tips and Best Practices

Virtual events bring people together! From meet and greets with comics creators, to online comics conventions, to programs for children, parents, and educators — and so much more — it's possible to reach your patrons beyond the aisles of your store, library, or classroom!

CBLDF is here with tips and resources to help you build your community and make your virtual events safe for everyone!



Art by Derek Charm

Just as you practice safety procedures in your classroom, library, or store, it is important to set yourself up for safe virtual events. You want to:

- **know** how to navigate your platform ahead of time to problem solve as needed.
- **protect** the privacy and safety of participants.
- **prepare** to respond to inappropriate behavior from a participant.
- **understand** legislation protecting minors, such as the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

Fortunately, you can take steps to make online events safer for yourself and your patrons!

Choosing and Understanding Your Platform

The process for choosing a virtual event platform is pretty similar to the one for physical events. It has a lot to do with what you want to accomplish. The table on the next page provides some suggestions.

Whatever platform you pick, you need to know how to use the platform to ensure your panelists and attendees get the best — and safest — experience. Take the time to learn the ins and outs of the platform, or enlist the help of someone who already has the knowledge.

Getting Started With Virtual Event Platforms

The more you know about the platform you're using, the better your ability to host a safe and successful event. Check out these getting started guides for some of the most popular platforms:

- Facebook Live: <https://www.facebook.com/facebookmedia/solutions/facebook-live>
- Facebook Stories: <https://www.facebook.com/help/126560554619115>
- Instagram Live: <https://help.instagram.com/292478487812558>
- Instagram Stories: <https://help.instagram.com/1660923094227526>
- Twitter Live: <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-live>
- YouTube Live: https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/9257891?hl=en&ref_topic=9257610
- Zoom: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

Type of Virtual Event	Suggested Platform(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Art Demos › Interviews › Readings › Tutorials › Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Facebook Live › Instagram Live › Videoconferencing software, such as Zoom › Vimeo › YouTube / YouTube Live
Ask Me Anything (AMA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Discord › Reddit › Slack › Twitter
Comic Book Club Meeting	Videoconferencing software, such as Zoom
Live Auctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Facebook Live › Instagram Live
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Virtual Comics Conventions › Webinars 	<p>Live events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Facebook Live › Instagram Live › Videoconferencing software, such as Zoom › YouTube Live <p>Recorded events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Videoconferencing software, such as Zoom › Vimeo › YouTube

Protecting Privacy and Responding to Inappropriate Behavior

General Tips

- › Know how to use your platform and ways to reduce risk on the platform. If you aren't tech savvy, you probably have employees or know people who are. Hit them up for advice!
- › Write and post a public privacy notice on your website / event page. This brief statement should let people know how you collect, use, keep, and share personal information.
 - › This notice is required if your event involves kids under age 13. (More on that later.)
- › Ask employees or trusted volunteers to be moderators. They can help with logistics and / or remove, report, or block troublesome attendees.
- › Set ground rules. Let attendees know how you will deal with people who break the rules, from warnings to removal.
- › Consider having attendees ask questions using comment or Q&A features and having the host read the questions aloud. This eliminates recordings of participants and lets you vet questions or comments.
- › Watch the comments, keeping an eye out for bullying, predatory behavior, suspect links, and doxxing. You can start with warnings, but don't hesitate to remove and report unsafe comments and users.
- › If the behavior of bad actors can't be controlled, shut down and reschedule the virtual event. The safety of your attendees, panelists, and employees should come first.

Social Media

- › An advantage of hosting an event on social media is that you don't have to collect personal information from your attendees.
- › Most social media platforms have age requirements that keep children under the age of 13 from using the platform without parental permission.

Webinars and Videoconferences

- › Consider using a registration form. Registration lets you limit who has access. Some platforms offer registration, or you can use a ticketing website like Eventbrite, Ticketfly, or Brown Paper Tickets.
- › Ask anyone who will be on video to use a digital background or to sit in front of a blank wall. This hides valuables (or messes).
- › Consider shutting off the camera and microphone functions for everyone except panelists. Doing so improves privacy and prevents distractions.
- › Turn off screen sharing for everyone but the host and panelists.
- › At the beginning of the event, explain how to use the platform:
 - › Tell attendees how to control cameras and microphones (if allowed).
 - › Tell them how to comment or ask questions.
 - › Know how different versions of the platform work. For example, the features in the mobile version of a platform may differ slightly from the computer version.
 - › Let everyone know if you are recording the event and how the recording will be shared.
- › Some platforms allow polling, thumbs up/thumbs down, or other interactive features that can help you protect the privacy of participants.
- › If a videoconference attendee has chosen a problematic background, give them a chance to change it. If they refuse to do so or they change back to the problematic background, block them and do not let them participate.

Keeping Kids Safe During Virtual Events

If you're planning a virtual event that will include kids, take some time to learn about the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), a law that protects children under the age of 13. Because of this law, you need parental permission to collect personal information from young children. What kind of information is protected by COPPA? Some examples include (but aren't limited to):

- › full name
- › address and phone numbers
- › email address and screen names
- › Social Security Number
- › audio or video recordings of a child

If you do not have a parent's permission, or the parent takes permission away, you should not let the child participate in your virtual event.

Under COPPA, you need to post a public privacy notice for events involving children under age 13. This is a brief statement on your website or event page that lets people know:

- › if personal information is being collected.
- › who might be collecting information, such as the social network or the platform you plan to use.
- › a description of the information being collected and how it might be used.
- › a description of parental rights, including a process for exercising those rights.

Drafting a privacy notice might seem intimidating, but you really only need to do it once. After, you can use it as a boilerplate for future events, updating as needed. Librarians and nonprofits that run events for youth are a great resource for drafting a privacy notice. Check your public library's website for examples, and reach out for advice.

Zoombombing

Zoom is one of the most popular webinar and videoconferencing platforms, but the increased use of Zoom for social events has revealed several weaknesses. One of those is "Zoombombing," which happens when a person joins a Zoom meeting to disrupt it. They may do so by sharing inappropriate images, racist speech, links to malware, and more. Zoom has settings and features that can help prevent Zoombombing:

- › Use a unique meeting ID. This minimizes the chance that your meeting will be discovered by an unintended participant.
- › Require a password.
- › Require advance registration or make your event invite-only so you can limit who participates.
- › Limit who is allowed to share their computer's screen. Make your panelists co-hosts, and set the share screen function so only hosts can use it.
- › Enable the waiting room feature, which prompts you to manually accept participants to your event and makes it easier to add or remove participants.
- › Once you have started, use the lock meeting function to keep more people from joining.
- › Disable the file transfer function.
- › For the chat feature:
 - › disable private chat between participants.
 - › set chat so attendees can communicate only with the host.
 - › consider disabling chat.
- › Mute, disable video, or remove those who disrupt the meeting.
- › Disable a removed participant from rejoining a meeting.
- › Do not share a meeting link or meeting ID in a public forum.

COPPA does not apply to teenagers or adults, but you should keep their personal information safe as well. When it comes to collecting personal information, consider treating them the way you would a kid under 13. You may want to:

- › Use a platform that doesn't call for the collection of personal information. Facebook Live, YouTube, and similar outlets make it possible for attendees to remain anonymous.
- › Avoid recording video or audio of attendees. Most videoconferencing platforms make it possible to shut off video and audio for everyone but the panelists.
- › Right after the event, delete the personal information that you collected from attendees.

RESOURCES

CBLDF Resources

- › "Tips on Hosting a Virtual Event for Your Store" – CBLDF's guide to hosting great virtual events. <http://cbldf.org/2020/05/tips-on-hosting-a-virtual-event-for-your-store/>
- › "Book Clubs" – CBLDF's guide to hosting a comic or manga book club, including best practices for remote clubs! <http://cbldf.org/book-clubs/>

Privacy

- › "Protecting Privacy in a Pandemic: A Resource Guide" – from the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, this article includes information and links that are useful for anyone interested in maintaining the privacy of their patrons. <https://chooseprivacyeveryday.org/protecting-privacy-in-a-pandemic-resource-guide/>
- › "Virtual Programming and Patron Privacy" – this OIF resource provides tips for ensuring privacy during virtual events for kids. <https://chooseprivacyeveryday.org/virtual-programming-and-patron-privacy/>

COPPA

- › "Complying with COPPA: Frequently Asked Questions" – this FAQ provides in-depth information about COPPA. <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions>
- › "Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule: A Six-Step Compliance Plan for Your Business" – a brief outline for complying with COPPA that includes a useful chart for various scenarios. <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule-six-step-compliance>

Educators

- › "Zoom Access for Schools" – this resource for educators in San Diego County provides information for safety while using Zoom. <https://covid-19.sdcoc.net/distance-learning/zoom>

Businesses

- › "Publishers Share Expectations for Booksellers Planning Virtual Author Events" – this blog post from the American Booksellers Association includes links to several resources that can facilitate planning for virtual events. <https://www.bookweb.org/news/publishers-share-expectations-booksellers-planning-virtual-author-events-577113>
- › "BBB Tip: Writing an Effective Privacy Policy for Your Business' Website" – this piece from the Better Business Bureau includes the basics of privacy policies and links for COPPA compliance. <https://www.bbb.org/article/news-releases/21390-bbb-tip-writing-an-effective-privacy-policy-for-your-small-business-website>

JOIN THE FIGHT!

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the First Amendment rights of the comics art form and its community of retailers, creators, publishers, librarians, educators, and readers. CBLDF provides legal referrals, representation, advice, assistance, and education in furtherance of these goals. Our work is made possible by our members! We have membership plans for donors in every budget, and all of them are tax-deductible. Join today by visiting <http://cbldf.org/member>

Visit cbldf.org for the latest censorship news and more resources supporting the comics community!

Call CBLDF at the first sign of a First Amendment Emergency!
1-888-88-CBLDF • info@cbldf.org



2020 member art by
Matt Wagner

VIRTUAL EVENT SAFETY CHECKLIST

Before the Event

- ☐ Know the platform:
 - ☐ Familiarize yourself with the platform **OR**
 - ☐ Enlist a host who knows how to use the platform.
- ☐ For events involving children under age 13:
 - ☐ Write a public privacy notice.
 - ☐ Post the public privacy notice on your website / event page.
 - ☐ Make sure you have parental permission for participation.
- ☐ Optional: For events involving teens and adults:
 - ☐ Write a public privacy notice.
 - ☐ Post the public privacy notice on your website / event page.
- ☐ Ask employees or trusted volunteers to help moderate the event.
 - ☐ Coordinate with moderators about rules and how they should enforce the rules.

Videoconferencing

- ☐ Set up a registration form.
- ☐ Ask panelists and attendees (if applicable) to sit in front of a neutral background or to use a digital background.

During the Event

- ☐ Explain the basic features of the platform you are using.
- ☐ Describe the format of the event.
- ☐ Explain how attendees can participate.
- ☐ Set ground rules.
- ☐ Describe consequences of rule violation.
- ☐ Moderate the comments and interactions among attendees.
- ☐ Remove attendees who engage in unsafe behavior or violate the rules of the event.
- ☐ If unsafe behavior cannot be controlled, shut down the event.

Videoconferencing

- ☐ Inform attendees whether the event is being recorded.
 - ☐ Do not record events involving children under age 13.

- ☐ Turn off screen sharing for everyone but host and panelists.
- ☐ Optional: Turn off camera and microphone for everyone but host and panelists.
- ☐ Optional: Have attendees communicate questions for panelists to the host or a moderator.
- ☐ Optional: Use functions such as polling or whiteboards to help keep attendee responses confidential.

After the Event

- ☐ Delete personal information collected from anyone under the age of 13.
- ☐ Personal information from teens and adults:
 - ☐ Delete information **OR**
 - ☐ Make sure the information is encrypted and password protected.
 - ☐ Limit the number of people who can access the information.
- ☐ Ask for feedback from staff and panelists.
- ☐ Ask for feedback from participants.
- ☐ If you had to remove someone, consider whether they should be banned from future events.
- ☐ If you decide to ban someone, make sure your employees know.