

Remote Teams – ideas to virtually connect and stay connected <3

When you work in a team it is essential to not only get work done together but also to get a feeling of being connected with each other, to know what is going in each other's lives and most important to have fun together.

Here are some ideas we liked very much which will help your team to become and stay a #DreamTeam when working remote and virtually! Because we all know #Teamworkmakesthedreamwork

1. Gossip-Time at every meeting

Take time to gossip, talk about the latest rumors and scandals. Studies show that this works as social glue and helps to weld the team together.

So at the beginning of every meeting take a few minutes to talk about your annoying customer, your strange colleague from the other project and maybe your boss - just don't be too mean 😊

Objective	staying in touch, enhance your team spirit
Time	as long as you like 😊
Material	none

2. Workload and mood check at every meeting

Knowing how your teammates are doing, if they are almost overworked or just in a bad mood, is important to not take comments the wrong way. When you know that your colleague's kid is sick, her brother lost his job or his dog just ran away it is a lot easier for you to offer help and also to understand how much or little the other team member is able to do.

Therefore you can make an easy chart (y – day of your meeting, x – mood or workload) to mark once workload and general mood at your weekly meeting or your daily. Every team member chooses a symbol (a star, a sun, a smiley...) and mark him*herself on the chart.

If someone is utterly overworked or in an especially good or bad mood the team leader should ask about it and those with free time can offer help.

Objective	knowing how the team spirit is, helping each other not to overwork
Time	10 minutes
Material	prepared charts

3. Your life story in five minutes

Split in teams of two, then you have five minutes. One tells her*his entire life story within these five minutes, the other one just listens. When the time is up, come back together as a group and take turns to tell the life stories from memory to the others.

Objective	listening exercise, learning things about your team mates you didn't know before
Time	5 minutes in teams + 5 minutes per team member
Material	none

4. How to tell an alien

Imagine aliens have landed in your city and since they don't understand our language, you need to communicate with pictures.

Ask every team member to draw (or choose from the internet) five pictures that explain/describe your company/yourself/your team/your city/the country you come from/any other topic.

You can either talk about the pictures or save them anonymously in a shared folder and then make guesses who drew/chose which pictures.

Objective	having fun, reflecting on your company/your team
Time	20-30 minutes if the pictures are drawn before
Material	paper and pencil/google picture search

5. Three truths and one lie

Take 3 minutes of individual work: every team member comes up with three interesting facts about her*himself and one lie (e.g. I love to go jogging, I have 3 cats, I don't have a driver's license, I have a tattoo). Then take turns - one tells their 4 facts, the others try to find out what the lie is.

Objective	having fun, getting to know your team mates
Time	20-30 minutes depending on team size
Material	none

6. Ten things we have in common

Try and find 10 things that all team members have in common. You may start with easy things like "we are all wearing pants today" (hopefully you have that in common...) but then be bold and move to more personal topics, things you like, vacations you have taken, values you share etc.

Objective	having fun, setting a common ground, creating a bond
Time	20-30 minutes
Material	screen sharing to take notes everyone can see.

7. My Precious

Very simple but can become quite intimate if the team wants to really open up: every team member brings one item/object that is more or less important to her*him. Then you take turns showing the item to the others and telling them the story about this object and why it is so precious to you!

Since the stories can take some time and every object should be cherished you can show one object every meeting.

Objective	setting a common ground, creating a bond
Time	10 minutes per story
Material	none

8. Tour around the apartment

Have you ever been to a colleagues apartment and realized how interesting and how strangely bonding it is to know how the other person is living? You can have that as a remote team as well: at every meeting one of your team mates takes the others on a virtual tour around their apartment. Walk around, show your favorite places, open your fridge, make the others jealous with your marble bathroom and your golden tub. Make sure that the one whose turn it is can prepare the apartment ;-)

Objective	getting a feeling for the other's life
Time	15 minutes per apartment
Material	none

9. A gift from my possessions

This game is quite special. You may need a little help from a friend or spouse who is not part of your team. Write down the names of all team members on separate papers. Then the friend matches each team member with another team member. You don't need pairs, just every team member has to get a different name. Then the friend secretly tells every team member who is their match (call them or send an email). There may also be tools on the internet for that.

For this matched team mate you now have to find a gift. But you are not allowed to buy or do something yourself. You have to look through your very own possessions and find something, which you think the other teammate, will like, which means something to you and which you are nevertheless willing to give away. This might take a few days. Then send your gift to the other team member.

On the next team meeting or maybe on an extra date take some time to open your gifts and tell the others why this gift is important to you and why you chose it as a gift anyway.

Giving a present is as special as receiving a gift – all the more when it is something that means something to you. Everyone will sure be touched.

Therefore, you should not do this too early within your team, since it is necessary to feel safe within the team and also know your team mates a little bit so you can choose a gift they will actually like.

Objective	get quite deep connection, open to each other
Time	A few minutes for the matching, a few days for choosing the gift and sending it, , about 60 to 90 minutes for opening the gifts
Material	help from a friend or an online matching tool

10. Your secret friend

This is a game you play to care about each other and to do something good for each other.

As explained in No. 9 you secretly match your team, so that everyone got the name of another team member. For the next four weeks, you are the secret friend to this teammate and your task is it to make this person happy. SO think about things that will make him*her feel good and comfortable and seen. You can send flowers or pizza, you can be especially nice, you can send gifts or try and get some of their work done. Be creative – there are so many possibilities to care for each other. However, don't forget: you are the SECRET friend! If all agree, you can reveal who was whose secret friend after the four weeks. Since four weeks are quite long, remind each other about this game at the team meetings.

While this game makes you feel good since you are getting gifts and everything, it also has a positive effect when you are actively thinking and caring about another person – so this is a double 😊

Objective	being nice to each other, feeling constantly connected
Time	depends on your creativity
Material	depends on your creativity

11. Pancakes vs. Waffles

Pancakes vs Waffles is one of the video conference games your people will love, where you make decisions collectively as a team. For round one, your team has to decide on whether the world is going to keep pancakes or waffles, and the other is to be obliterated from existence. Anyone can advocate for a favorite choice, and ultimately you must have a vote of majority to make the decision.

After one of the delicious breakfast foods is eliminated, you add a new competitor. For example, the game may become Waffles vs Pumpkins, and then Pumpkins vs Puppies, and then Puppies vs Kittens, and then Kittens vs Romantic Relationships, and similar.

Typically, the longer you play, the more intense the conversation gets and the more team members will share their values. The game mechanics are

helpful for virtual team building because the initial conversation of Pancakes vs Waffles is low stakes, and it only gradually becomes more personal as you get to later stages.

Objective	having fun, starting with light topics but getting more intimate
Time	as long as you want
Material	none

12. The perfect dinner

Have dinner together! Decide on a menu that you will cook separately at home. Set your tables nicely; choose a fine bottle of your favorite drink, light some candles. You may also want to even to a video conference while cooking.

Then have dinner together, toast each other, enjoy the good food, have a good time!

Of course, you can also have a big breakfast or brunch or make a lunch date. It doesn't matter. What matters is that you are having food together, which is a special way of connecting to each other!

Objective	having fun, doing something together that increases your team connection
Time	an evening and time for cooking
Material	Food, recipe, a kitchen

13. Let's dance!

These days social media is so spammed with short videos of people doing dance moves and choreographies to short music clips. Don't worry you do not need to be this sophisticated!

You can either do your virtual dance as a standalone event or add it as a quick three-minute session during a scheduled team call. You can even start the meeting with music already playing when the team members enter the conference room. The dancing-energy will boost the whole meeting!

Make sure that you have the team's favorite songs ready and just dance – no need for fancy moves, just let the beat move you.

Objective	having fun, lessen awkwardness, boosting energy
Time	3 minutes up to an whole evening
Material	playlist and a feature to play music within the conference room

14. Live remote co-working

You kind of lack discipline when working at home alone? Then open a virtual office! Do a video conference with your teammates without an agenda or anything, everyone focused on his*her own work. But even just seeing others work will make you feel less alone and get you more motivated and more productive!

Objective	feeling connected, getting work done
Time	as long as you like
Material	none

15. Exciting everyday items

This is a quick and easy story telling game. You can take turn so that at every meeting another team member tells a story.

Therefore one team member grabs an object that lies in arm length and then creates a story around it why this item is amazing and special and very very precious. The goal is to exaggerate and just make everyone laugh. For example you can tell about how this object is actually an old portkey that transported you to the Quidditch world champignonship where you met Harry Potter and his friends.

Objective	having fun, getting creative, learning how to improvise
Time	5 minutes per story
Material	a random object from your apartment

16. Call of the heroes

In order to make virtual meetings more fun, they should be structured as well as meet everybody's needs. To make sure that everyone is engaged, paying attention and that everybody looks out for the wellbeing of each other, you can assign specific roles to every team member.

Here are some ideas:

- Cheerleader: Responsible for keeping spirits high during the meeting! This person will enthusiastically cheer on the speaker and other team members, and lead others to do the same. This role is perfect for online team games too!
- Mover and Shaker: This role is like a virtual meeting traffic cop. When conversations get in the weeds or otherwise aren't moving along, then the M&S's job is to call it and get everyone back on track.
- Shade Thrower: Someone on your team is probably "that person", who always plays devil's advocate or similar. Empower your hero by assigning the role of Shade Thrower, which is essentially permission to politely boo others. This role is mostly for online team building games with an element of competition.
- Photographer: Throughout your call, there will be opportunities for photos and snapshots of your team. Remote teams need photos too! Give

someone the role of group photographer and they can snap a few shots to share by chat or email later.

- Scribe: For some people, Scribe is the least fun role at the meeting, and for others it is the dream job. The scribe is in charge of taking notes, and the better the notes the better the record of the meeting.
- Time Keeper: When having a virtual meeting it is essential that you stick to your agenda. So the Time Keeper is the one reminding the team to focus and to finally come to a decision.
- Coffee Breaker: When your work gets intense, when someone talks passionately about a specific topic or when discussions get heated, you might need someone who points out that a coffee break would be good.

Objective	having fun, getting creative, learning how to improvise
Time	---
Material	none

17. Origami Zoo

This is fun because usually no one is good at origami at the beginning. The more often you practice, the better you get. Send each team member a pack of Origami paper and then start building an origami zoo. You can take turns so that every other meeting another team member teaches how to do a new origami animal.

Objective	learning something new together, doing the same thing together
Time	15 minutes
Material	Origami paper, instructions from the internet

18. Let's get healthy

You do not need to play all the games while being in a conference call. You can also challenge yourselves between your meetings.

For example, try to drink more water since we all usually are not hydrated enough. Or you can agree on eating more fruit and vegetables. Try to be vegetarian for a month. Or vegan. At every meeting take a few minutes to talk about your success – who will become the healthiest team member?

Objective	pushing each other to live a healthier life
Time	10 minutes
Material	none

19. Whose emoji board is it?

Sometimes an emoji says more than a complete message – and the choice of emojis that one uses frequently may say a lot about that person. So make a screenshot of your emoji bar and upload them anonymously at one place. Then at the next meeting try to guess which screenshot belongs to which

teammate. It could also be interesting to ask about certain emojis and why they are used so frequently ;-)

Objective	having fun, getting to know new things about your team mates
Time	10 -20 minutes
Material	a shared folder

20. Guess the artist

Before the next meeting ask everyone on the team to send in a picture they can use a funny story or something interesting about their lives. Only rule: no pictures of oneself are allowed. Upload the pictures anonymously on your shared whiteboard or into a folder.

At the meeting take some time and try to guess who uploaded which picture. Then of course share your story!

Objective	getting to know each other better
Time	20-30 minutes
Material	Pictures, whiteboard or shared folder

21. Flat lay your desk

Every team member takes a flat lay pic of his or her working desk. A flat lay is that kind of picture where you look at the desk from above and all items are usually styled on a flat surface. Then share your pictures. Of course, you may also ask about certain details of the other's desks!

Objective	getting to know how the others work makes you feel connected
Time	20 minutes
Material	pictures of your desks

22. Rock, paper, scissors tournament

Choose two people who start a normal rock, paper, scissors game. The winner then says the name of the next person of the team to play with and so forth. You may try to become even faster and faster as a team.

Objective	having fun, increasing attention, wakening up
Time	5 minutes
Material	none

23. Tiny Campfire

This short evening event is something we recommend to do when you start working w in a new remote team. Someone needs to be in charge of organizing the event a little bit. But don't worry, this is fun too!

A week before the event each team member should be sent a little package with a candle, matches, marshmallows, skewers, chocolate and cookies.

Then on the evening take about 90 minutes to sit around your tiny campfire, roast your marshmallows over the candle (together with the chocolate and cookie if you like this), tell ghost stories and maybe some can play the guitar and you even sing songs.

Since the team may be shy at the beginning, you can get the conversation going with some ice breaker questions:

- either-or-questions (e.g. morning bird or bight owl? Beer or wine?)
 - Where did you grew up?
 - How did you end up here?
 - What do you do in your free time?
 - Where did you go on your last vacation?
 - Are you married, do you have kids?
 - Then you can get a little more into the details:
 - What is your most precious possession?
 - If you could have one superpower, which one would you choose?
 - What item or gadget are you currently dreaming of buying?
 - If you could live anywhere on this planet without having the leave anyone or anything behind, where would you live?
 - What aspect of your personality is the most valuable to those around you?
- Have a great time 😊

Of course, we did not come with all these ideas ourselves. So credit goes to

<https://miro.com/guides/remote-work/team-building>

<https://teambuilding.com/locations/virtual-remote>

<https://museumhack.com/virtual-team-building-for-remote-teams/>