

Small Group Structures: Breakout Rooms and Channels

There are several options for engaging students in small, collaborative groups on *Microsoft Teams*. Small group settings provide learners with opportunities to generate ideas, problem-solve and practice skills.

Breakout Rooms During Meetings

Breakout rooms provide teachers with the ability to quickly move students in and out of smaller meeting spaces. Here students can engage with one other as well as access a whiteboard and chat feature.

This space is a great place to facilitate think-pair shares, collaborative problem solving, and other strategies designed to generate discussion. Teachers can also move between breakout rooms quickly in order to check-in and support individual groups of students.

As with all tools there are strengths and considerations:


Features	Other Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• access to a collaborative whiteboard• ability to randomly distribute or assign specific students• create up to 50 rooms (small groups or individual spaces)• built in timer• move participants between meetings• communicate in real time with all students via announcements• teacher can join any breakout room to facilitate discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inability to see PowerPoint or meeting chat in the main room• ability to remove/mute one another• inability to track individual student contributions to the whiteboard• students cannot access other groups' whiteboards or chats (teacher can facilitate in a debrief)

To access Breakout Rooms, use the icon at the top of your meeting. The screenshot shows the tab and features.

***Note:** if you choose to assign participants randomly you will not be able to change this option later in the meeting

See "[Use Breakout Rooms for Teams Meetings](#)" for more features and instructions.

1. Start the meeting.

2. In the meeting controls, select **Breakout rooms** .

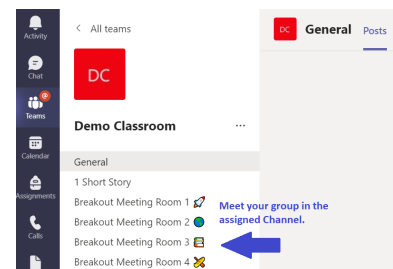


3. Select the number of rooms you want (50 max), and whether you want Teams to assign people to rooms (**Automatically**) or you want to choose the people for each room yourself (**Manually**).

Channel Meetings

Channel Meetings provide a permanent space to collaborate. These spaces are a great place to structure and facilitate group discussions that can be revisited over time and during asynchronous learning.

Teachers create channels in their Class Team on *Microsoft*



Teams and direct students to these spaces for small group discussions.

Teachers can pin whiteboards to the Channel, post Discussion Board prompts and link Collaborative Notebook Pages or Word Documents for students. These pieces remain after the meeting, allowing teachers to follow up the small group time with whole class gallery walks (students move through the channels asynchronously, returning to class meeting for a debrief).

Again, the use of Channels Meetings comes with its own strengths and considerations:

Features	Other Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students can access whiteboard, chat and discussion board posts (for example, gallery walk after initial discussion)• students can record their meeting (teacher can review and provide feedback)• ongoing access to discussion prompts and evidence of learning created	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• takes longer to establish and build routines• requires scaffolding and structuring• time to transition between spaces• inability to communicate to students all at once

Other Small Group Structures

The use of Breakout and Channel Meetings can provide teachers and students a variety of ways to build in variety to a synchronous lesson, including:

Workshop Model (Jennifer Seravallo)

Provide students with a short lesson, break out into small groups or one on one rooms to independently practice. Teachers move in and out of the breakout spaces providing support or guidance.

Differentiated Model (John Spencer)

Begin a synchronous lesson with time for students to work on a reflection or upcoming assignment, provide direct instruction and then move students into small groups or individual breakout rooms

There are numerous ways to structure, invite and facilitate collaboration in the Blended Learning classroom. Find a structure or strategy that works for you and your learners. Once students are familiar with the routine, norms and expectations, begin to scaffold and layer additional complexity or new structures.

See the ["Group Structures in Blended Learning" Power Point](#) and [Session Recording](#)