# Meeting space guide

BigBlueButton (BBB) is the open source conferencing solution that we will be using for our online sessions. It is hosted on Astraea's own servers, it is very safe to use and it respects your privacy.

# Quick overview

Get familiar with capabilities of BigBlueButton by watching these quick overview videos:

- Participants (5:33)
- Presenters (9:15)

Additional video tutorials https://bigbluebutton.org/teachers/tutorials/.

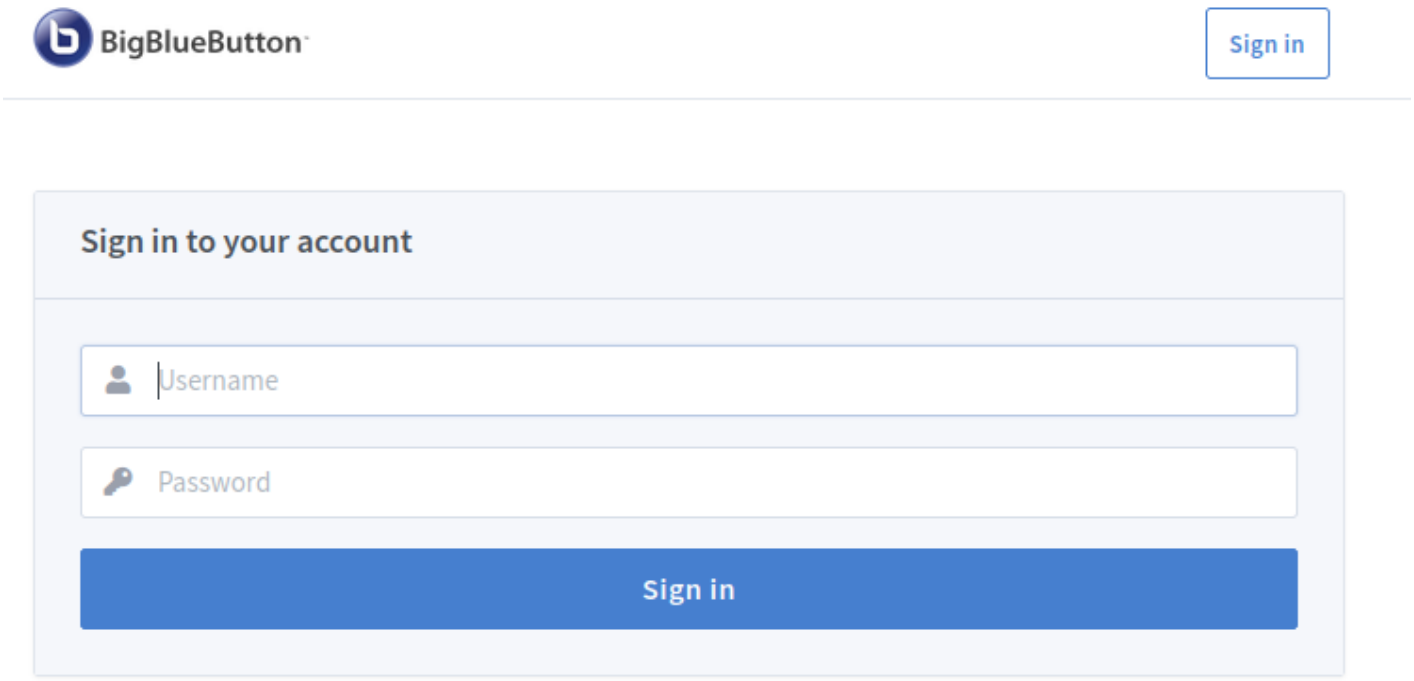
# Tips for participation

- **Sit in a comfortable space**.
- Bring a glass of water, tea or similar to **stay hydrated** (and put it away from the computer to avoid spills).
- **Have your device connected to the electricity source** or make sure you have your battery fully charged.
- If possible **use broadband internet connection** and **connect to your router/access point with a cable**.
- If you are using a VPN you'll have to turn it off, several VPNs block BigBlueButton.
- BigBlueButton runs in the browser. If possible **use the latest version of Firefox browser.**
- BigBlueButton requires a lot of your device's capacity, it will work best if you **close all other tabs in the browser and all other programs running on your device**.
- **Join the sessions before they start**, so we can assist you if you experience any issue.
- Access the sessions with **your real name or nickname**. You won't be able to change your name unless you join the session again.
- **Use headphones with microphone.**
- **Mute your microphone** when entering a session and **unmute only when you want to speak**.
- Activate your camera only if invited, as **too many cameras can make the system slower for everyone**.
- **To exit the session close the browser tab.** You can rejoin the session using the URL that you received.

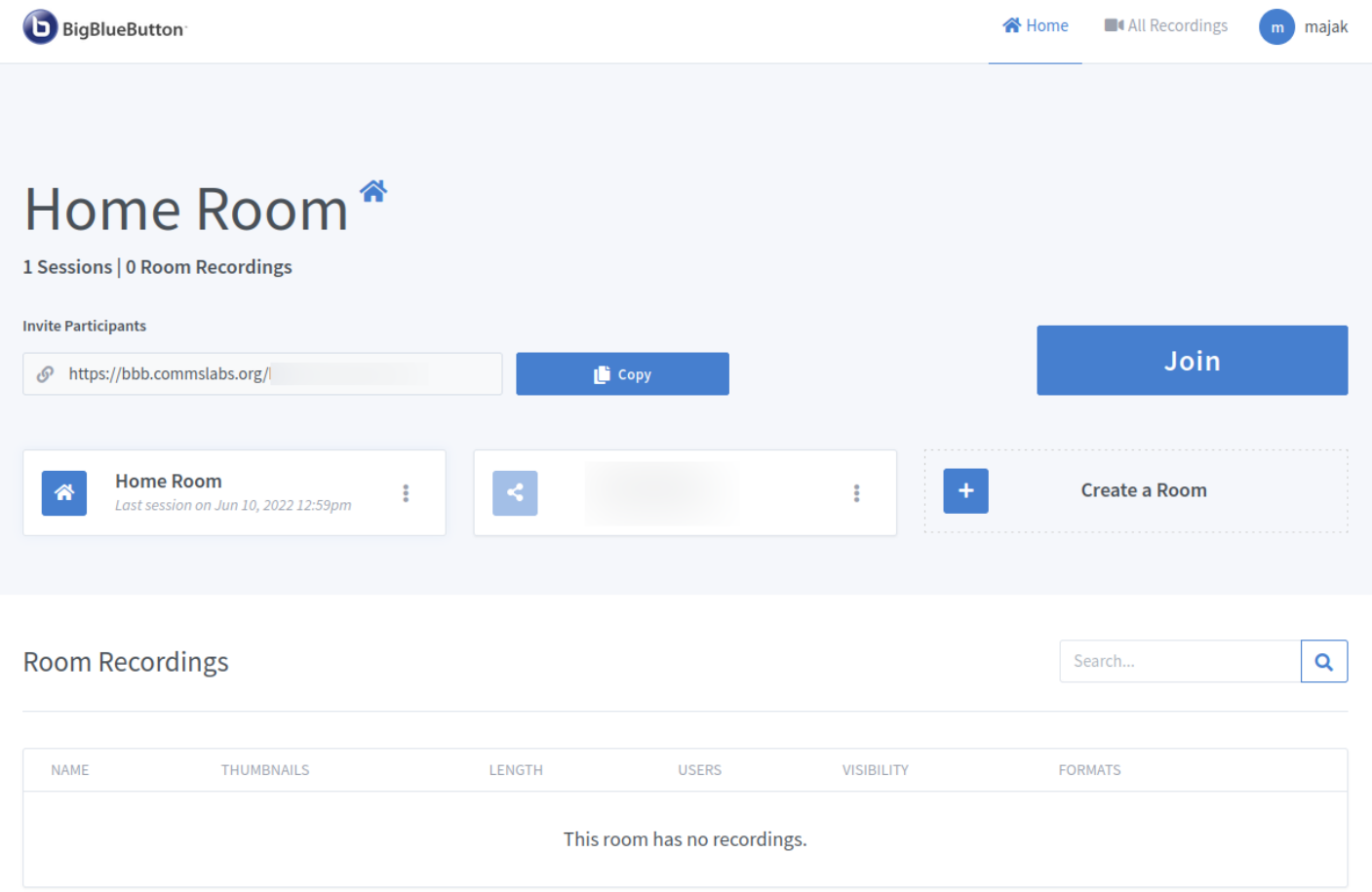
- If you **need a break** during the session, **take it**.

# Create a BigBlueButton session

To create a BigBlueButton session click on Sign In button at https://bbb.commslabs.org/ and enter your username and password.




After login you will see the home screen where you can setup the sessions.




To create a new room, click on Create a room field and fill in the desired settings for the room. When the room is created you can copy and send the meeting link and access code and send it to participants. Meeting room can be opened right away or you can wait until the meeting start time.

create_a_room.gif

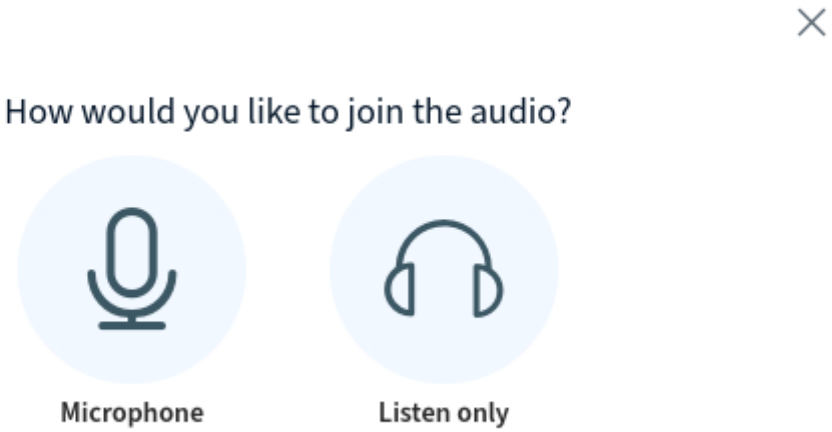
# Join the BigBlueButton session

To use BigBlueButton you just need to **open the session link in your browser** (recommended are **Firefox**, **Chrome** and **Safari**). It works on mobile devices too.

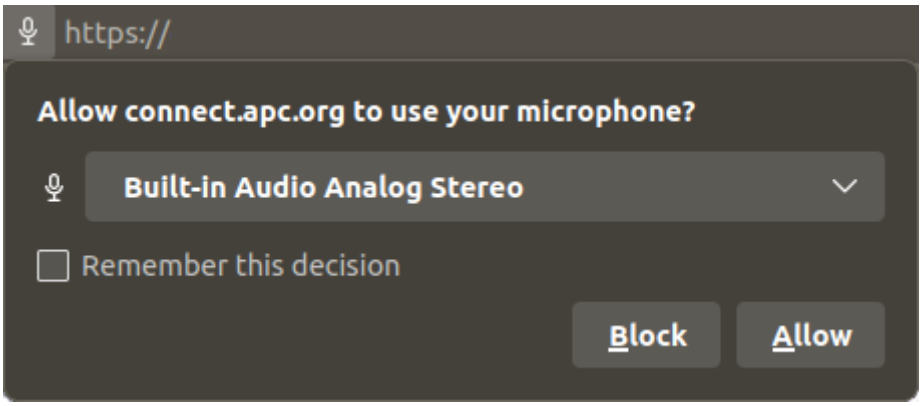
**Warning!** There might be some hiccups with some browsers, especially on phones (in general when a phone goes to "sleep" the browser usually stops working), because each Android manufacturer deals with web browsing differently (iPhone should work fine). **So, if you encounter problems, please be ready to re-enter the session with another browser.**

When you join the session your browser will ask you if you want to join in Microphone or Listen only mode. **Select Microphone** as to be able to interact.

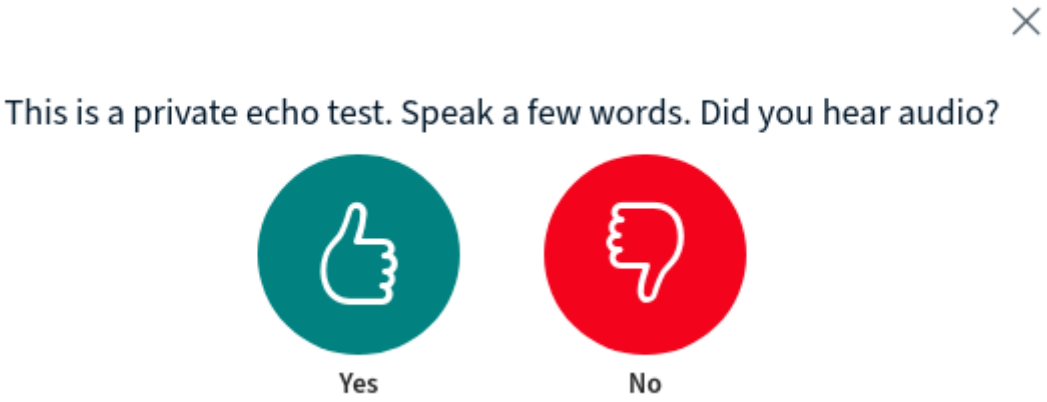
Select **Microphone** in the pop up window.



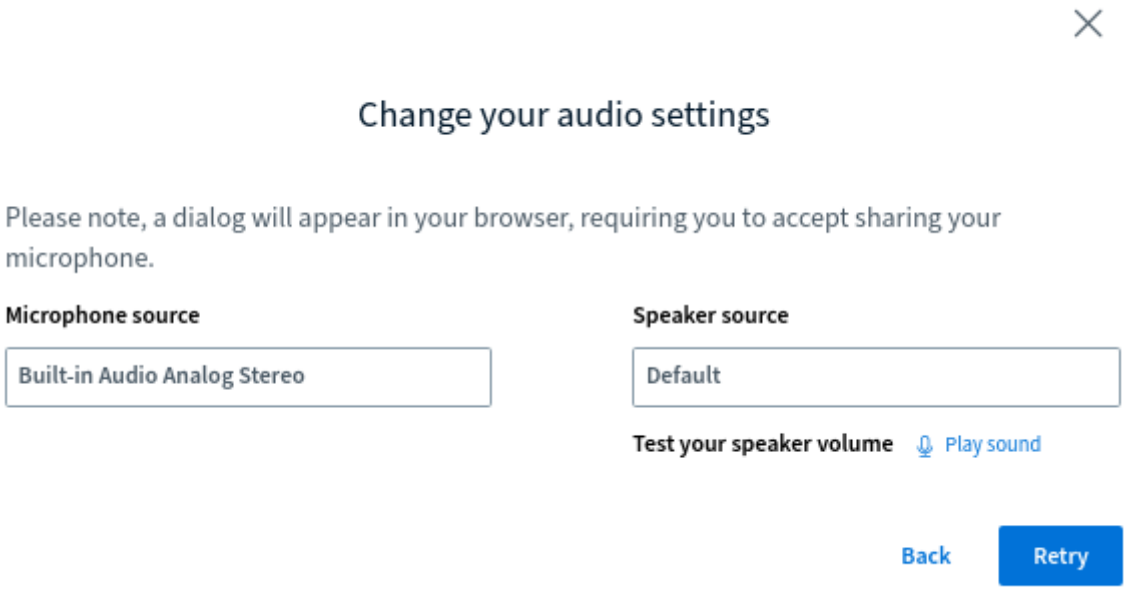

Next you will need to **enable microphone** by clicking Allow button.




Then you will be able to test your microphone with **echo test**.




Speak to test the microphone (no one else will be able to hear you) and if you hear yourself, confirm it by clicking on **Yes** button. If you don't hear yourself select **No** and you will be able to change your audio settings.




You can use headsets but some operating systems might have "drivers" issues, so be ready to use another set of headsets or the internal audio/microphone of your computer.

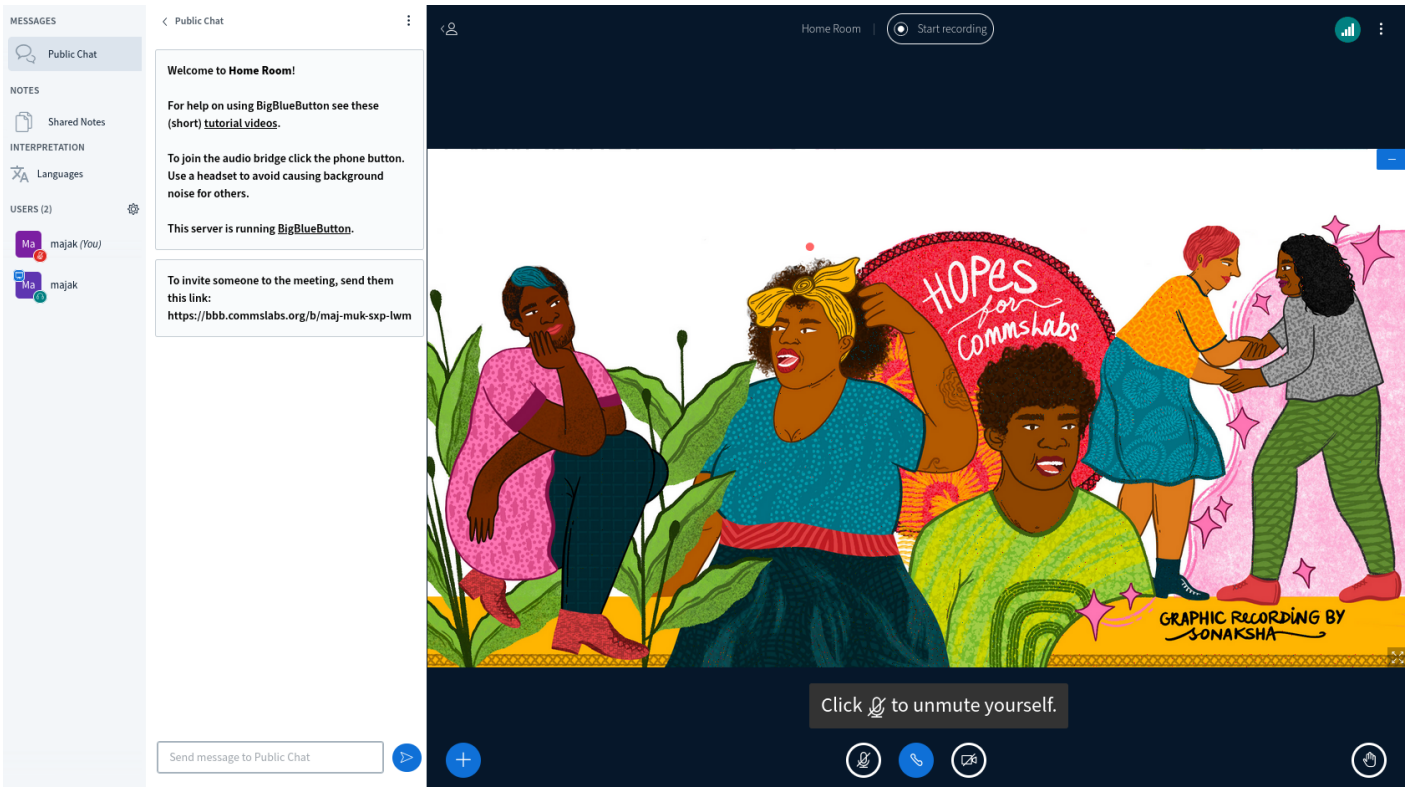
**Next you will join the session.**

**Warning!** Remember not to use the BACK button in the browser, or you will leave the meeting. If you do, just rejoin and go through echo test again. If you have audio issues during the session (others can't hear you or you can't hear them) click on the headset icon to select a different microphone or speaker.

# Overview

Let's review the interface and see where you can find the features you will need the most.

# The interface




On the left side of the screen you can see **participant's list**, **public chat** and access to the shared **meeting notes.**

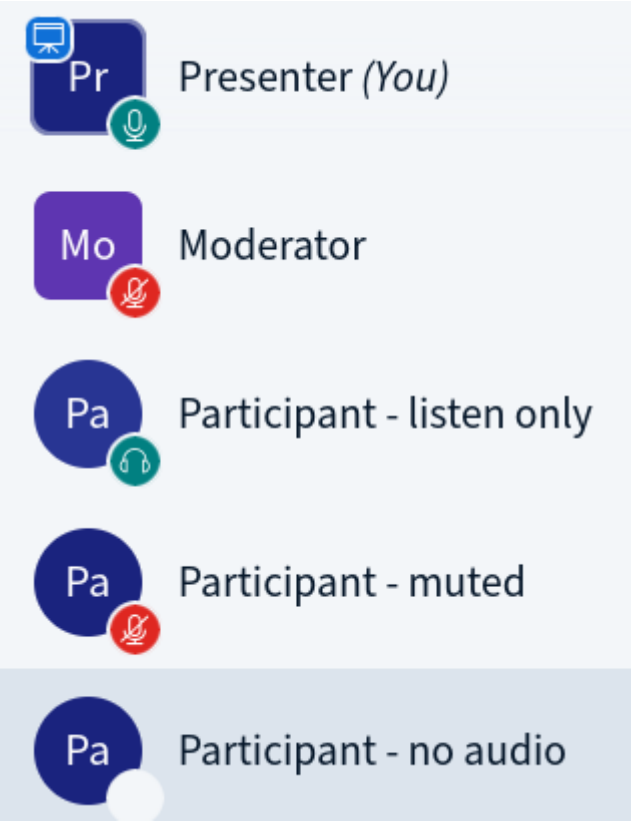
In the middle of the screen you will see different things according to the setup (presentation, videos, shared screen, whiteboard, etc.) and you have a lot of control over your own view of the meeting (more on that below in the Video section).

You can use the **buttons below the presentation** to mute/unmute yourself, leave/join audio, share camera, share your screen, enable interpretation or closed captioning and raise your hand. Some buttons might not be visible due to the settings of the room or your role in the meeting (meeting organizer and presenter have more buttons than participants).

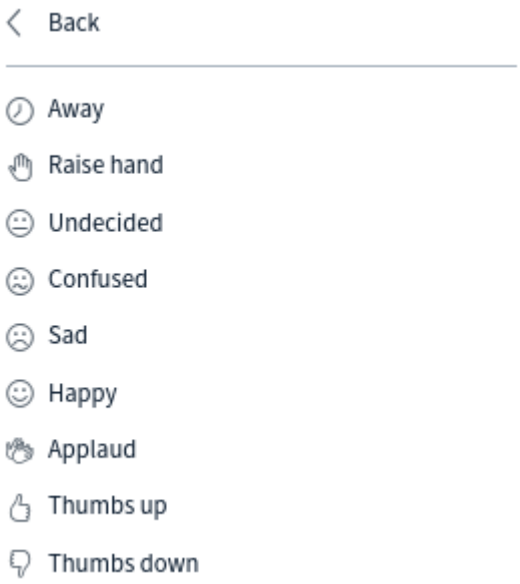
# List of participants

You can see a **list of all participants** in the session on the left hand side of the screen.

Icons will tell you more about the individual's role and their connection status. **Moderators have square icons and participants circular. Presenter is only one and has a little presentation icon added.** A red dot will appear for muted participants and a green one for those who are unmuted. If the icon is white, audio is not enabled yet and the user can't participate in the conversation.




Your own name will be on the top of the list. Click on it to set your status. And a little popup will appear to notify other users about it.




If you click on somebody else's name, you can initiate a private chat (a chat no one else can see). This works even if the person is in another breakout room.

If you are a meeting moderator you can see other features to manage participants, i.e. to make someone presenter, mute/unmute, etc.

# Chat

Chat works like you are used to on other platforms, so we will only mention additional functions that you might need.

- In the chat you can write **only plain text**, but you can use emoticons like :)
- You can also initiate **private chats** with other participants or moderators of the meeting by clicking their name in the Participants list and selecting Private chat.
- Selecting menu in the top right corner of the chat will give you the option to **save the chat** (in .txt format) or copy the contents (to the clipboard).

# Notes

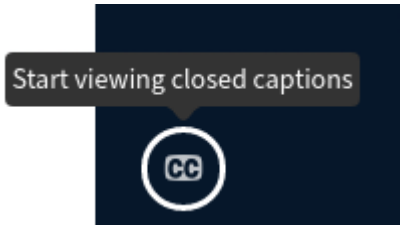
- Shared notes can be added by participants and text exported in multiple formats.

# Control audio and camera

You can use the buttons below the center screen to mute/unmute yourself, reconnect audio (leave and join again), share/unshare camera or share your screen. Some buttons might not be visible due to the settings of the room, and depending if you are meeting organizer, presenter or participant.



## Closed captioning (CC)




If closed captions are enabled (live subtitles) a CC icon will appear at the bottom of your screen. Click to enable it and select font and color of the subtitles.

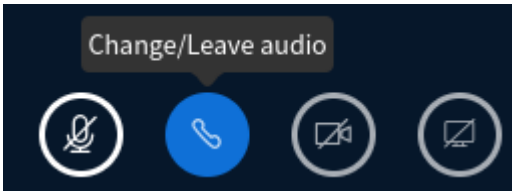
# Mute and unmute your audio

To mute or unmute you can click on the microphone icon. You can also select mute/unmute in your status (by clicking on your name in the list of participants) or press spacebar on your keyboard.

# Reconnect audio

Leaving audio and reconnecting is useful when you encounter issues with your audio, if you connect or change your headphones or when you get back to the main room from a breakout room.

To reconnect audio click on the phone icon and follow the instructions on the screen.



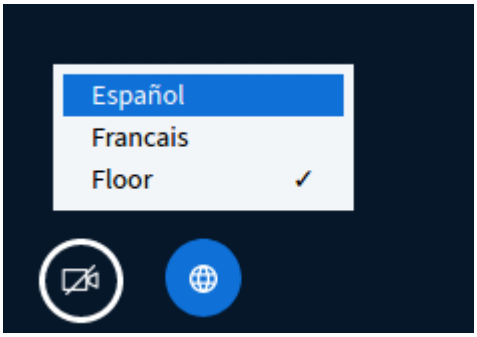

# Share camera

To share your camera:

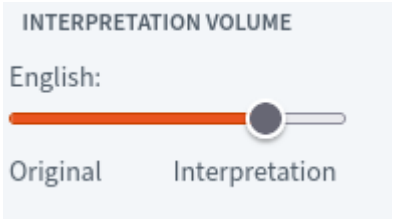
1. click on the **camera icon**,
2. allow browser to access the camera,
3. preview the shared camera image and
4. click on the **Start sharing button**.

# Interpretation

When interpretation is enabled, the blue “globe" icon allows you to choose the language you would like to listen to.




If the language is being spoken by someone in the session, you will hear the original audio. If an interpreter is speaking in that language, you will hear the interpreter's voice as well as the original audio at the background. You can increase interpreter's volume or original audio volume as it best suits you.




When an interpreted language is chosen, a new slider control will appear on the left side menu, above the list of names. This slider allows you to select the volume of the original language vs the interpreted language. This is particularly helpful when a speaker has a very loud microphone or voice and it is difficult to hear interpretation above it.

If a BBB session's audio is being recorded, the recording will only reflect the original audio or “floor".

**Note!** Some participants have indicated that when they switch from one interpreted language to another, they can't hear well, but it will certainly work if you switch to the floor sound first and then to the other language channel.

# Raise hand



If you click the icon to raise hand in the lower right corner, everyone will be aware that you are requesting to participate. Also, your name will show first in the participants list.

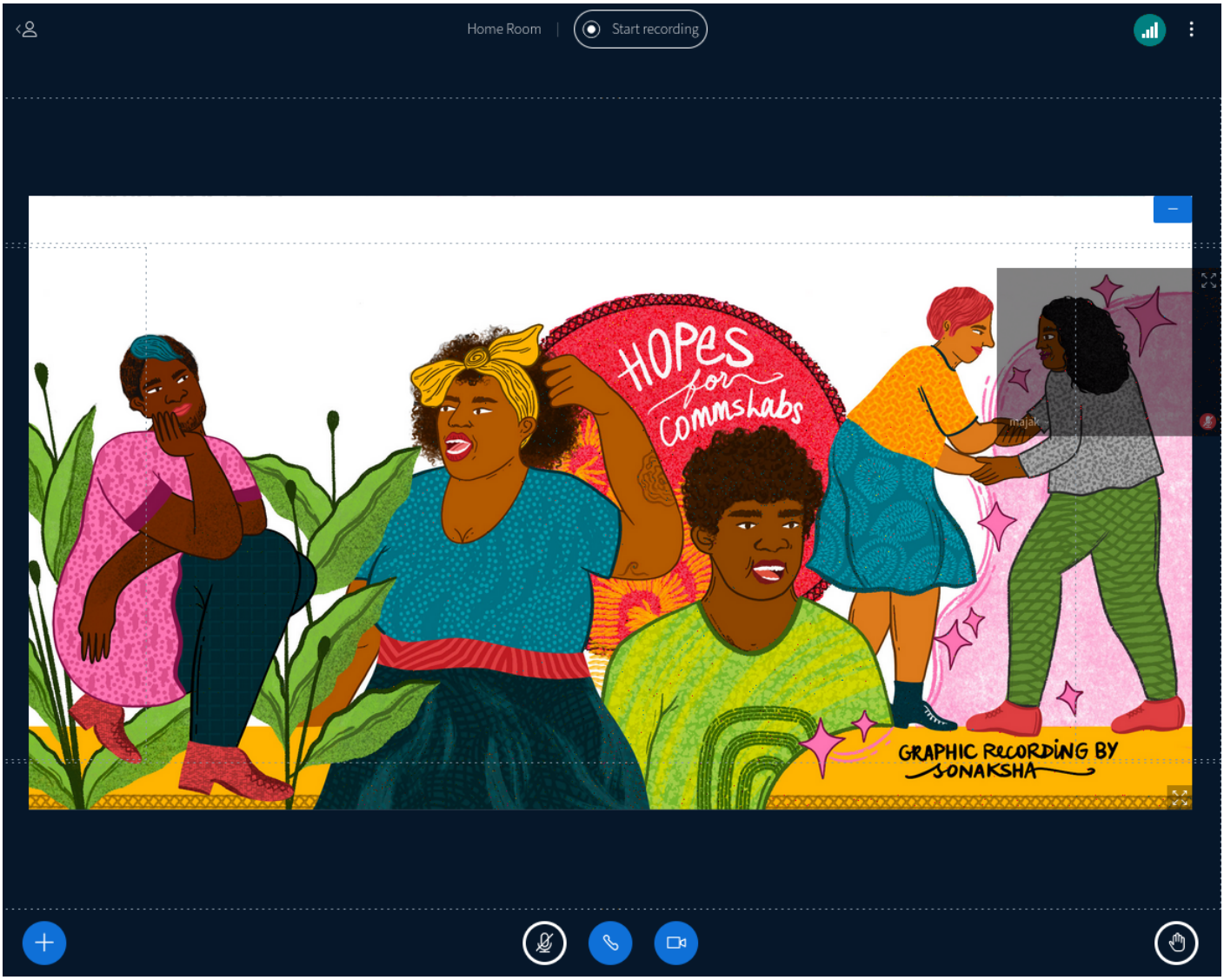
Click on the same icon to lower the hand.

# Adjust what you see

When presentation or cameras are shared, you can adjust how they appear on your screen.

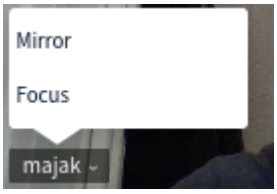
# Camera

If only one camera view is shared with the presentation you can **move the position of the camera view** to top, right, bottom or left side of the presentation. To do so hover the mouse over the video and, when cursor changes into a hand, click and move the video to desired location.



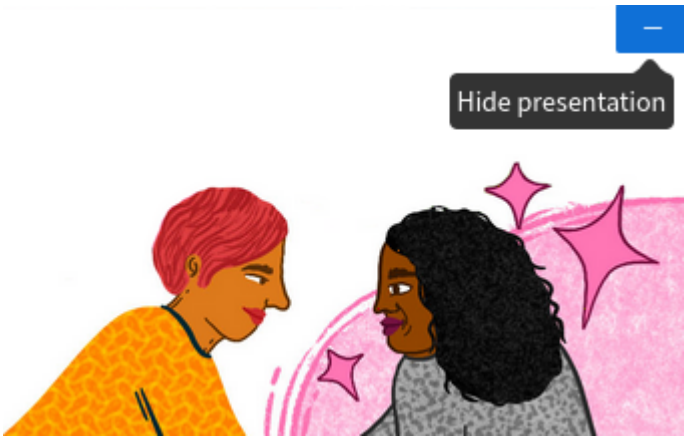

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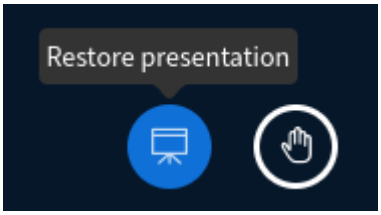



# Presentation

You can minimize the presentation screen to give more space to cameras by clicking on the icon in the top right corner of the presentation.



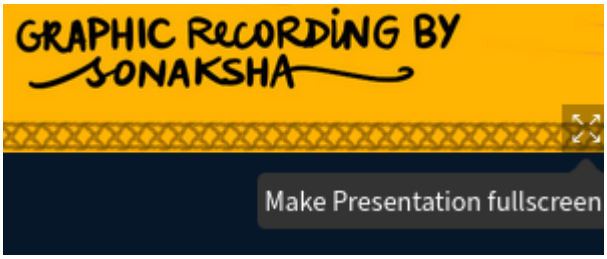

You can see it again by clicking on restore presentation icon in the bottom left of the screen.




To download the presentation click on the icon in the bottom left of the presentation.

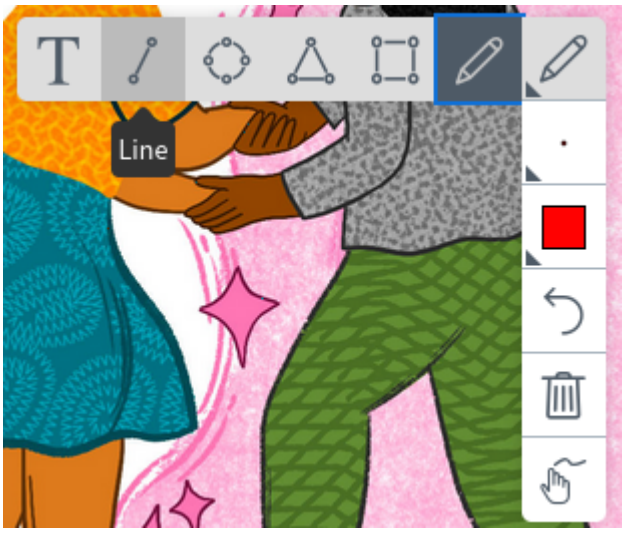



To view the presentation maximized, click on the "Make fullscreen" icon in the right bottom of the presentation.



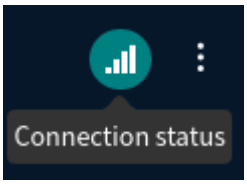

# Interaction with drawing tools

If presenter enables this feature you can use various tools to write and draw on top of the presentation. You can select text, line, various shapes and colors and sizes.

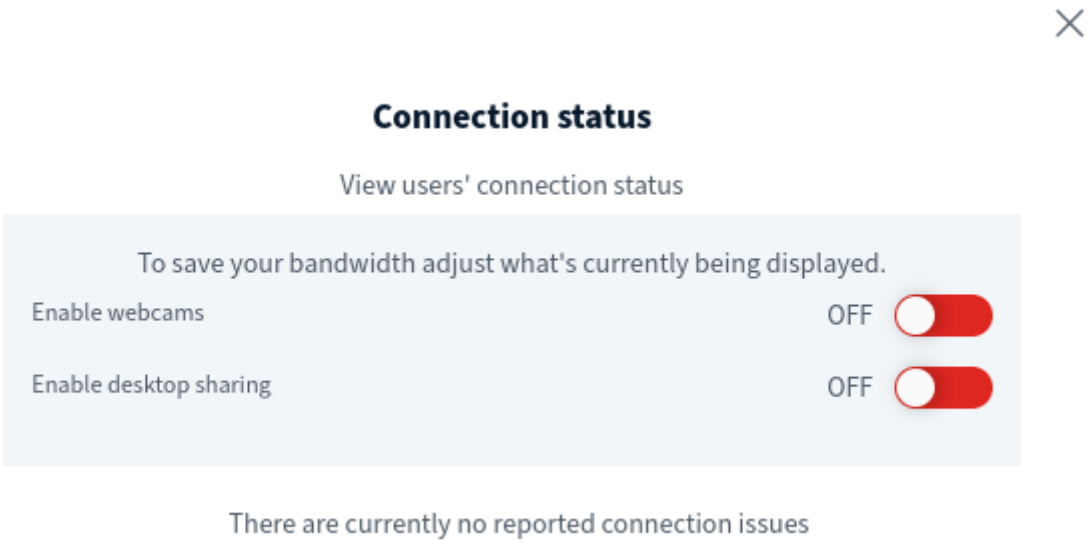



# Connection status

A connection status icon at the top right of the screen allows you to see how good connection you have and adjust data usage. This is especially important for mobile phones on slow connections.

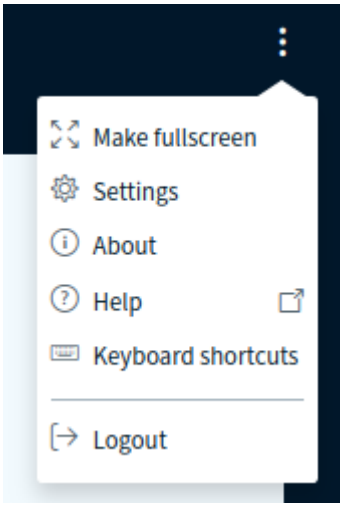



If it becomes red, your bandwidth is not very good at the moment and it is recommended that you click on it and disable cameras and desktop sharing.

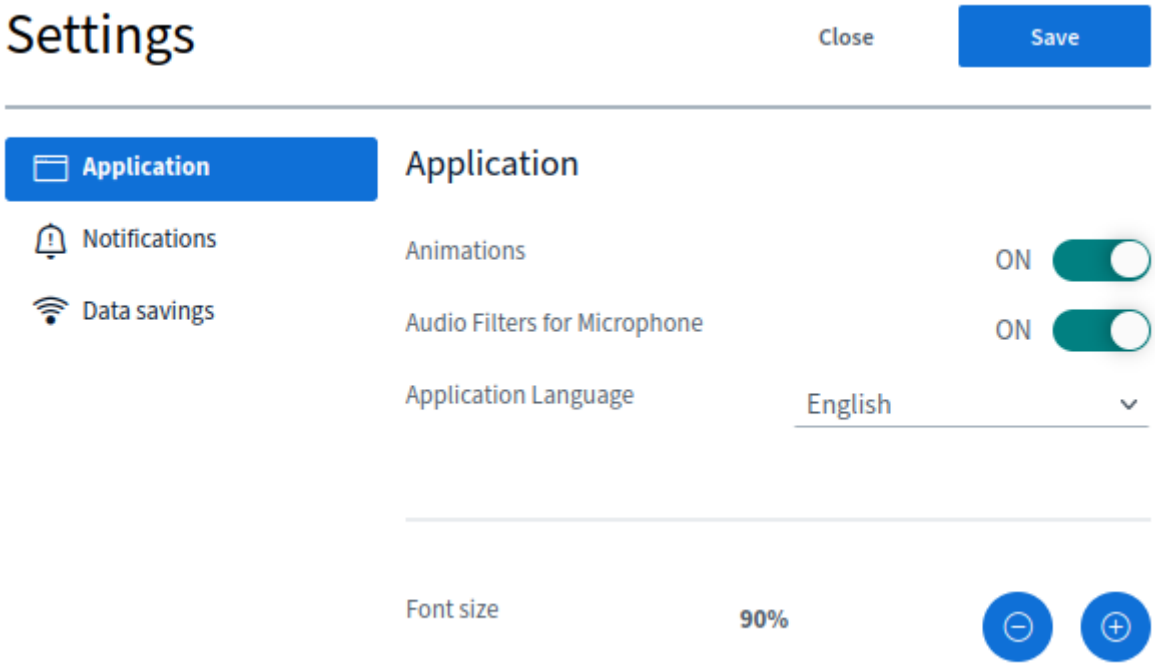



# Personal settings

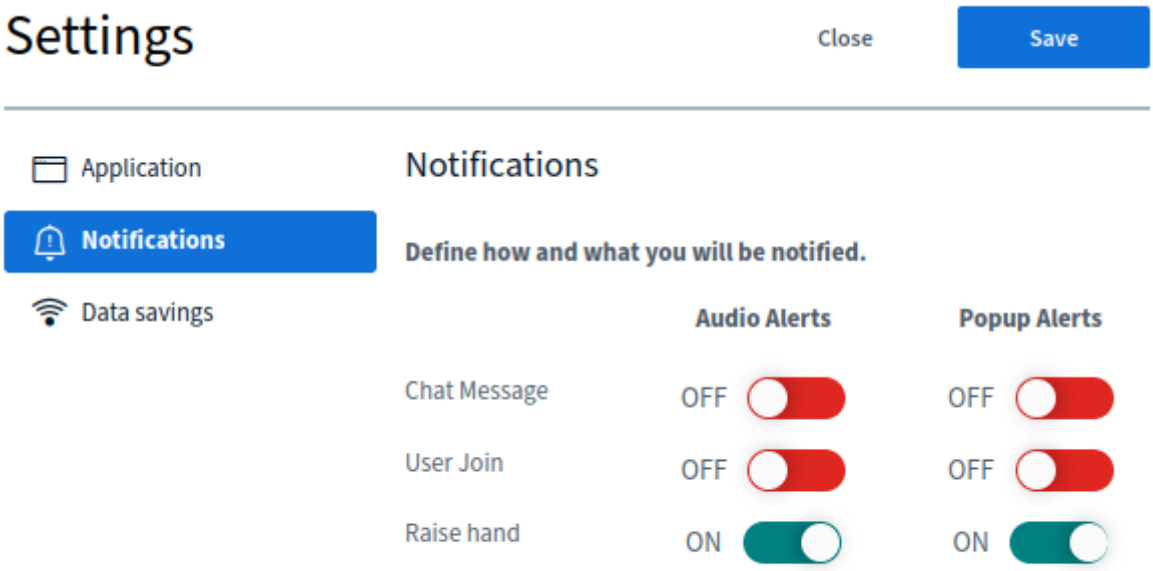
Clicking on three dots icon will open personal settings window that enables you to optimize your experience in BigBlueButton.




Here you can adjust the user interface - animations, audio filters and application language.




And in the Notifications tab you can adjust audio and popup alerts.

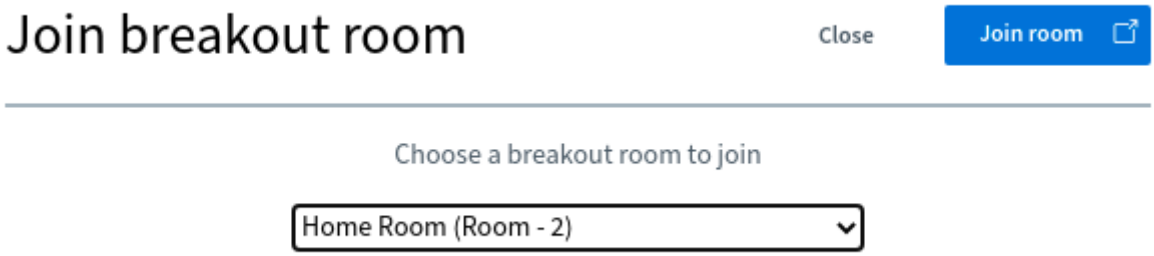



# Breakout rooms

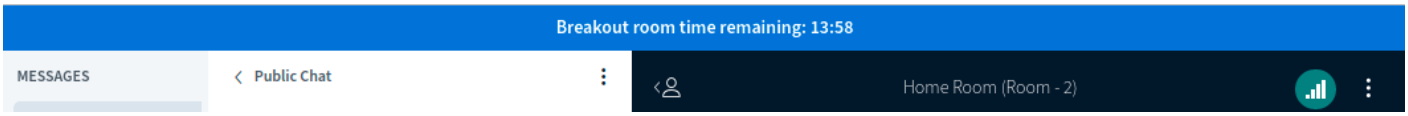
When moderator opens breakout rooms you will receive a notification. If moderator has assigned you to a specific room you will be asked to join that one.




When the choice of which room to join is left to participants, there will be an additional dropdown menu to select the room before you can join it.




When you enter the breakout room you will see time left until the breakout room closes displayed on the top of the window. Other functionalities are similar to the main room (recording is not available though).




To leave the breakout room just close the browser tab or window. If that happens accidentally, moderators in the main room can place you back in a specific breakout room.

When you enter the main room again, reconnect audio and you will be able to participate.

# Presenter

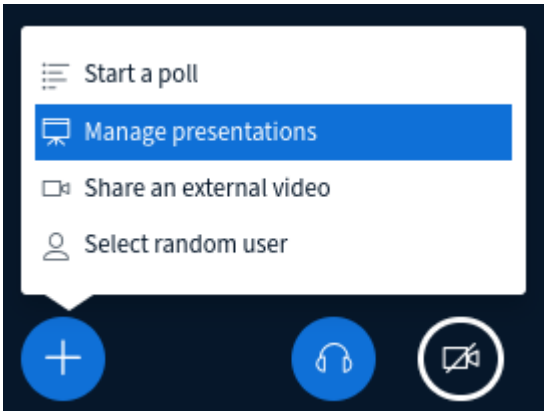
With presenter role you can add presentations, share external videos, share your screen and create and run polls.

## Manage presentations

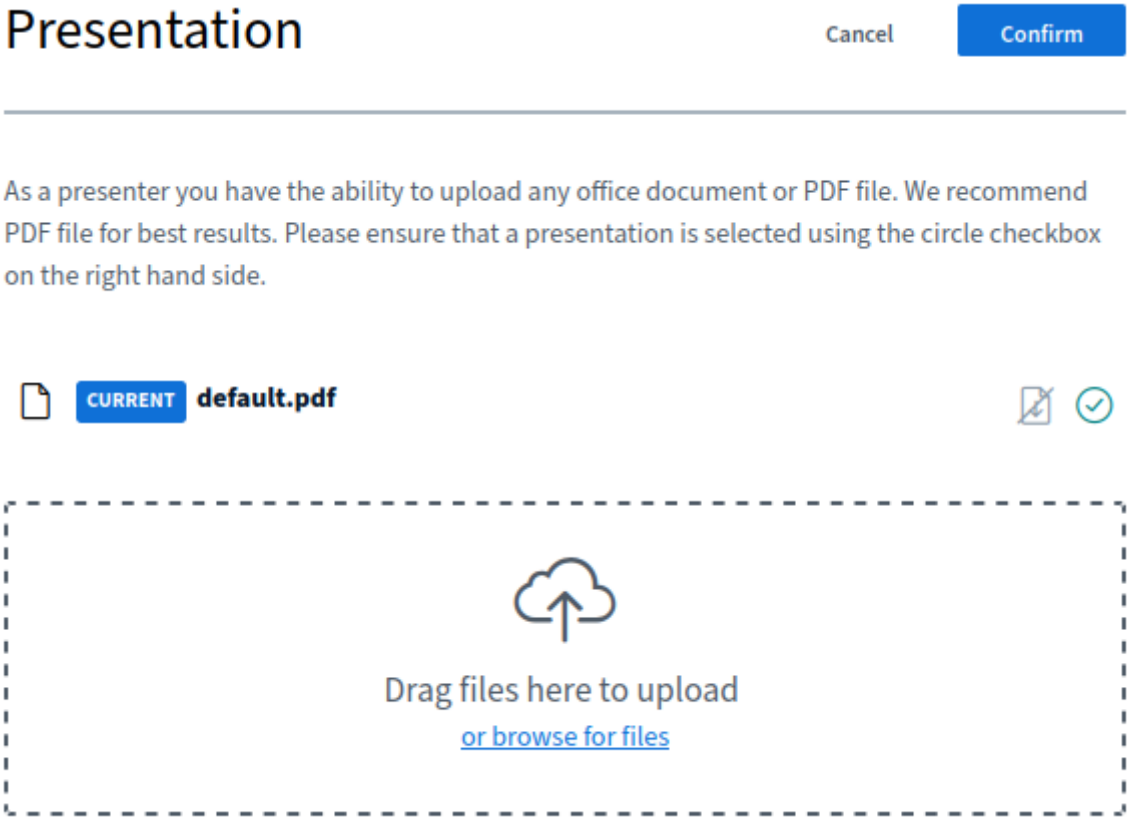
For best results uploading an Adobe Acrobat document (.pdf) document is recommended, although BigBlueButton will accept other file formats, for example Office documents (.doc, .docx, .pptx), text documents (.txt), images(.png, .jpg).

Please note the maximum size is **30 MB or 150 pages** per document. You can upload multiple documents as long as they are under the size restrictions.

To upload a presentation first click on the **blue (+) button** at the bottom and then select **Manage presentations**.

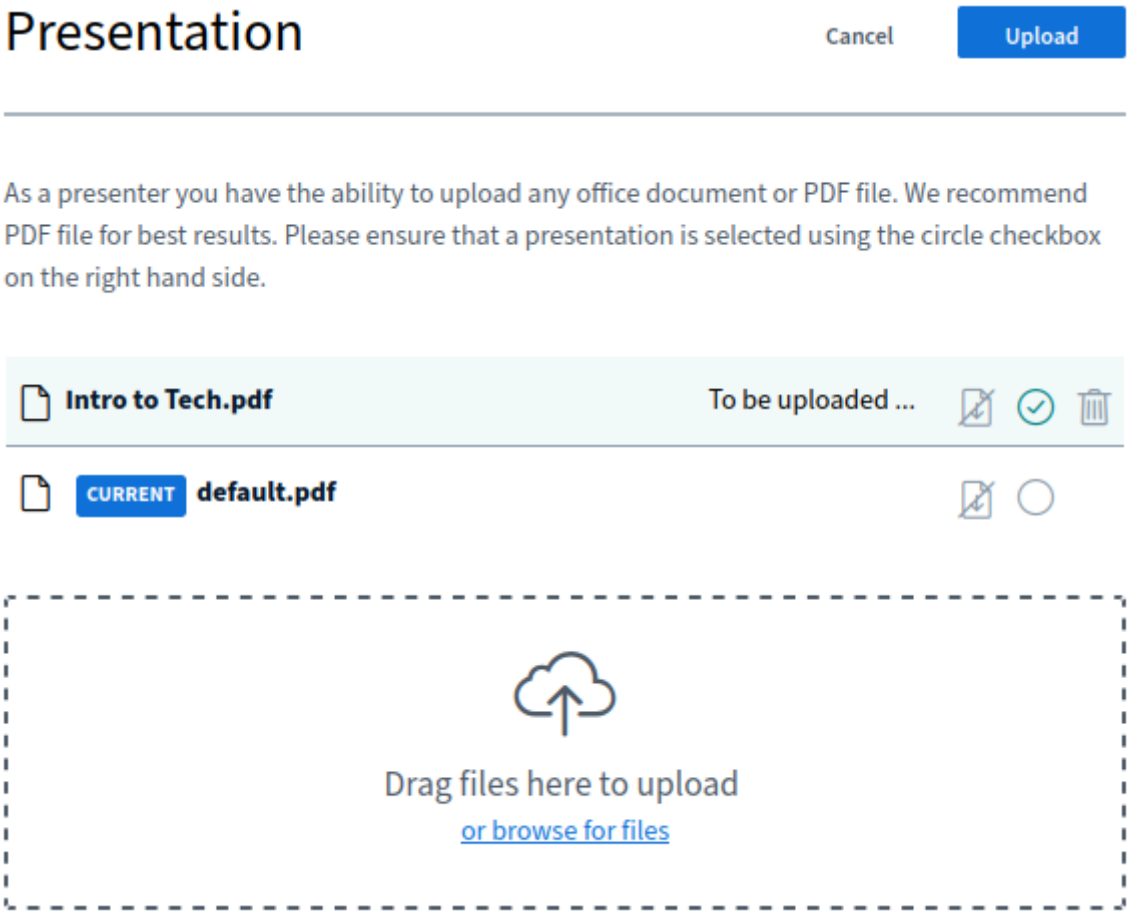



A window where you can upload your presentation will open.




The default presentation is on the top of the list and you can add new ones by dropping them on the **Drag files here to upload area** or selecting them by **clicking the upload area** or **browse for files** link.

After you select the file, it appears on the list with **To be uploaded...** status




To upload it, click on the **Upload button** at the top of the screen. It will take a few seconds for the presentation to be uploaded and converted to PDF.

The uploaded presentation will immediately appear in the room (so if you don't want to show it now, load it beforehand or include an empty slide).

If you would like to **select or upload another presentation** go to **blue (+) button** again and select **Manage presentations**. The current presentation has a label CURRENT and a green circle checkbox.

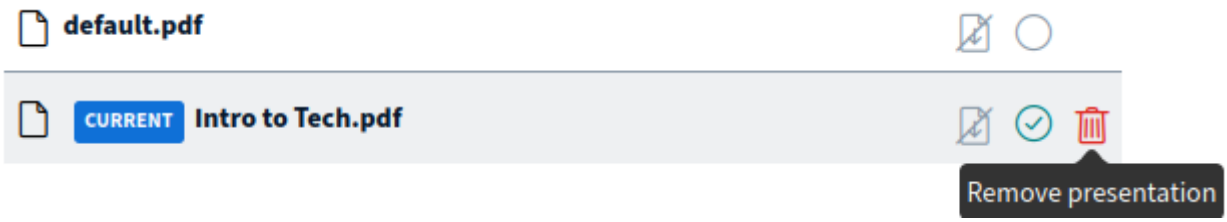



To **select another presentation** click in the empty circle and click button **Confirm** at the top of the page.

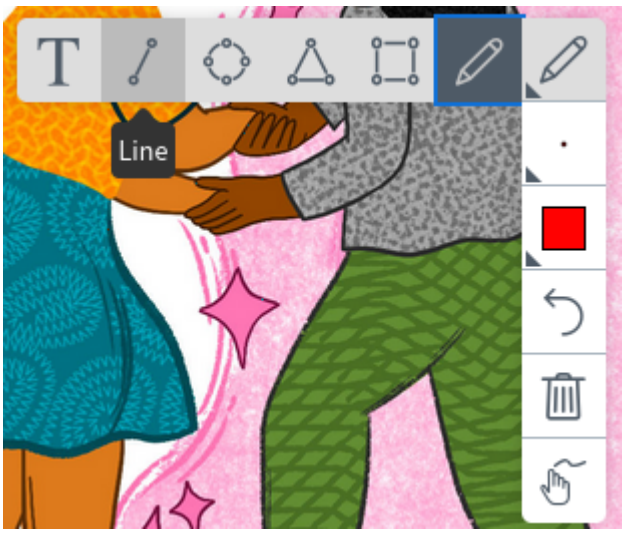
If you would like the **users to be able to download the presentation** then enable sharing by clicking on the **down arrow icon** next to green circle checkbox. The users will now have a little **download icon available** in the bottom left corner of the presentation.




To **remove a presentation** click on trash can icon.

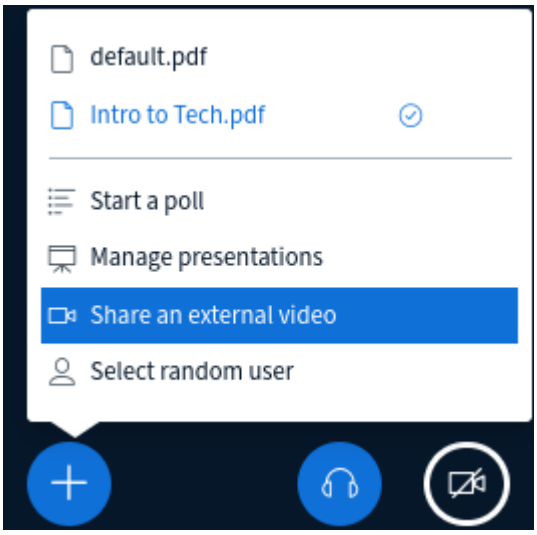



You will be able to use additional features to write and draw over the presentation. Review the available tools by clicking on the hand icon on the left side of presentation. If you are the moderator, you can also make these tools available to other participants. Click on the **multi-user whiteboard** icon at the bottom to enable it.

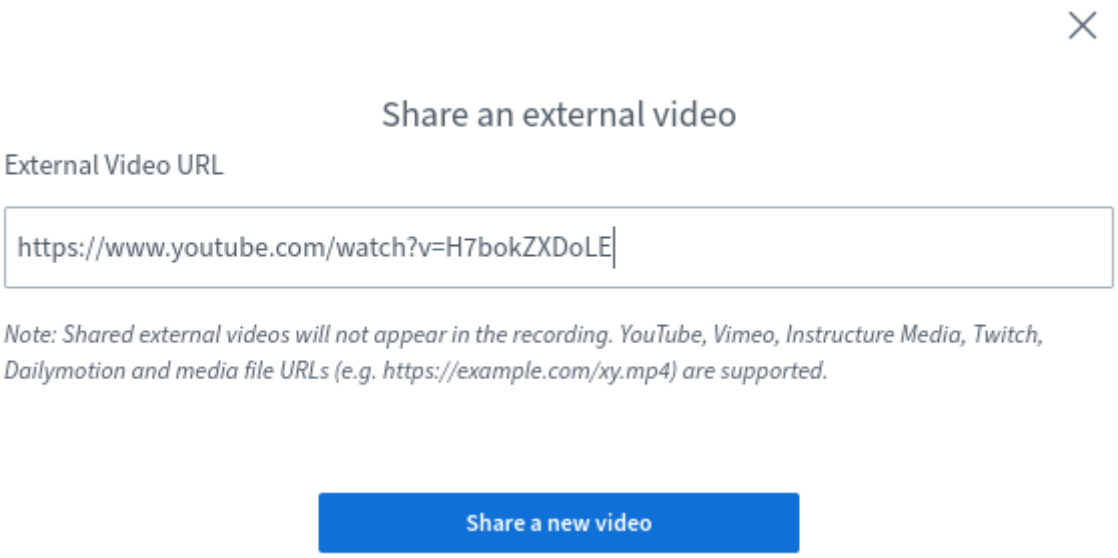



# Share external video

To share an external video (videos available on Vimeo, YouTube, Twitch...) you need to have a presenter role, then click on the **Plus (+) button** and select **Share an external video** in the menu.

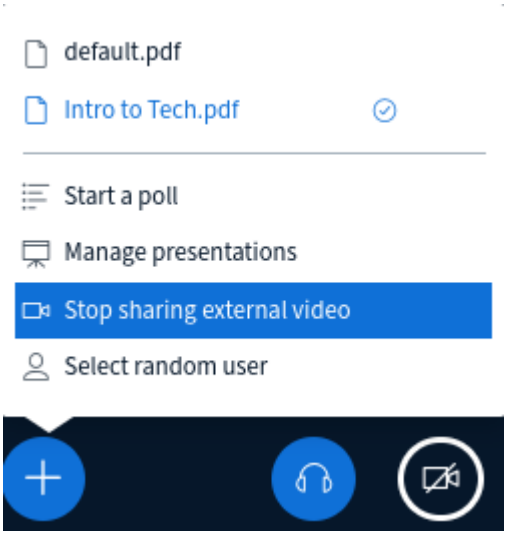



Next, paste the video URL into the text field and click on the button **Share a new video**.




The video will start playing in the main window. Participants can pause and play the video on their screen. Beware that not all participants might see the video as the content of the video might be geo-blocked by YouTube or other services.

To stop the video click on **Plus (+) icon** and select **Stop sharing external video**.



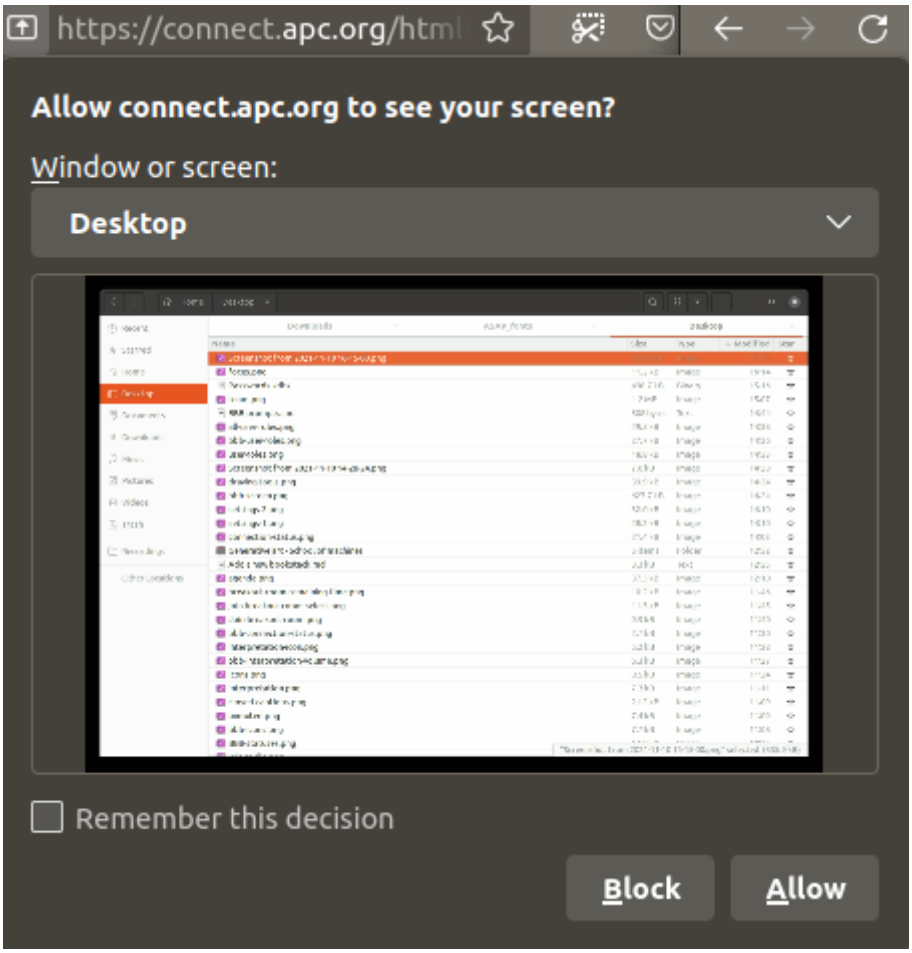

# Share screen

To share the screen click on the **Share your screen** icon below the presentation.



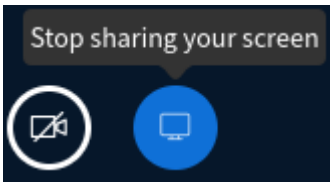
When the browser's notification pops up **select the screen you would like to share:**

- **Window**: shares a specific application you have open. If you move to other applications, it doesn't affect what participants see.
- **Entire screen:** shares whatever you are seeing, as you change applications and programs – beware this is a risky option as participants can see everything!



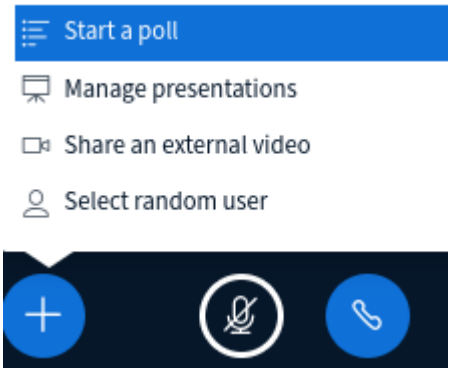

Confirm your choice with a click on the button **Allow**.

To stop sharing the screen click on the **Screen icon** again.




# Polls

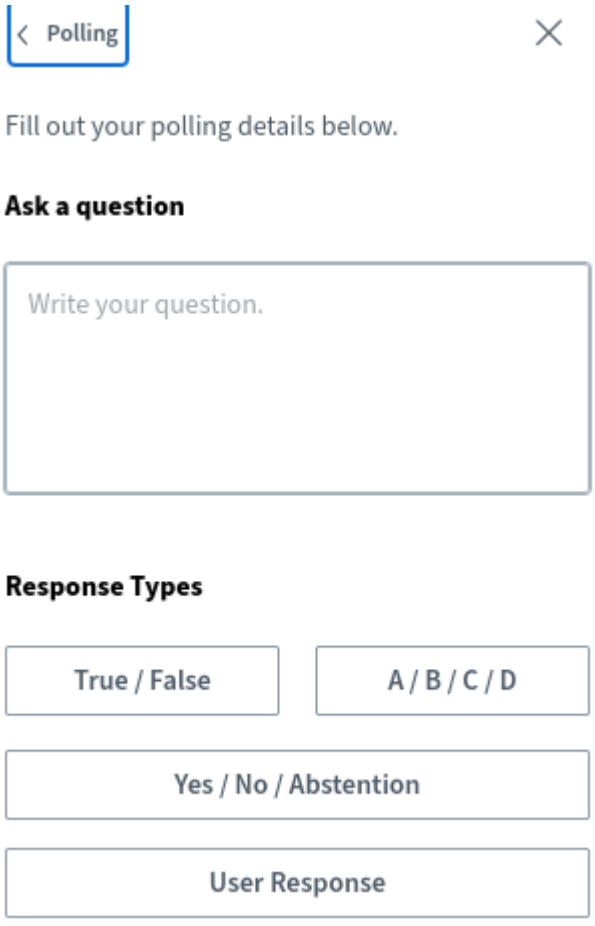
To create a poll click on the blue **Plus (+) button** and select **Start a poll**.



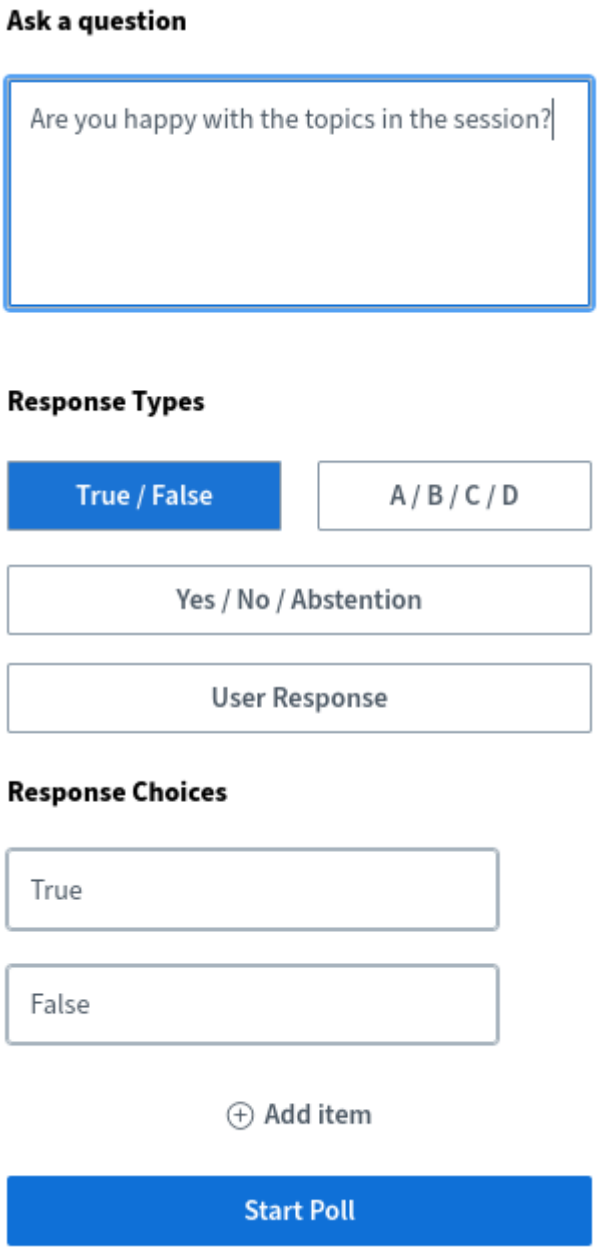

Next you will see a window with poll options. You can select one of the predefined polls or create a custom one.

Enter **Ask a question** text.

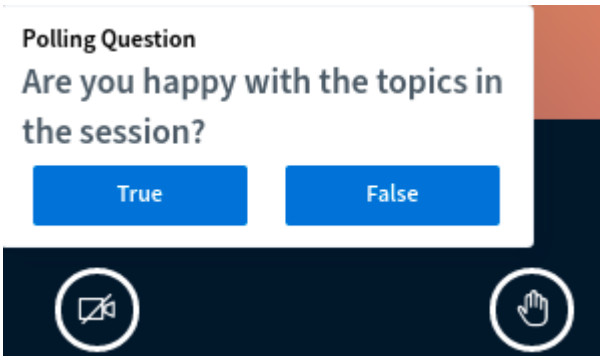
**Select question type**: True/False, ABCD (2 to 4 possible customizable answers), Yes/No/abstention, and open ended (each participant can fill out their answer in free text).




When you are ready click on **Start Poll**.



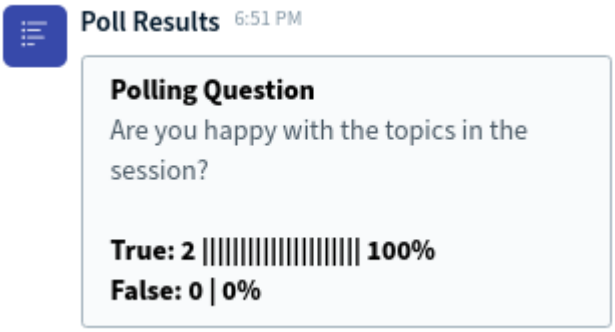

Each participant will get a message to answer the poll.




You will be able to **monitor the answers**.




When the poll has ended select **Publish polling results** and all participants will see the **results in a chat**.




# Moderator

As moderator you have full control of the session and the participants. However if you want to show a presentation or share your screen you will need to take over presenter role too (if you don't already have it).

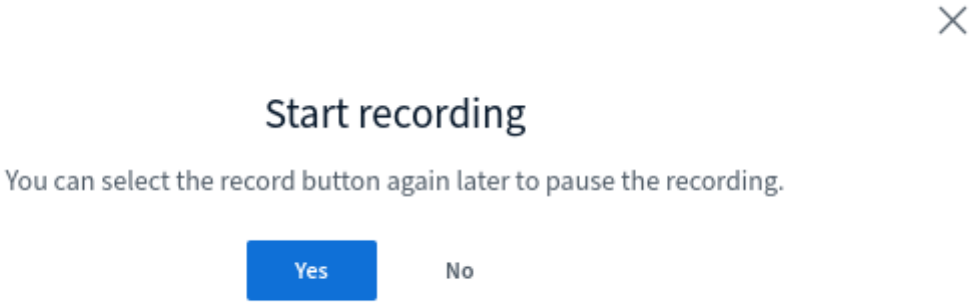
# Recording the session

Moderators of the room will see a button **Start recording** at the top of the meeting room.

To record, click on the **Start recording button**.



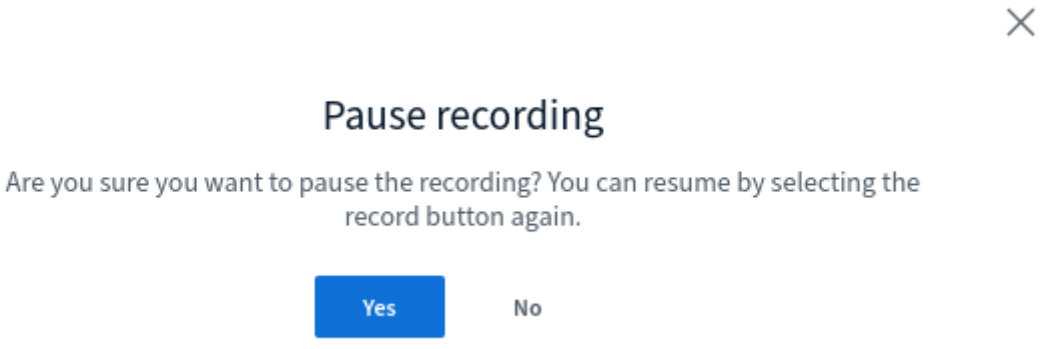

A pop-up will notify you that you can pause the recording and resume it later. Click **Yes** to start recording.




The Start recording Button will change and indicate the length of recording.




To stop the recording click on the button again. After confirming you want to stop recording in the pop-up notification your recording will be stopped.




Button will change and be ready to resume the recording.



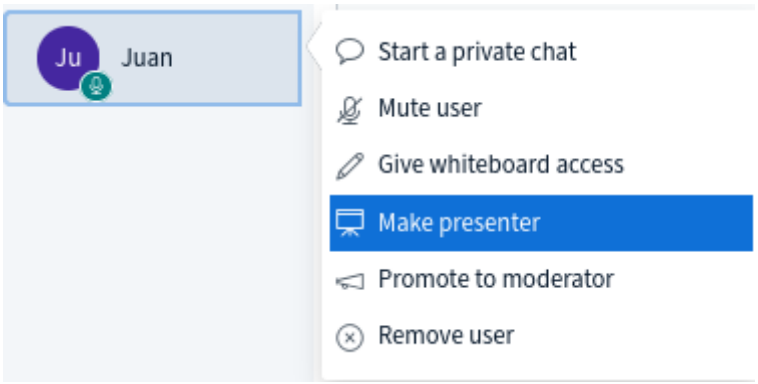
After you end the meeting the recording will become available on your main room page. It usually takes a few minutes for the recording to be available.

**Note:** If you record the meeting for one second all the notes and chat will be saved as the result.

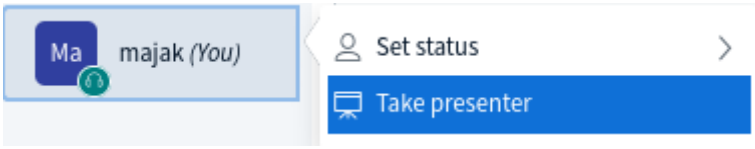
# Make participant a presenter

As only one user can be a presenter at the same time, user with moderator role will need to assign Presenter role to the user that needs it. Moderator can also take away the presenter role and assign it to themselves.

To give Presenter rights to the user, **click on their name in Users list** and select **Make presenter**.

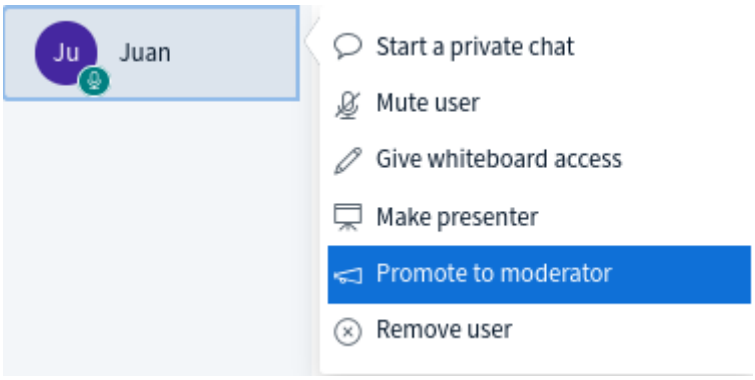



To get Presenter role back, **click on your name** and select **Take presenter.**




# Make participant a moderator

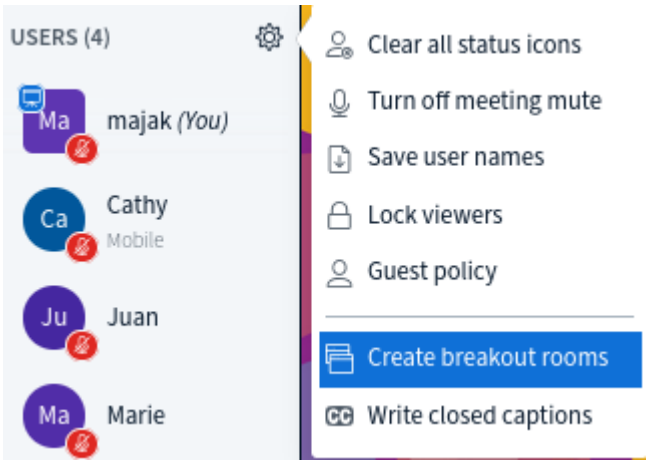
To promote the participant to moderator role click on their name and select **Promote to moderator**. Now they will have the same rights to manage the room as you have.




# Create breakout rooms

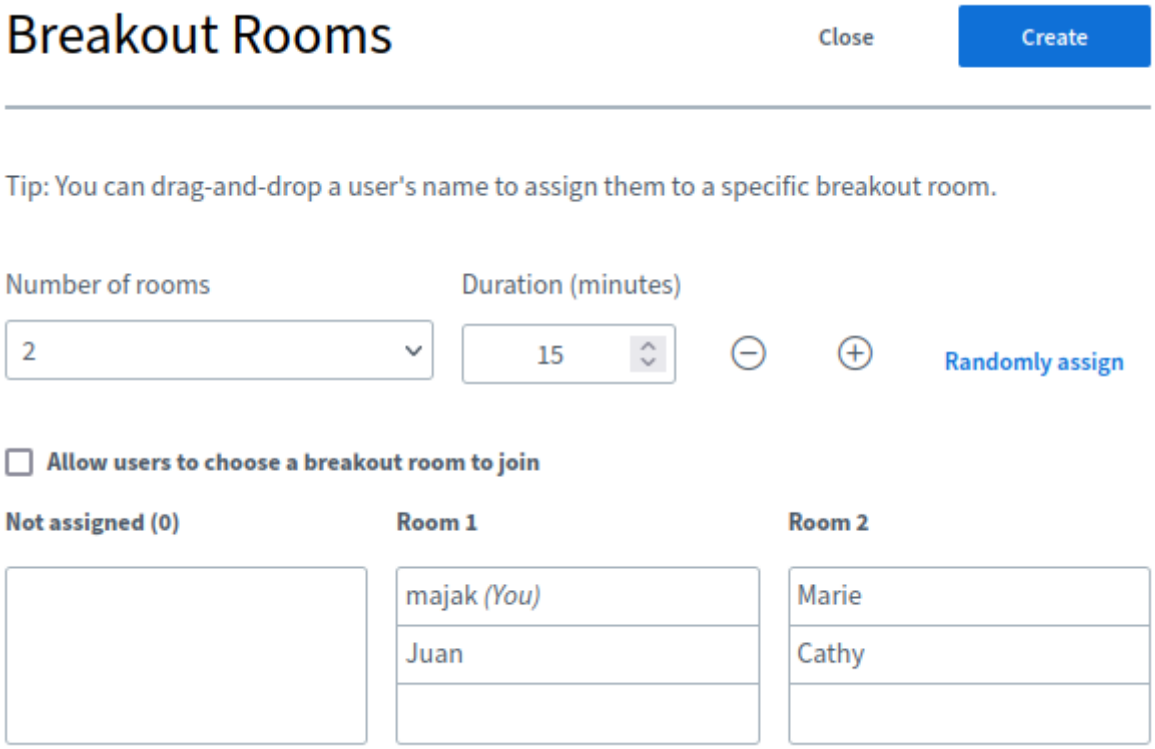
Breakout rooms can be created by clicking on the **gear icon** in the Users list and selecting **Create breakout rooms**.

**Note!** When you enter this menu you cannot manage any other option in BBB until you finalize or cancel the breakout rooms, ie you cannot unmute yourself, nor see the chat. **Best practice is to to open another browser tab to create breakout rooms.**




Next select the number of rooms you would like to create (between 2 and 16) and assign users to them.

You can drag and drop the users' names, randomly assign them to rooms OR let each choose the room that they want to join. You will also need to define the duration of breakout rooms.

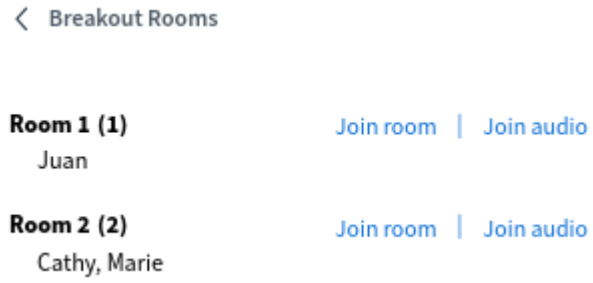



Confirm the settings and open the breakout rooms by clicking on **Create** button.

The participants will get a notification to join the breakout room. When they join the room a new tab will open in their browser and mute them in the main room. When participants join the breakout room they will see a notification about remaining time on top of the window.

- Participants will also see the last slide of the presentation shown in the main room.
- The first participant to join the breakout room will have the presenter role. You cannot record breakout rooms.

In the main room any moderator can join any breakout room and move around, as well as join “audio only".




Participants can be called back to the main room by the Presenter, or can return by leaving their breakout room, which will bring them back to the main room.

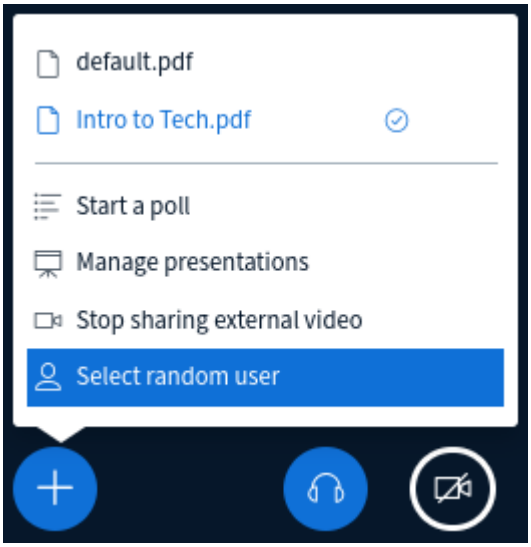
**Note!** You cannot assign people randomly to rooms if more than one participant is a moderator!

**Note!** Rooms can end abruptly, even before the warning countdown is done. It's important to save/copy notes, especially since breakout rooms cannot be recorded.

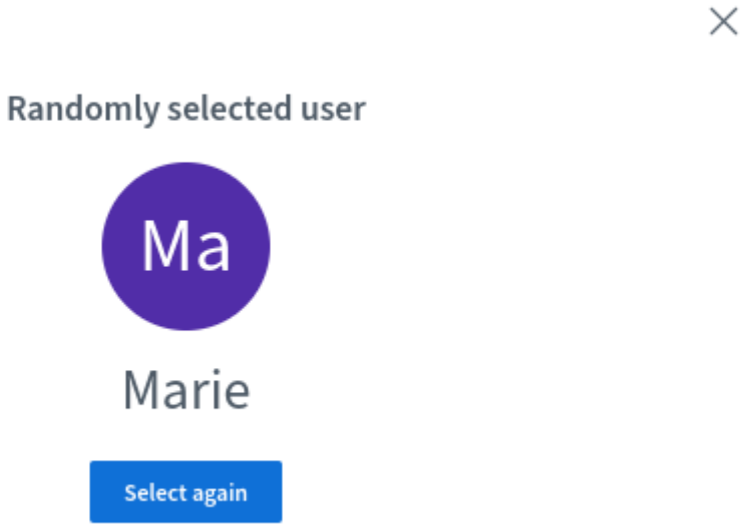
You can send private messages to participants in breakout rooms from the main room.

# Select a random user

Sometimes you would like to call out a random user and a feature Select random user can help you make a more random selection. Click on the **Plus (+) button** and **Select random user**.




On the screen all participants will see a popup window with a randomly selected user.

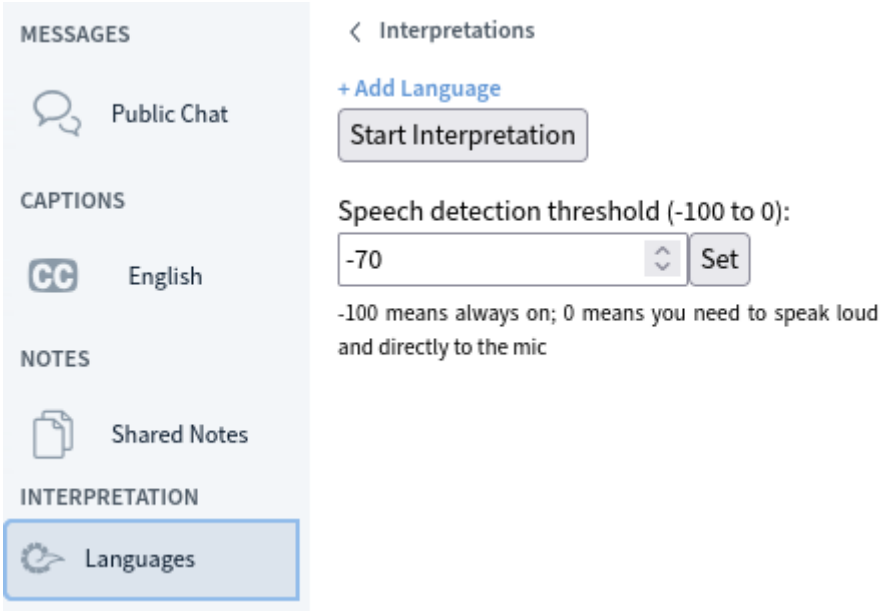



# Setup interpretation

Session moderator can setup and manage interpretation in several languages.

# Activate the interpretation

To start interpretation, click **Languages** in the left sidebar.




Then introduce the language names (+ Add language) and click Confirm. Define the speech detection threshold for interpreter audio input (between -100 for noisy environments to 0 which means off ): -70 is the default and you can leave it as it is.



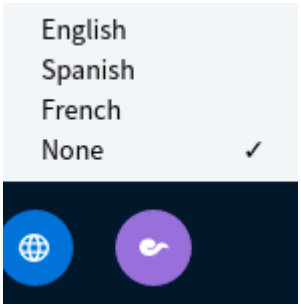

When you are ready, click on **Start interpretation**.

Participants will see a new **globe icon** that allows them to select any of the interpreted languages.

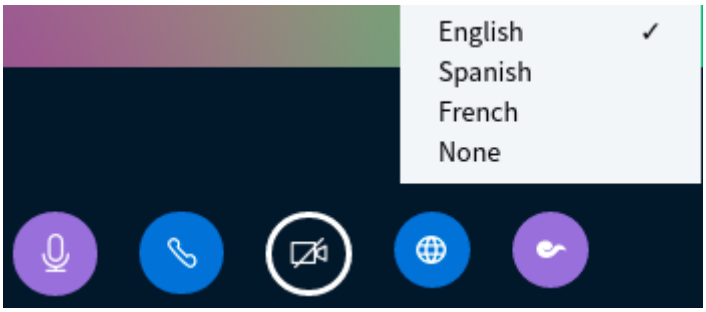
# Assign interpreters

In order to assign interpreters, first promote them to moderators: click on their names in the left sidebar, then Promote to moderator.

When they are moderators, they will see a new, purple button to the far right of the bottom menu. They can each select the language they want to interpret into.



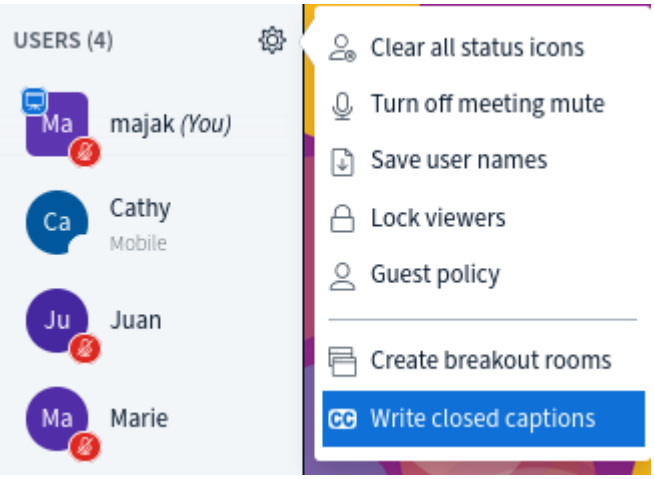

When they are interpreting, their mic icon is violet (instead of the normal blue of participants).



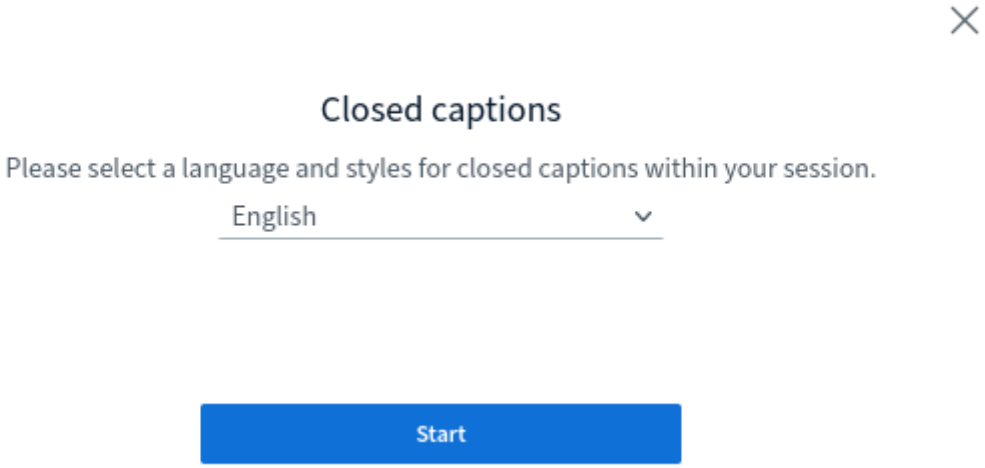

# Setup closed captions

Meeting moderators can enable close captioning on the meeting.

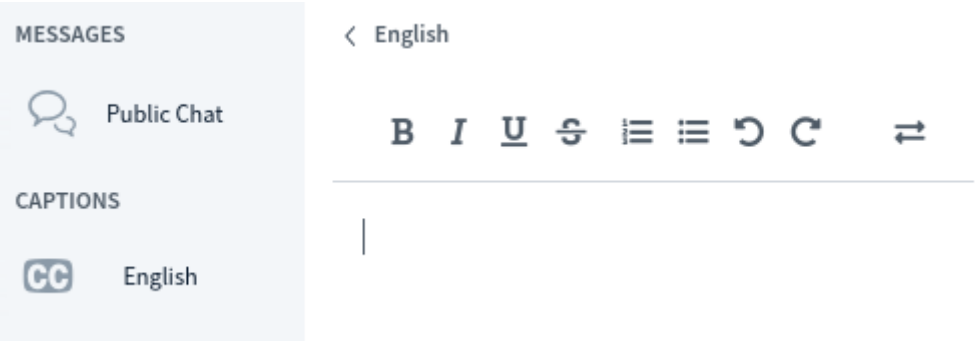
Select the **gear icon** and **Write close captions**.




Then **select the language**.




You can **start typing text** and participants who had enabled CC (clicked on the CC icon) will be able to see the closed captions.




Several people can take turns writing subtitles in the same language.

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Revision #4
Created 2025-05-12 15:53:14 UTC by Maja Kraljic
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