

HOW TO HOST A VIRTUAL SAGE TABLE

Until further notice, all in-person SAGE Tables are cancelled. However, our all-generations LGBT community still needs each other to connect, share, and grow.

We don't know how long it will be before we can meet again in-person, so if you are ready to host a virtual SAGE Table, here are some resources and guidelines to consider.

STEP ONE: SELECT A PLATFORM

There are many different video and teleconferencing platforms on the market. There is no one platform that is clearly preferable for a SAGE Table. We suggest you research and try several options to see which best meets your needs. As you are comparing platforms, review the National Council on Aging's "[Tools for Reaching a Remote Audience](#)." This document can help you weigh the pros and cons of each platform in order to select what is most accessible to you and your community.

In making this selection, consider the number of attendees, the length of the event, and the platform with which you are most comfortable. Remember, it will be up to you and your fellow SAGE Table hosts to onboard participants and make sure they are comfortable with the technology. Hosts should also take the time to familiarize themselves with the various host functionalities, as well as important security features on each platform.

Many people are becoming more comfortable with video conferencing platforms, but remember that a voice only conference call can also be a simple way connect people.

Feel free to contact SAGE at info@sagetable.org for guidance on selecting the right platform, or accessing a platform that meets your needs.

STEP TWO: CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE & GOALS

Virtual events, unlike in-person events, have no geographic limits. While we encourage you to continue traditional community events with people from your area, this is also a chance to think outside the box.

Is this SAGE Table from and for your local community center, or a chance to bring old and new friends together from across the country? Is this SAGE Table a nationwide Drag Brunch, or an intimate conversation to help participants cope with these difficult times? Setting these goals as you begin planning can help guide decisions about outreach and which platform you select.

Once you have determined your desired audience and number of attendees, you can start to build an invitation list and an outreach plan.

STEP THREE: NOTIFY SAGE (PLEASE AND THANK YOU!)

Register your event with SAGE by visiting sageusa.org/join-sage-table. If the event is public, please also consider sharing on the [SAGE Table Facebook page](#). It is helpful for us to know when these events are happening so that we can provide support and follow up with you to see how it went.

STEP FOUR: OUTREACH & PREPARATION

Unlike an in-person event, no need to worry over the meal. Instead, take time to write up an email invitation, or perhaps a digital invitation on Facebook or Eventbrite.

In your planning, make sure to include your onboarding process. Once you're comfortable with the platform, we recommend one of the following approaches:

1. Setting a "trial run" open to all guests a day or two before the event.
2. If the RSVP list is small, recruit a volunteer to help you check in with those who have RSVP'd individually and ask if they would like a walkthrough to test the platform.

Expect that the beginning of the event will include many adjustments to the platform. Consider starting your event with a 15-30 minute "get to know [insert platform name] happy hour."

STEP FIVE: PROGRAMMING

How can an online event feel intimate, safe, engaging, and fun? Consider using these tools:

- Breakout rooms. Some platforms, such as Zoom, allow you (the organizer) to send people into smaller "rooms" to have more intimate conversations. Consider sharing question prompts before breaking attendees up into groups of 2, 4, or 6 for conversations. Give them about 5 minutes per person, and bring them back together for a group debrief.
- Invite attendees to use the "chat box" for interactive questions.
- Prepare a group question and give each person attending 2-4 minutes to respond.
- Invite everyone to bring their favorite meal to the table! Just because we're online doesn't mean we can't eat, drink, play, and dance together.
- Share a video, article, or another piece of media before the meal and ask people to discuss.
- Use some of the prompts from the [SAGE Table Host Toolkit](#) to get the conversation going.

Sometimes, all it takes is an open-ended question, like "How are you feeling this evening?" or "What made you smile today?" to start a conversation.

STEP SIX: GIVE US FEEDBACK

Virtual SAGE Tables are new for us, and we want to hear about your experience as virtual hosts. Please contact us at engagement@sageusa.org to tell us what went well, what you might change, how we can support you, and if you plan on hosting another SAGE Table.

