How to Host a Skype Conference Call (Using a Windows PC)

The most important items for a successful Skype Call are if you have enough memory and processing power on your computer and if your data connection is fast enough. (See the handout "Are My Computer and Internet Connection Adequate for Using Skype?/Technical Specifications)

It is impossible to have a good quality conference call if someone is trying to participate from a dial-up connection or with a very slow Internet connection. People will be dropped and reconnected automatically by Skype which greatly disrupts the background of the call for the other participants.

In these cases, you need to recommend that the person with a problematic connection participates in the meeting by telephone instead of computer. A land-line phone works better than a cell phone and should be recommended if possible. The person hosting the call will also have to purchase Skype credits so they can add a person's phone number as a Skype Contact and then they call that phone number as part of the conference call.

It is preferable to set up conference calls so the host calls all the participants because setting up the Skype capability for people to "call in" on their phones requires an additional monthly subscription for a Skype phone number. It is cheaper to only make out-going calls to people using land-lines or cell phones.

Before each call, **always** check to make sure you are using the most recent update of the Skype program. Skype is continually improving features (like minimizing echoes). You can check this before you login by doing the following:
   * Start Skype
   * Open the Help Menu and select Check for Updates
   * Follow the prompts to update your software.

Procedures
Before the call, make sure you have everyone's Skype name and have added them all as Contacts before the call. You will not be able to include anyone in the call who is **not** on your Contact List. It is also helpful to add a Phone Number for each Contact so you can easily call them if their computer connection is breaking up or disconnecting.

Before the call
   * Disconnect or silence any nearby telephones or cell phones.
   * Try to remove or turn off any other sources of noise near your computer.
   * Start the Skype program on your computer and login.
   * Create a Group from your Contacts for the call.
      - Click the button in the bottom-right corner of the Contacts panel that says Create a Group.
      - Drag the name of each participant into the panel at the top of the Call Screen.
      - If this is a group that you will be using again, you will want to click the button labeled **Save group in Contacts** in the upper-right corner.

Starting the call
  * Open the Group for your call.
  * Click the green button labeled **Call Group**
  * It is recommended to make all conference calls as audio calls because video conference calls use an excessive amount of bandwidth and the quality is not often satisfactory.
  * People who are not online yet will be automatically dropped from the Group after several rings.

Adding late-comers or people who have been dropped to the call
  * If the late-comer calls you, click the button to **Add to Current Call**.
  * Another way to add a latecomer to the Group is when you notice they are online, click the **+** button to the right of the green Call Group button and click through a 5-step process to add them.
  * An easier way is just to drag their name from the Contacts list into the Group, the same way you created the Group in the first place.

Recommended settings during the call
Move your cursor towards the bottom of the Skype window so the Skype toolbar is displayed
  * On PCs, keep your Contacts List open by clicking the **Show contacts** icon at the left end of the toolbar. This way you can see when latecomers come online and can be added to the call.
  * Click the **IM** button (second from the left end of the toolbar) to open the messaging screen at the bottom. If someone wants to send written information like an URL to everyone on the call it will be displayed in this area.
  * Whenever you are not actually speaking, always **Mute** your microphone by clicking on the icon that looks like a microphone.

Tips for successful participation
  * The Host should remind people to **identify themselves** when they begin speaking by saying something like "Hi, this is xxxxx."
  * The Host should remind people to keep their microphone **muted** whenever possible.
  * Anyone will be able tell who is speaking and who is adding extraneous noise to the call by noting the **highlighted border** around their participation picture or icon.
  * If you hear an **echo** in the call, you are not the one causing it.
    - Someone has their microphone too close to their computer speakers or external speakers and their microphone is re-broadcasting sound coming from their speakers.
    - Anyone can tell who it is by noting the highlighted border around their picture.
    - Ask them to move their microphone at least 8-10" away from their speakers.
  * If someone gets accidentally **dropped** from the call, the Host should simply drag their Contact icon back into the Group frame.
    - Remind people to **not** call the Host if they get dropped but if they are not reconnected shortly to **Text (IM)** someone who is still on the call and ask to be brought in again.

Tips for concluding the call
* The Host should click the **red telephone** to close the call.
* To **COMPLETELY** exit Skype on PCs
  - Open the Skype menu in the upper left corner and select **Sign Out**. (This returns you to the Login screen.)
  - On the Login screen, open the Skype menu in the upper left corner again and select **Close**.
  - Find the Skype icon in System Tray (in the Task Bar at the bottom right of the Windows Desktop) and right-click to open the Shortcut menu. Select **Quit** to completely disconnect from Skype. (If you do not do this, your contacts will still be able to send you Skype IMs and try to call you and it will look to them like you're still logged on.)
* To exit Skype on Macs or iPads
  - Select either **Offline** or **Sign Out**
  - Make yourself **Inactive**
  - Make sure you locate and select **Quit** or shut down your Skype program to completely disconnect