

Chapter 13

Setting Up Video Meetings

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Learning what you need to know in order to use Google Meet
 - » Setting up a video meeting of your own
 - » Joining someone else's video meeting
 - » Fiddling with video meeting features and settings
 - » Presenting your screen
-

A very long time ago, most people worked in the place where they lived. Farmers had their fields and livestock right outside the door, and tradespeople of all descriptions had their tools inside the house. Home was work and work was home, and separating the two would never have occurred to most people. All that changed when the Industrial Revolution came rumbling along. Its muscular machinery mass-produced goods formerly crafted by hand, and the great bulk of its hulking factories and warehouses required huge tracts of land outside of cities and towns. The world's butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers had no choice but to leave their homes to ply their trades (or, more likely, some repetitive and soul-destroying subset of a trade) in these faraway enterprises. As a result, for the better part of 200 years, most workers have been leaving their homes and hi-ho, hi-hoing their way to work.

But now a “post-industrial” revolution is taking shape as a steady stream of workers abandon their traditional employment locales and bring their work home. The result is the *remote workforce*, where people toil at home, in a shared office space, hunkered down at the local coffee shop — anywhere but in a standard office.

Nothing wrong with that, but how do these so-called *office-free* workers get some face time? How do they meet? Well, if their organization uses G Suite, they can create video meetings using the Google Meet app. In this chapter, you get to know Meet, find out what it can do, use it to start or join meetings, and explore its features. An office? Who needs it?

What Do You Need to Use Meet?

A *video meeting* is, by definition, multiple simultaneous video and audio streams where everyone in the meeting needs to see and hear everyone else. That's a tall order, so Google Meet asks a lot from your computer and your Internet connection to get its job done. “Asking a lot” means that Meet comes with a few important requirements that must be met before you can start or join a meeting. Here's a summary:

- » **A recent version of your operating system:** Meet supports the current version and the two previous major versions of Windows, macOS, Chrome OS, and Debian-based Linux distributions.
- » **The current version of your web browser:** Meet supports Chrome, Firefox, Edge, and Safari. Be sure to update your browser to the latest version before using Meet.
- » **A video camera:** Make sure your computer has either a built-in or an external USB video camera or web camera.
- » **A high-speed Internet connection:** For the best video quality, your Internet connection should have at least 3.2 Mbps per meeting participant for upload (outbound data) and at least 2.6 Mbps (1.8 Mbps minimum) per meeting participant for download (inbound data). Your Internet service provider probably has an online tool that will let you know your connection's upload and download speeds. If not, search Google for “internet speed test” and then click the Run Speed Test button.
- » **A fast, modern processor:** To stream HD video, your computer's CPU (central processing unit) should be at least a 2.2 GHz Intel 2nd-generation i3/i5/i7, an AMD equivalent, or better. Is all this just

gobbledygook to you? If so, don't give it a second thought. As long as your computer is less than ten years old or so, you'll be fine.

Allowing Meet to use your camera and microphone

You won't be even the teensiest bit surprised to learn that videoconferencing apps require access to video and audio hardware to do their thing. Meet is no different, and so before you can use the app to start or join a meeting, you must give Meet permission to use your computer's camera and microphone.

To allow Meet access to your equipment, surf over to the Meet home page at meet.google.com (see [Figure 13-1](#)) and try any of the following:

- » **Access Meet settings:** Click Settings (the Gear icon; refer to [Figure 13-1](#)).
- » **Start a new meeting:** Click the Join or Start a Meeting link, enter an optional nickname, and then click Continue.
- » **Join an existing meeting:** Click the Join or Start a Meeting link, enter the meeting code, and then click Continue.

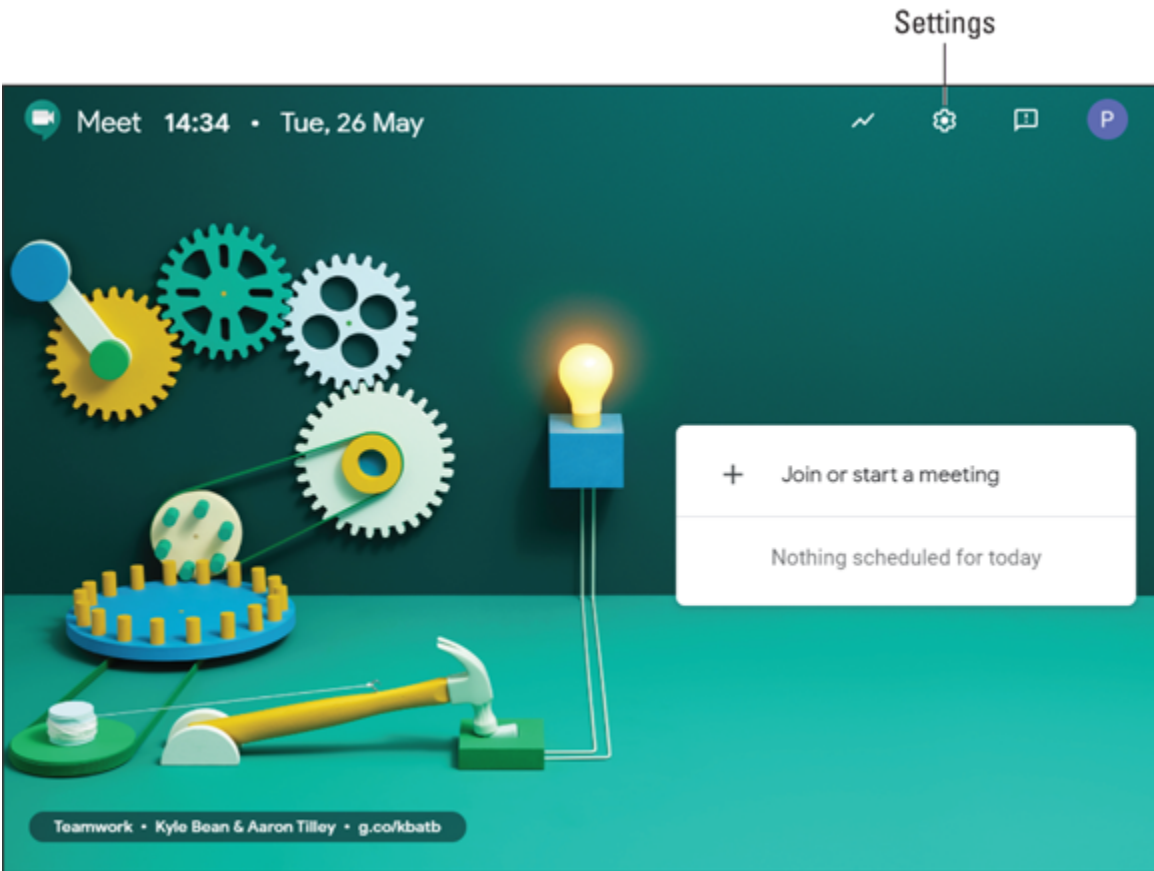


FIGURE 13-1: The Meet home page.

Whichever method you choose, you see a dialog box letting you know that Meet needs to use your camera and microphone. (See [Figure 13-2](#).) Click Dismiss to close the dialog box. You also see a browser pop-up that asks whether you want to allow meet.google.com to use your camera and microphone. (Again, see [Figure 13-2](#).) Click Allow to grant access to your equipment. You're good to go!



REMEMBER You might also see a browser pop-up that asks whether you want to allow meet.google.com to show notifications. If you're cool with that, click Allow; if not, click Block.

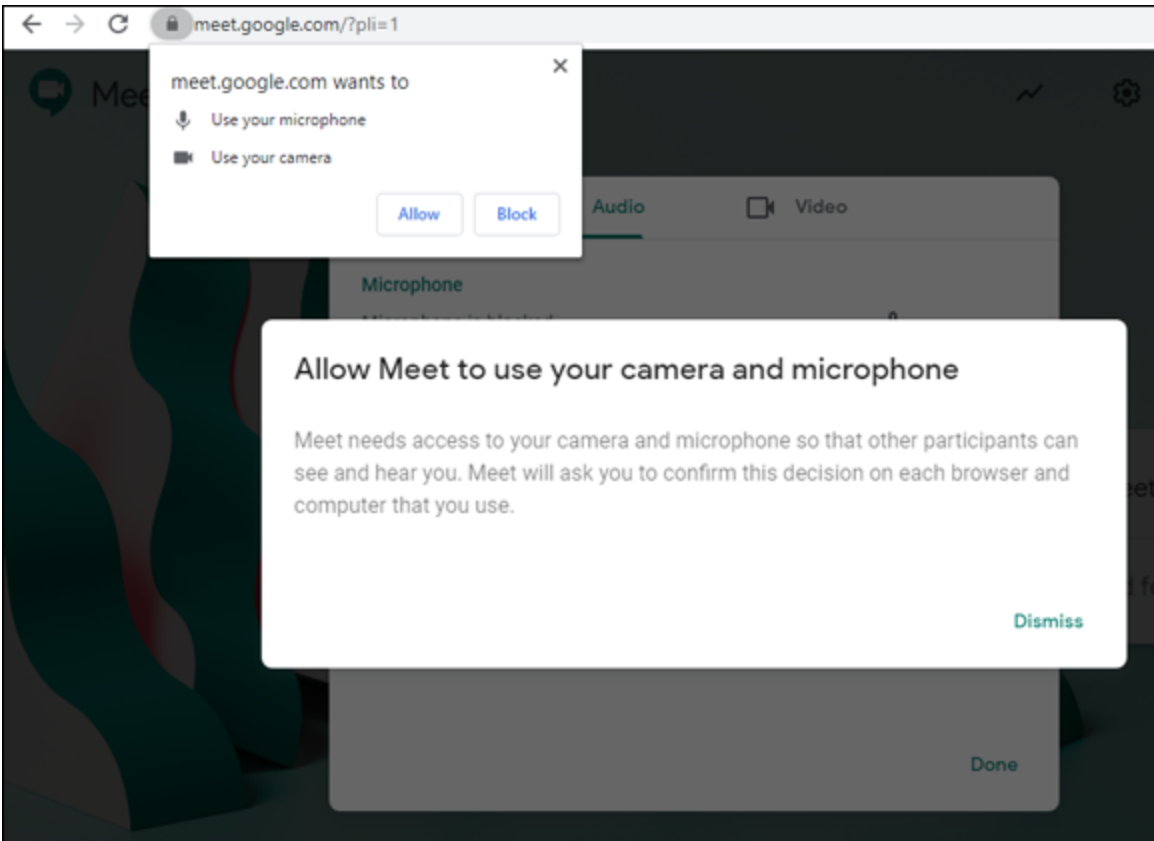


FIGURE 13-2: You need to give Meet access to your computer's camera and microphone.

Making sure Meet is using the equipment you want

If your computer happens to have multiple cameras, multiple microphones, and/or multiple speakers, Meet chooses the default devices on your system. If the defaults aren't what you want to use, it's best to check now to avoid embarrassing “We can't see you!” or “We can't hear you!” admonishments in your next meeting.

Follow these steps to double-check, and if necessary change, the audio and video equipment that Meet is using:

- 1. Click Settings (the Gear icon).**
Meet opens its settings.
- 2. On the Audio tab (see [Figure 13-3](#)), use the Microphone list to select your preferred audio input device.**



REMEMBER No microphone or speakers? No problem! You can still participate in meetings by using your phone as your audio device, as I describe later.

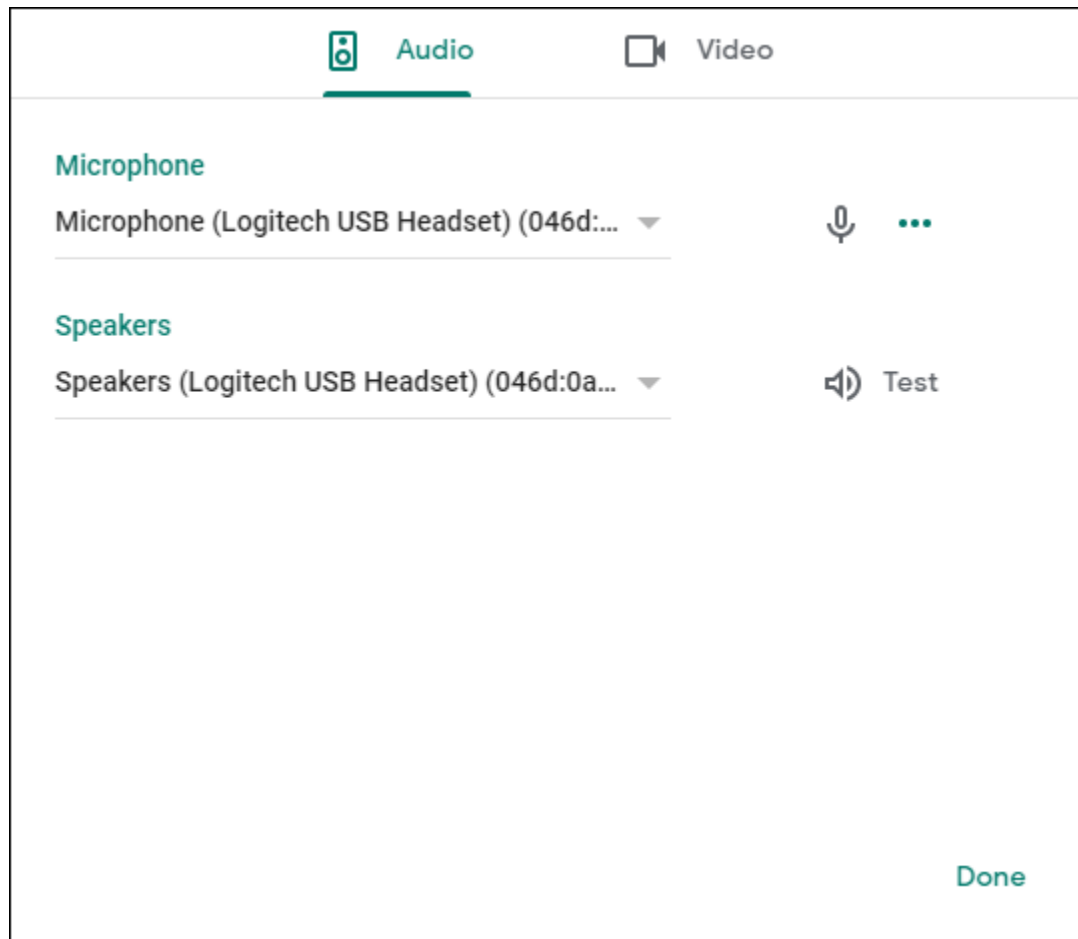


FIGURE 13-3: Use the lists on the Audio tab to choose your preferred audio input and output devices.

3. Use the Speakers list to select your preferred audio output device.

To ensure that your chosen speakers are working, click the Test icon to hear some sample audio.

4. On the Video tab (see [Figure 13-4](#)), use the Camera list to select the device you want to use for your video feed.

Meet shows a camera preview to the right of the Camera list, so after you select a device, make sure that preview is displaying live video.

5. Click Done.

Meet uses your selected devices for current and future meetings.

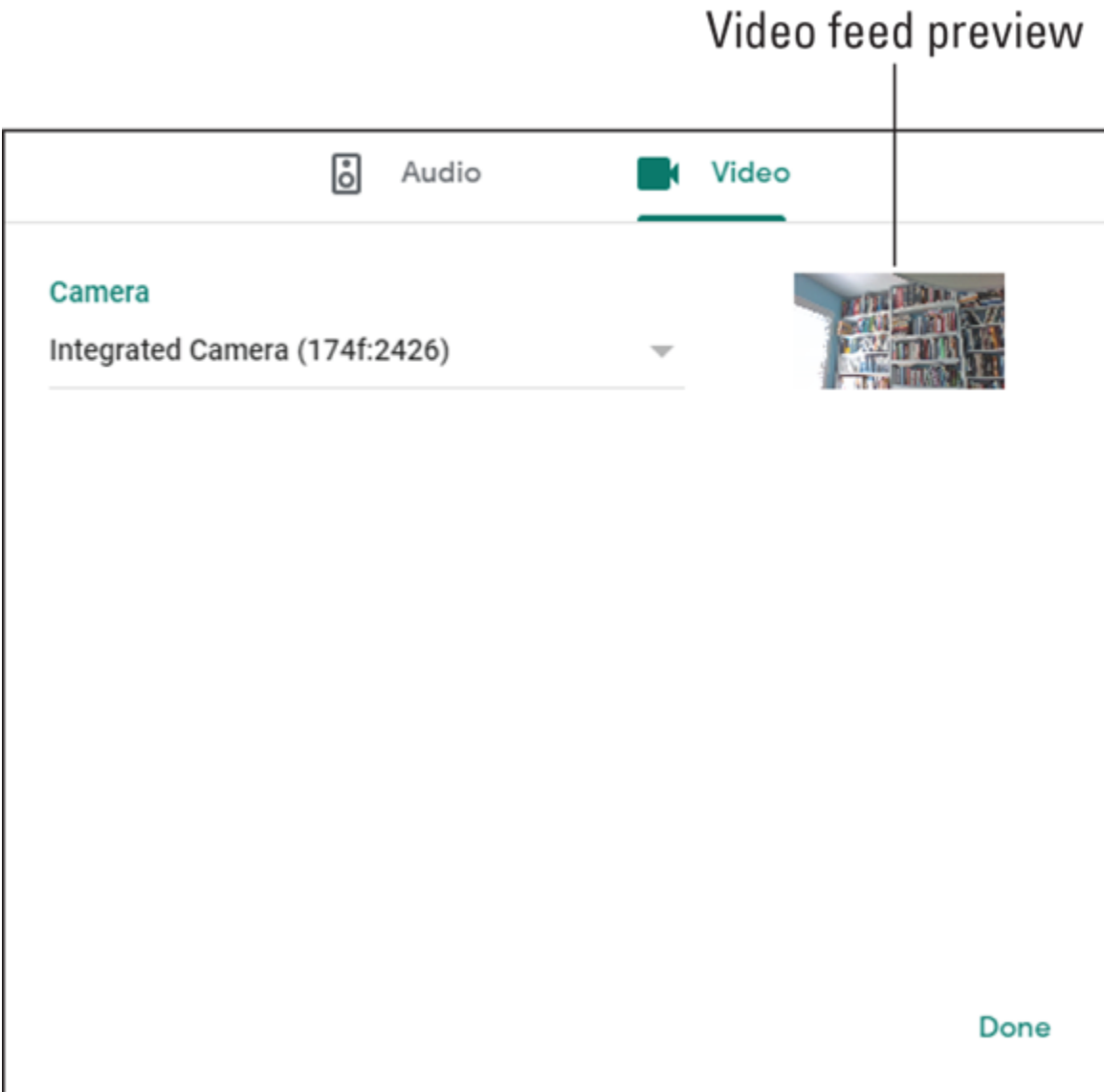


FIGURE 13-4: Use the list on the Video tab to choose your preferred camera.

Starting a Video Meeting

One of the awesome features of Meet is that it has very few features! As long as your computer and Internet connection meet the minimum

requirements (which I drone on about earlier, in the section “[What Do You Need to Use Meet?](#)”), creating a fresh meeting from scratch requires just a few steps. Even better, you don't have to use the Meet home page, because you can also fire up a meeting from the friendly confines of Gmail, or you can schedule a meeting using the Calendar app.



REMEMBER Yet another way to crank out a video meeting is from within a Google Chat conversation. To learn how this works, see [Chapter 14](#).

Starting a video meeting from the Meet home page

Here are the relatively few steps you have to follow to crank up a new video meeting from the Meet home page:

1. **Send your favorite web browser to meet.google.com.**
2. **Click Join or Start a Meeting.**

The Join or Start a Meeting dialog box shows up.

3. **(Optional) Enter a nickname for your meeting.**
4. **Click Continue.**

Google Meet creates the new meeting and drops you off at the Meeting Ready page, shown in [Figure 13-5](#).

5. **Click Join Now.**

Meet adds you to your own meeting. See the “[Adding people to your video meeting](#)” section, a bit later in this chapter, to find out how to populate your meeting.

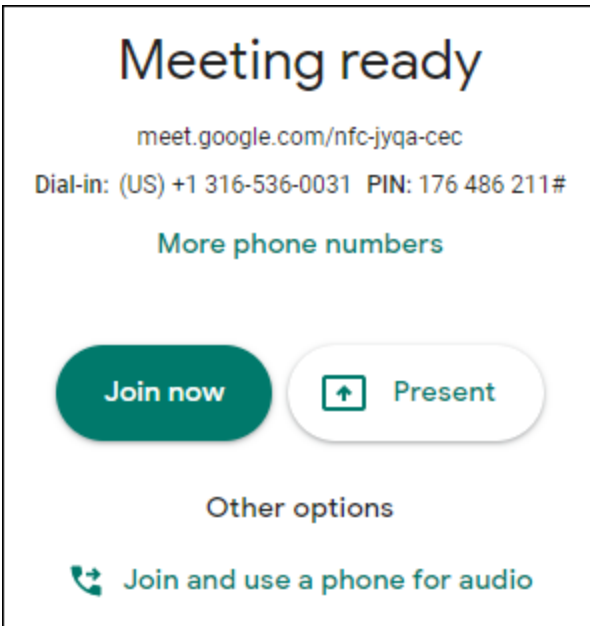


FIGURE 13-5: The Meeting Ready page displays the details for your new meeting.

Starting a video meeting from Gmail

Forging a new video meeting from Gmail requires just three measly steps:

1. **Head on over to mail.google.com.**
2. **In the Meet section of the navigation menu on the left side of the page, click Start a Meeting.**

Google Meet creates the new meeting and opens the Meeting Ready page (which looks pretty much the same as the one shown earlier, in [Figure 13-5](#)).

3. **Click Join Now.**

Meet adds you to your meeting and displays the Add Others dialog box, shown in [Figure 13-6](#). Check out “[Adding people to your video meeting](#),” next, to learn how to fill out your meeting. When you dismiss the Add Others dialog box, you end up at the meeting screen, shown in [Figure 13-7](#).

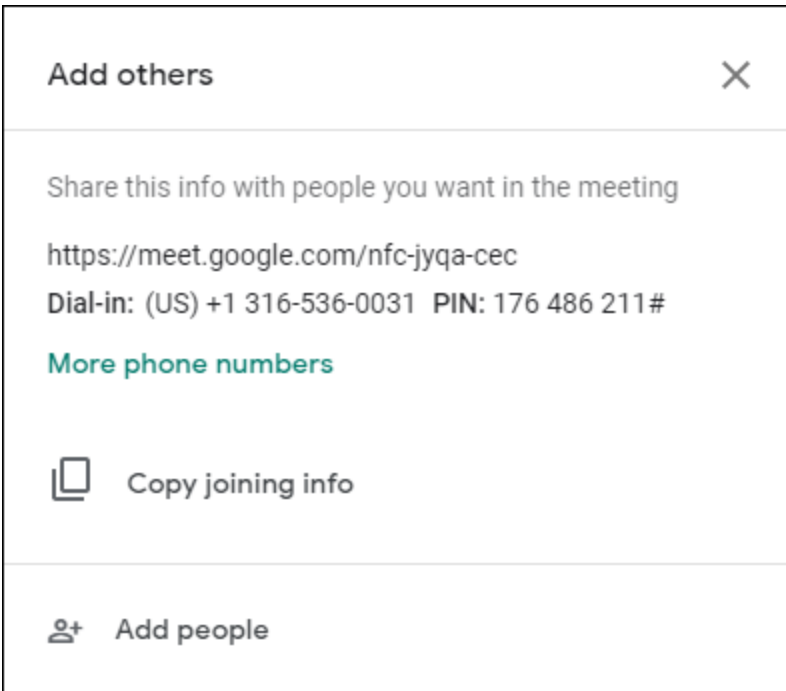


FIGURE 13-6: The Add Others dialog box appears when you first join the meeting.

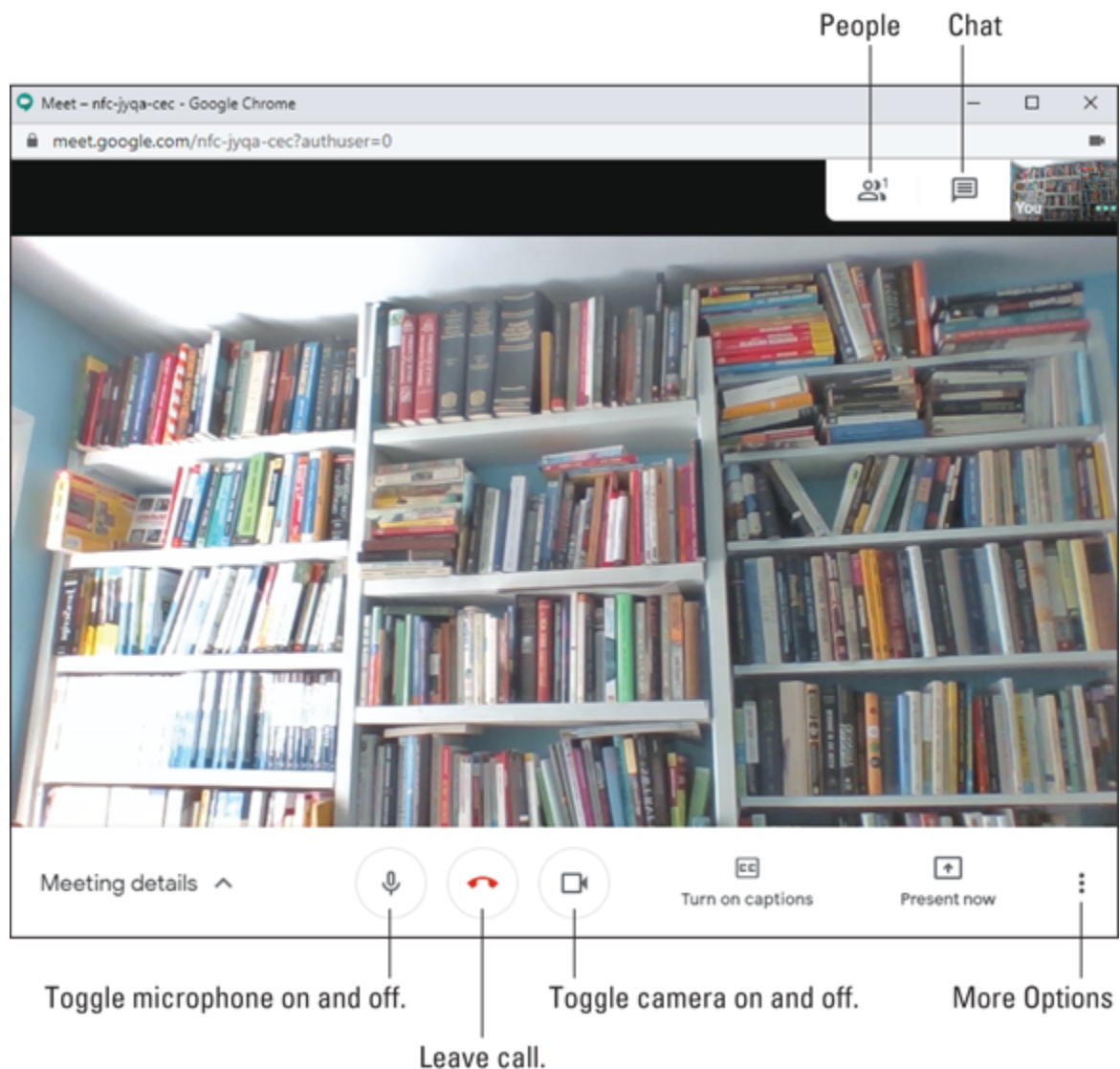


FIGURE 13-7: A typical meeting window.

Adding people to your video meeting

Whether you stamp out your new meeting via the Meet home page or via Gmail, you end up with a meeting that has a population of exactly one: you. Since, as the song says, one is the loneliest number, you need to get more people in there — fast. Meet gives you two ways to let other people know about your meeting:

- » You can invite other people via email.
- » You can copy the meeting's *joining info*, which consists of the meeting address and the meeting's dial-in phone number and PIN.

The next two sections cover both methods.

Inviting people to join your video meeting via email

The simplest and easiest way to ask people to join your meeting is to send them an email invitation. You have two ways to do this:

- » If you have the Add Others dialog box onscreen (this appears when you first join your own meeting; refer to [Figure 13-6](#)), click Add People.
- » In the meeting window, click the People icon (refer to [Figure 13-7](#)) and then click Add People in the new pane that appears on the right.

You end up looking at the Add People dialog box. Enter the name or address of the person you want to invite (or select that person from the list provided), repeat as needed, and then click Send Email. Your invitees receive an email message with a big Join Meeting button that gets them to the Ready to Join? page, and they then click Join Now to enter your meeting — just like that.

Sending the video meeting joining info to people

The joining info for your meeting consists of two bits of data:

- » The meeting address, which takes the following general form:

```
https://meet.google.com/meeting-code
```

Here, *meeting-code* is a code that uniquely identifies your meeting.



- » **TIP** The dial-in phone number and PIN that people who dial in need to enter. By default, Meet displays a phone number for only U.S. callers. If you have people calling in from elsewhere, select More Phone Numbers to see numbers from other countries, as well as a PIN those people can use.

The basic idea is that you copy your meeting's joining info and then share that info with would-be participants by pasting the info into an

email, text, web page, or another text-based medium. Meet gives you two methods for copying the joining info:

- » *If you're looking at the Add Others dialog box (which shows up when you first join your own meeting; refer to [Figure 13-6](#)), click Copy Joining Info.*
- » *In the meeting window, click Meeting Details to open a dialog box like the one shown in [Figure 13-8](#), and then click Copy Joining Info.*

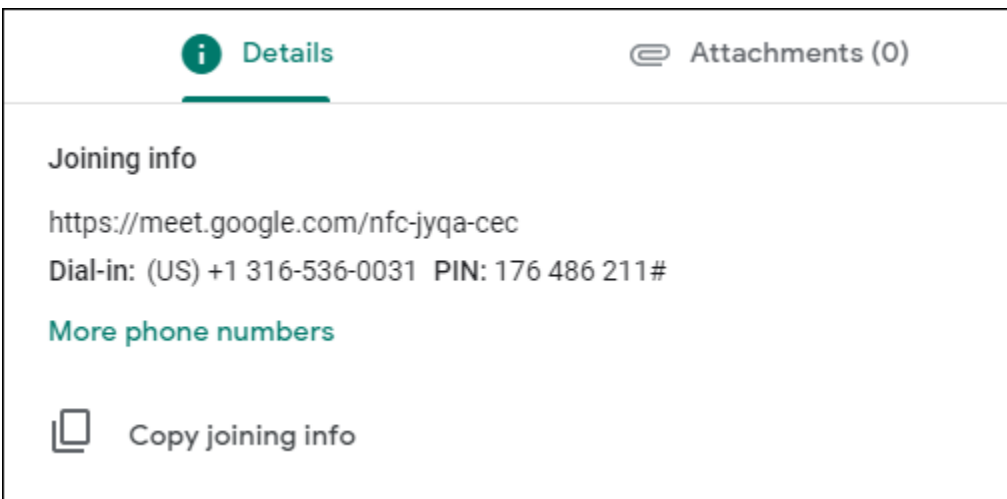


FIGURE 13-8: Click Meeting Details to see this dialog box with, you know, the meeting details.

Scheduling a video meeting with Calendar

Starting a video meeting and then inviting people to join you is fine for quick get-togethers or impromptu chinwags. However, most of the time it makes more sense to schedule a video meeting in advance. That way, you give your attendees plenty of notice, you can pick a time that works for everyone, and you know going into the meeting who will attend.

When you schedule a regular meeting in Calendar, you can turn it into a video meeting by doing either of the following on the Event tab:

- » Click the Add Google Meet Video Conferencing button.
- » Add at least one guest to the meeting.

The Event tab then shows the Join with Google Meet button (which you can click later to join your meeting) as well as the address of the video meeting. To see more joining info for the meeting, click View Conference Details (the downward-pointing arrow). Calendar expands the video meeting info to display the meeting ID, a dial-in phone number, and a PIN, as shown in [Figure 13-9](#). You can click the More Phone Numbers link to see the dial-in numbers for other countries.

Click the arrow to toggle the conference details.

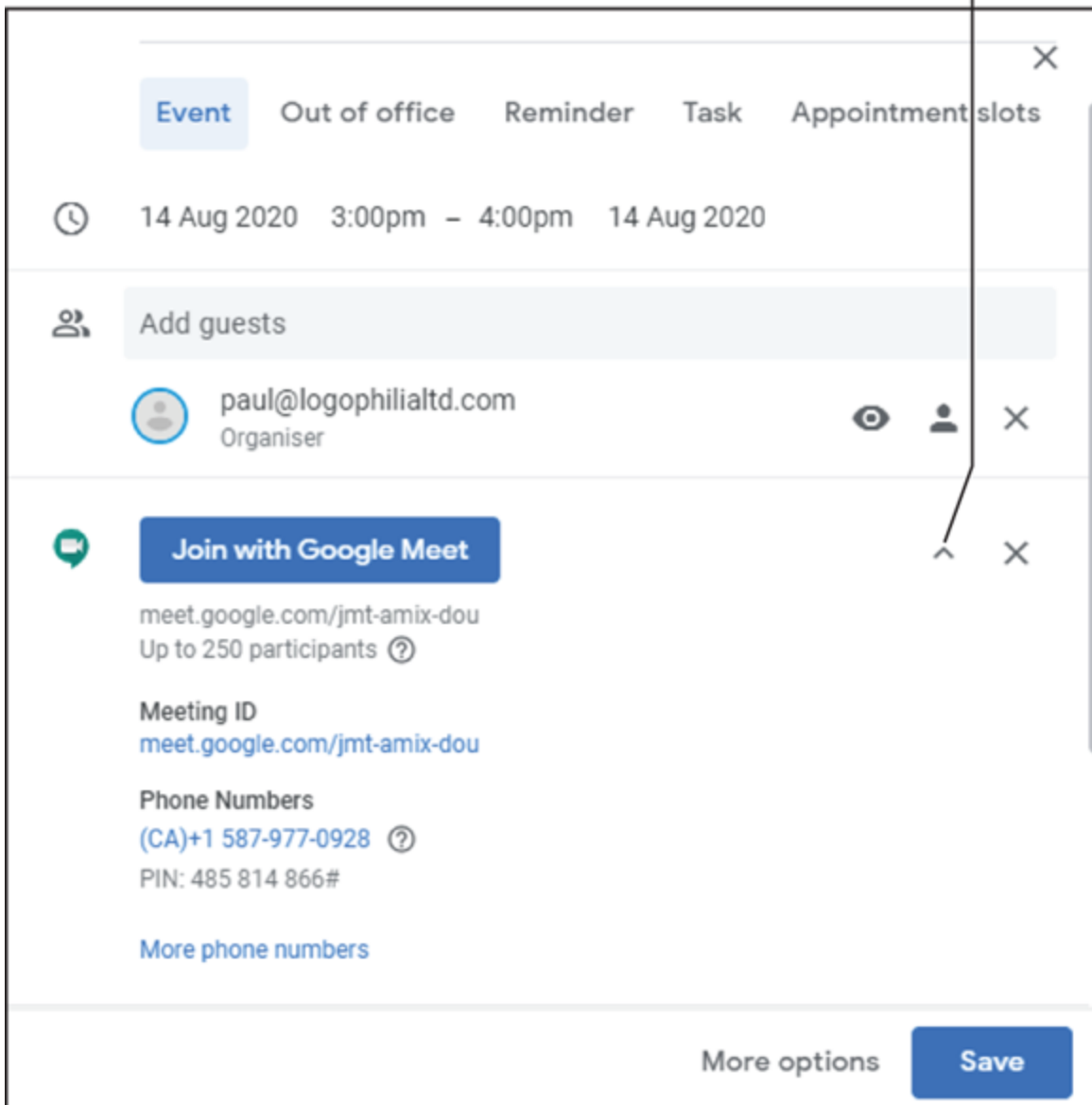


FIGURE 13-9: Click the View Conference Details arrow to see the scheduled video meeting's joining info.



TIP If you use Microsoft Outlook, you can schedule a Google Meet videoconference from within Outlook's Calendar if you install the Meet add-in to Outlook. Surf over to Microsoft's AppSource (<https://appsourcemeet.microsoft.com>) and search for *Meet* to locate the add-in.

Joining a Video Meeting

Before getting to the specifics of the myriad methods that Meet offers for joining a video meeting, you need to get straight exactly *who* can join automatically and who needs to request permission to join.

Three types of people can join video meetings automatically:

- » People in your organization who are signed in to their G Suite account
- » People outside of your organization who have been invited to the meeting via Calendar and who have a Google account
- » People outside of your organization who are invited during the meeting by a participant

And these three types of people require permission to join video meetings:

- » People who weren't invited to the meeting via Calendar
- » People who don't have a Google account and are attempting to join the meeting using the meeting's web address
- » People outside of your organization who are using G Suite for Education accounts

When a person who requires permission tries to access the meeting, they see the Ready to Join? page and must click the Ask to Join button. In the meeting itself, participants see the Someone Wants to Join this Meeting dialog box, shown in [Figure 13-10](#). A meeting participant can then click Admit to allow the new user or click Deny Entry to block the interloper.

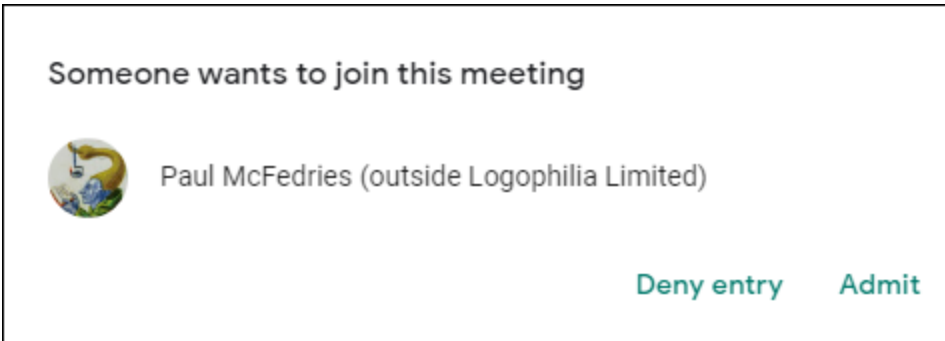


FIGURE 13-10: Meeting participants see this dialog box when a user who requires permission asks to join the meeting.

Joining a video meeting from the Meet home page

Follow these steps to join an existing video meeting from the Meet home page:

1. **Surf to meet.google.com.**
2. **Click Join or Start a Meeting.**
Meet opens the Join or Start a Meeting dialog box.
3. **Enter (or, more likely, paste) the meeting code into the text box.**
The meeting code consists of the characters that appear in the meeting address after <https://meet.google.com> (for example, abc-defg-hij). If you're entering the code manually, note that you can skip the dashes.
If the meeting has a nickname, you can enter the nickname instead.
4. **Click Continue.**
Meet opens the Ready to Join? page.
5. **Click Join Now.**
Meet connects you to the meeting.

Joining a video meeting from Gmail

Joining an in-progress video meeting via Gmail requires just a few steps:

1. **Surf to mail.google.com.**
2. **In the Meet section of the navigation menu on the left side of the page, click Join a Meeting.**

Gmail displays the got a Meeting Code? dialog box.

3. **Enter (or paste) the meeting code into the text box.**

The meeting code consists of the characters that appear in the meeting address after <https://meet.google.com> (for example, abc-defg-hij). If you're entering the code manually, note that you can skip the dashes.

4. **Click Join.**

Meet opens the Ready to Join? page.

5. **Click Join Now.**

Meet connects you to the meeting.

Dialing in to a video meeting and using the phone for audio

It's not technically impossible to participate in a meeting without a microphone and/or speakers, but what on Earth are you even doing there if you can't say anything or hear anything? Sure, you can use the Chat feature, but you don't need the full power of a video meeting just to chat with people.

So, if your computer lacks the necessary audio equipment, your equipment is on the fritz, or you left your headset at home, you might as well not join the meeting, right? Not so fast. You can still participate if you have access to a phone because Meet has a feature that enables you to dial in to the meeting and then use your phone's built-in microphone and speaker to speak and listen.

Here's how it works:

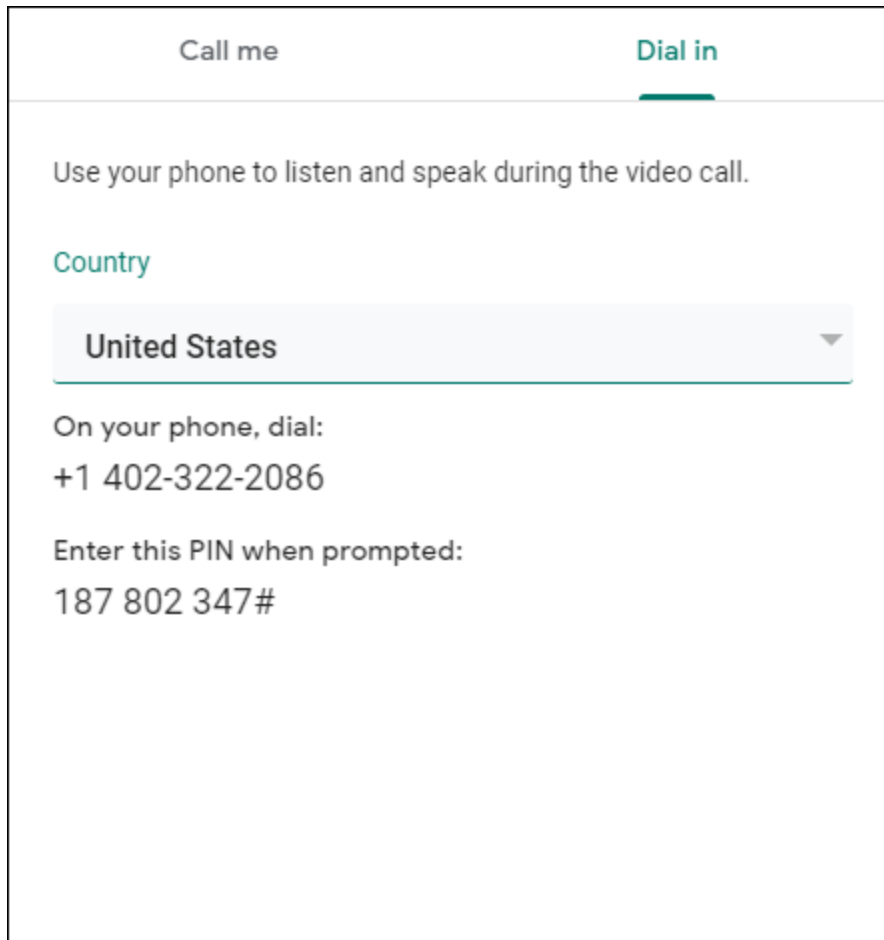
1. Tell Meet you want to use your phone:

- *If you're at the Ready to Join? screen*, select the option named Join and Use a Phone for Audio.

The Join and Use a Phone for Audio dialog box appears.

- *If you're already in a meeting*, click More Options and then choose Use a Phone for Audio from the menu that appears.

You see the unnamed dialog box shown in [Figure 13-11](#).



The screenshot shows a dialog box with two tabs: 'Call me' and 'Dial in'. The 'Dial in' tab is selected and highlighted with a green underline. Below the tabs, the text reads: 'Use your phone to listen and speak during the video call.' Underneath is a 'Country' dropdown menu with 'United States' selected. Below the dropdown, the text says: 'On your phone, dial: +1 402-322-2086' and 'Enter this PIN when prompted: 187 802 347#'. The dialog box has a thin green border.

FIGURE 13-11: Use this dialog box if you have to switch to your phone for audio during a meeting.

2. On the Dial In tab, use the Country list to select your country.

Meet displays a phone number and a PIN number.

3. Use your phone to dial the displayed phone number.

An automated service welcomes you to Google Meet and prompts you to enter the PIN.

4. **Use your phone's dial pad to enter the PIN number, followed by pound (#).**

You can now use your phone for talking and listening.

Customizing Video Meeting Settings

After you're safely ensconced inside a video meeting, you can use a few techniques to customize the meeting to suit your style. These techniques include changing the meeting layout, pinning, muting, and removing participants, and turning on captions.

Changing the meeting layout

By default, Meet chooses a meeting layout that (at least in Meet's opinion) best displays the meeting's video feeds and other content. Meet chooses one of the following layouts:

- » **Sidebar:** The video feed of the person who is speaking or presenting takes up most of the meeting window, and you see smaller versions of the other video feeds along the right side of the window.
- » **Spotlight:** The video feed of the person who is speaking or presenting takes up the entire meeting window. If you pin a participant (see “[Messing around with meeting participants](#),” next), that person's video feed takes up the entire window, no matter who is speaking or presenting.
- » **Tiled:** The video feeds for each participant are arranged in equal-size tiles to fill the meeting window. Meet can display up to 16 video feeds this way.

If you don't like the layout Meet chooses, you can change the layout as follows:

1. **In the meeting window, click an empty part of the screen.**

Meet displays its toolbar.

2. **Click More Options and then choose Change Layout from the menu that appears.**

I point out the More Options icon (the three vertical dots) earlier in this chapter, in [Figure 13-7](#).

Meet opens the Change Layout dialog box, shown in [Figure 13-12](#).

3. **Select the layout you prefer.**

If you want Meet to choose a layout for you, click Auto.

Meet switches to the layout you chose.

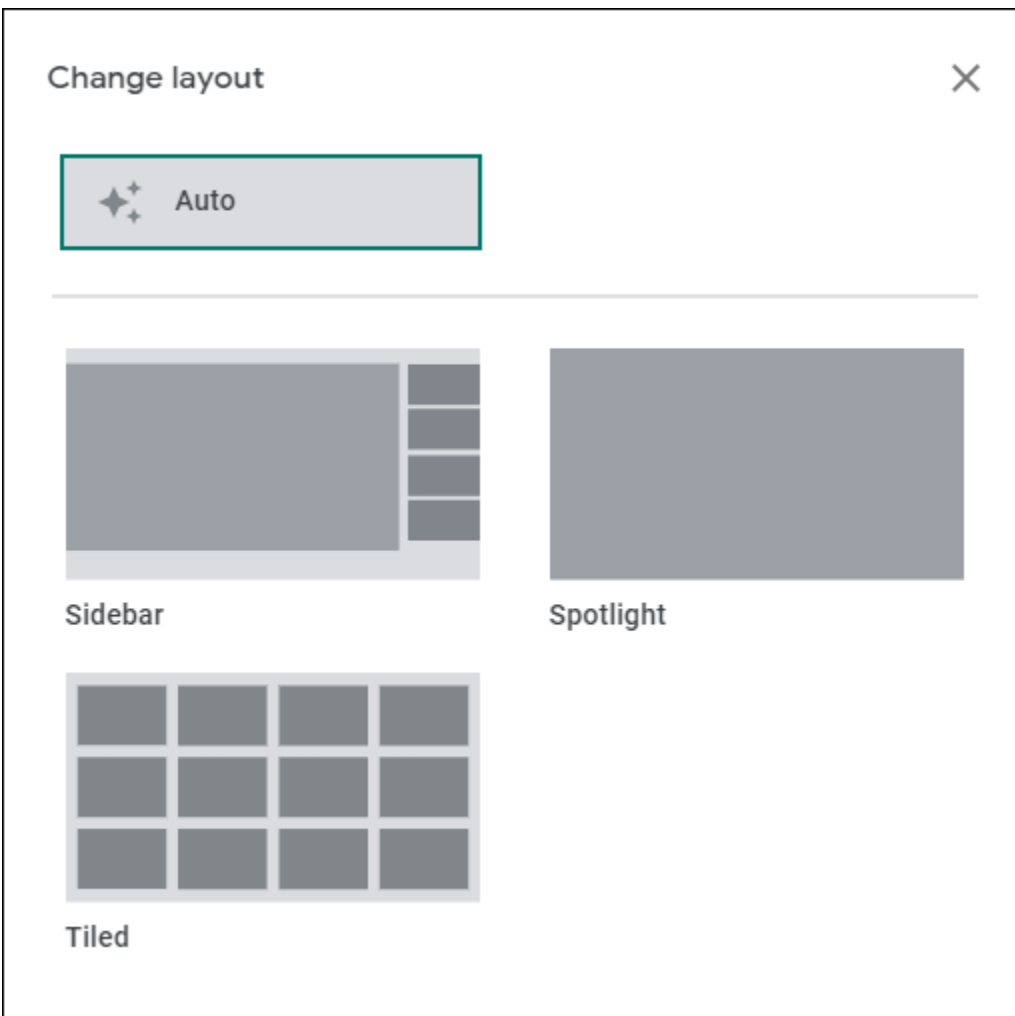


FIGURE 13-12: Use the Change Layout dialog box to pick out your preferred meeting layout.

Messing around with meeting participants

If you're the creator of the meeting, you can call upon some extra features to lord it over the other participants. To see what you can do, either move the mouse pointer over a person's tile, or click People (refer to [Figure 13-7](#)) and then select the person. You then see three icons, as pointed out in [Figure 13-13](#).

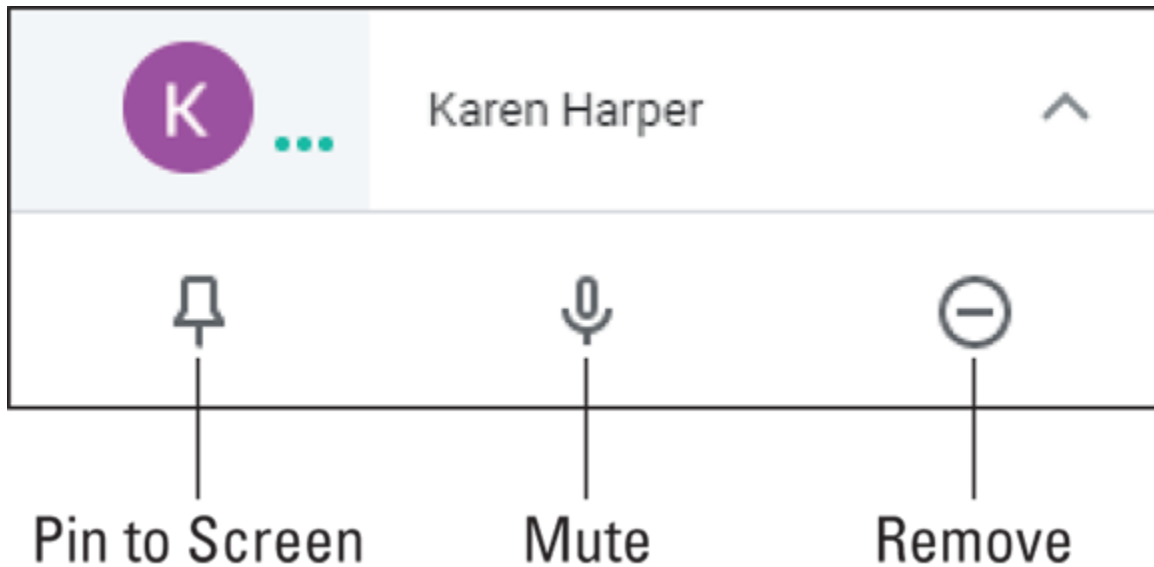


FIGURE 13-13: Select a meeting participant to see the options pointed out here.

Here's what each icon does:

- » **Pin to Screen:** Makes this person's video feed the main tile in the Sidebar and Spotlight layouts.
- » **Mute:** Turns off the person's volume for all meeting participants.



REMEMBER For privacy reasons, you can't unmute the person's (or any participant's) volume; the muted person must unmute their own volume.

- » **Remove:** Kicks the person out of the meeting. This is a drastic step, to be sure, but it might be your only option if the person is being belligerent, abusive, or in some other way too unpleasant to tolerate.

Displaying captions

If you're having trouble following what meeting participants are saying, hey, no judgment — it happens to the best of us. Meetings with two or three other people aren't usually a problem, but once a meeting's population swells much beyond that, the difficulty of keeping track of what's being said increases along with the size of the meeting.

You can make it easier to follow what's happening by turning on captions, which display a transcription of the meeting conversation.

Meet gives you two ways to turn on captions:

- » Click an empty part of the Meet window to display the toolbar, and then select the toolbar's Turn on Captions option.
- » Click More Options, and then choose Turn on Captions from the menu that appears.

Meet now displays a transcript of the meeting's conversations, as shown in [Figure 13-14](#).

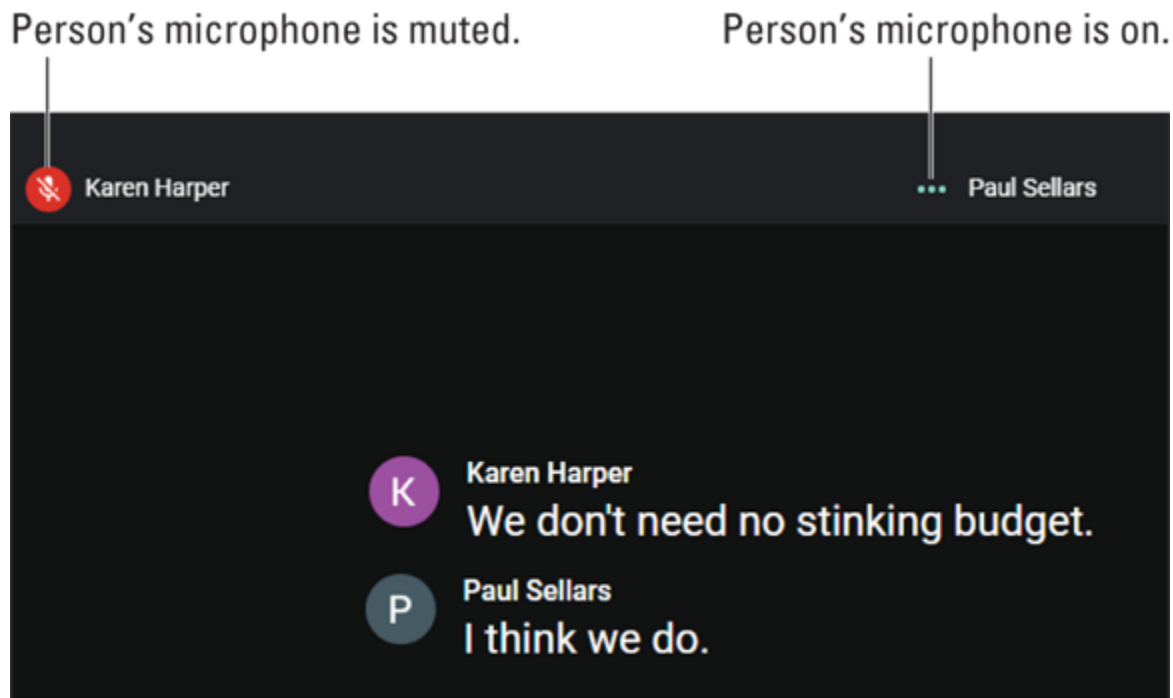


FIGURE 13-14: A video meeting with captions turned on.

Sharing Resources During a Video Meeting

A video meeting is mostly about having a face-to-face conversation with your colleagues, customers, suppliers, or whoever else shows up. I said “mostly” because every video meeting also offers ample opportunity to share other resources, which means either chatting with people in the meeting or presenting your screen to the meeting.

Chatting with meeting participants

Every meeting has what the corporate cognoscenti call the *back channel*, which refers to an informal communications channel that happens, as it were, “behind the scenes” of the meeting. In olden times (say, the early 2000s), the back channel might have been handwritten notes passed between participants. In the modern world of Google Meet videoconferences, the back channel takes the form of chat messages exchanged between meeting participants.

Why chat during a meeting? There are as many reasons as there are participants, but here are some of the most popular:

- » To share a link to something mentioned during the meeting conversation
- » To answer a question that comes up during the meeting without having to interrupt the current conversation
- » To ask a question about something said during the meeting
- » To let people know you have to leave the meeting, either temporarily or permanently
- » To comment on something said during the meeting



WARNING Bear in mind that everyone in the meeting can see every chat message, so be cool with any comments or questions.

To send a chat message, follow these steps:

1. In the Meet window, click the Chat icon.

I point out the Chat icon earlier, in [Figure 13-7](#).

Meet opens the Chat tab, which you can then use to view existing chat messages and post your own messages. (See [Figure 13-15](#).)

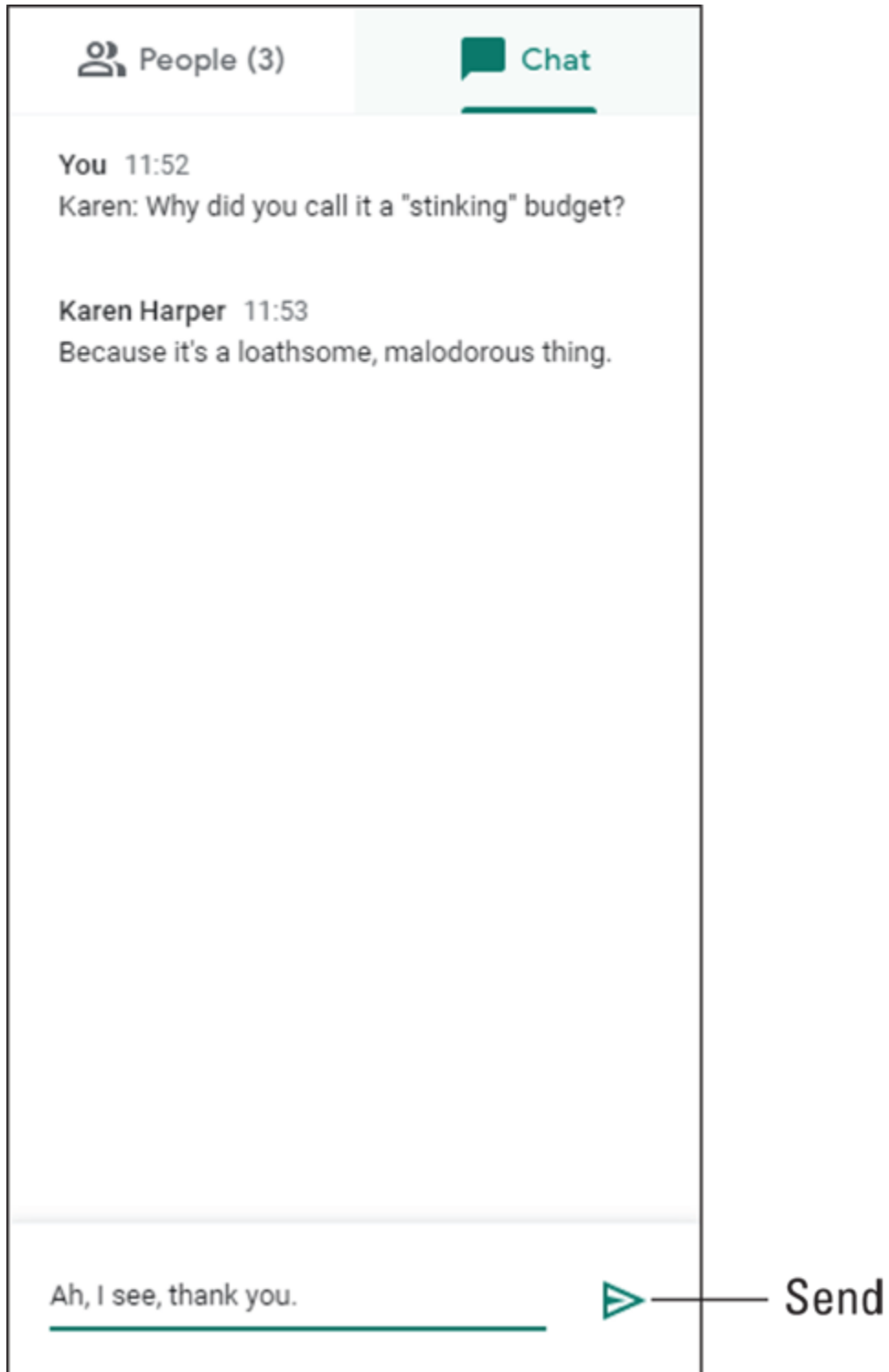


FIGURE 13-15: Use the Chat tab as your meeting's back channel.

2. **Enter the message you want to post to everyone in the meeting.**
3. **Click Send (refer to [Figure 13-15](#)) or press Enter.**

Meet posts the message to each participant.

Presenting your screen

If you want to impart some information, run through a technique, convey the results of something, or describe something visual, you can certainly try to do these things within the meeting conversation. However, even if you have the proverbial gift of gab, your words are likely to fall short. It's much better to *show* your meeting friends what you mean rather than describe it (pictures, despite inflation, still being worth the usual thousand words).

How do you show something in a meeting? Not by holding it up to the camera (although that's fine if you're showing off a new puppy). No, you *present* it, which means broadcasting to everyone in the meeting a live feed of your computer screen, which you then manipulate as needed. (You can scroll up and down, select things, choose menu items, and so on.) And if you need to show people only part of your screen, you can present just a particular window (or a browser tab, if you're using the Chrome web browser).

Follow these steps to present to the meeting:

- 1. In the meeting window, click an empty part of the screen.**

Meet displays its toolbar.

- 2. Click the Present Now button.**

If someone else is currently presenting, you see, instead of the Present Now button, *So-and-So* Is Presenting (where *So-and-So* is the presenter's name). Click that button and then, when Meet says this will allow you to take over the presenting duties, click Share Now.

Meet opens the Present dialog box. [Figure 13-16](#) shows the version you see if you're using the Chrome web browser.

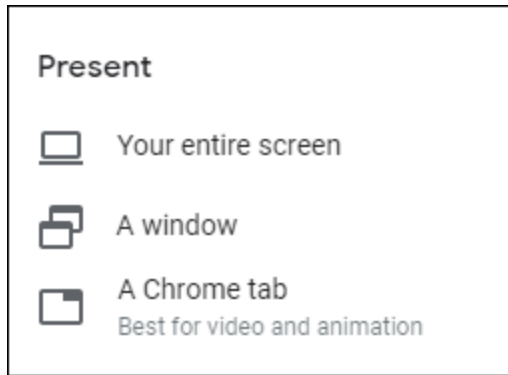


FIGURE 13-16: Use the Present dialog box to choose what you want to present to the meeting.

3. Select what you want to present:

- *Your entire screen:* Opens the Share Your Entire Screen dialog box, which displays a thumbnail version of your screen. Click the thumbnail and then click Share. (If you're using a web browser other than Google Chrome, you might see a dialog box that asks you to set up your browser permissions so you can share your screen. In most cases, you need to click the Share button to give the browser access.)
- *A window:* Displays thumbnail versions of your open application windows. Select the window you want to present, and then click Share.
- *A Chrome tab (Chrome only):* Displays the Share a Chrome Tab dialog box, which offers a list of your open Chrome tabs. Select the tab you want to present. If you don't want to share the tab's audio output, deselect the Share Audio check box. Click Share to make it so.

4. Share your content to the meeting.

5. When you're done, return to the Meet window and click Stop Presenting.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

JOIN A MEETING JUST TO PRESENT

In some cases, you might prefer to join a meeting only to present something. For example, if you're teaching a course via Meet, you probably want to skip the conversation part and go right into your presentation. Even if you stop presenting, you don't end up in the regular meeting space; instead, you just see a button that enables you to resume presenting.

Here's how to join a meeting only to present something on your screen:

1. **Select the meeting you want to join to get to the Ready to Join? page.**
2. **Click Present (instead of Join Now).**

Meet opens the Share Your Screen dialog box.

3. **Select what you want to share (entire screen, application window, or a Chrome tab, if you're running Chrome).**
4. **Click Share.**

Meet shares your screen with the meeting.