

Connect With WisLine



Audioconference Tips & Techniques





Welcome

Welcome to audioconferencing with WisLine. WisLine is the audio-conference service operated by the University of Wisconsin-Extension's Instructional Communications Systems (ICS).

ICS has been in the teleconferencing business since 1965. We've gained a wealth of practical experience in that time in hosting and conducting effective audioconference meetings. We'd like to share some of that experience with you in this booklet, and give you a quick guide to planning and hosting teleconference meetings. It is for both the "first timer" and the experienced audio-conference planner.

Thanks for choosing WisLine. For more information about WisLine, contact us at:

Web: www.uwex.edu/ics/wisline

Email: wisline@ics.uwex.edu

Phone: 608-262-0753



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Services & Features

Advantages

- ▶ **Easy to set up and use:** If you are new to using WisLine, our reservationists will walk you through your audioconference setup.
- ▶ **Availability of lines:** Now with hundreds of phone lines and our state-of-the-art digital bridge, WisLine is your audioconference call connection.
- ▶ **Convenient hours:** WisLine is available from 7 am - 10 pm, Monday - Thursday, 7 am - 5 pm on Friday, and 8 am - Noon on Saturday and other hours by special arrangement.
- ▶ **State-of-the-art digital audio quality and performance:** The sound quality stays at a high level even as the number of parties increases.
- ▶ **Service before, during and after your conference.** Our reservationists assist you with audio conference setup and our experienced technicians are available to help you.

Fast, Easy, Affordable

WisLine is the easy, fast and affordable way to meet with your colleagues without leaving your office or building. Wisline has the features and capacity to serve your audioconference call needs.

There are many good reasons to hold an audioconference meeting. An audioconference can help enhance and expedite the exchange of information, the gathering of opinions, and the generation of ideas. Today's best meeting leaders are blending several technologies in one meeting, such as email and the web, to accomplish their communication goals.

Dial-in, Dial-Out & More

- ▶ **Dial-in service:** Participants call in to WisLine and are automatically placed into their conference. Participants pay their own local long distance charges. Connection charges are billed to the conference coordinator.

Services & Features

- ▶ **Toll-free dial-in service:** Participants call in to WisLine using a toll-free number (no charge to the participants). All charges are billed to the conference coordinator.
- ▶ **Dial-out service:** WisLine operators place the calls to the participants. All charges are billed to the conference coordinator.
- ▶ Dial-in, dial-out and toll-free service can be combined.
- ▶ International calls can be arranged at any time. Rates vary by country.
- ▶ **Moderator preset:** Allows moderator to control some conference functions such as “muting” all participants.
- ▶ **Broadcast mode:** Allows only the moderator to be heard. Status can be changed by operator during audioconference upon request.
- ▶ **Pre-recorded inserts:** (CDs or cassettes) can be played during an audioconference, upon request.
- ▶ Interconnections with videoconferences or other audioconferences can be arranged.
- ▶ Entry and exit tones are available at no additional charge.
- ▶ Automatic operator recall by dialing *0 (star-zero) by participants or moderator.

- ▶ Audio levels can be adjusted on individual lines by operator upon request.
- ▶ Secured calls are available upon request.
- ▶ Other features include audioconference lock, participant PIN numbers, polling and voting options and custom welcome messages.

Enhanced Services

(Services must be requested in advance. Extra charges may apply.)

Sub-conferences:

Audioconferences can be split out into subgroups and reunited, with advance notice.

Question and Answer Session:

Moderated Q & A is available.

Weekend and Off-hours Calls:


Available upon request (unassisted weekend calls available at a reduced charge).

Recording/Archiving:

Conferences can be recorded to cassette tape, CDs, or streamed files (live or archived).



Audioconference Checklist



Use this checklist to help you plan and carry out meetings utilizing the WisLine audioconference service. It is for both the "first-timer" and the experienced audioconference planner.

Before the Conference

1. _____ Determine the purpose and objectives/goals of the meeting.
2. _____ Identify the people to be involved (and their locations).
3. _____ Identify the preferred times and dates (have 2nd and 3rd choices) for your audioconference. Is there enough time for you to prepare for and hold the audioconference?
4. _____ Contact WisLine as soon as possible for availability. Early contact helps secure the desired dates and times. (see page 10 for contact information).
5. _____ Become familiar with any unique features of the system.
6. _____ Outline your expectations: Ask yourself, "What results do I expect from this meeting?" Then structure your audioconference around this goal.
7. _____ Develop a welcome email, letter, or information packet for your participants. By providing them appropriate information, you will increase the productive and efficiency. This may be as simple as a list of resource on a web site, or developing a special page on your web site to support this meeting.

Your information packet, hard copy or electronic, may include some of the following:

- ▶ Purpose of the meeting, specific goals, issues or questions to be covered, including the agenda
- ▶ Information about other participants and/or special guests, again include web resources where applicable.
- ▶ Background materials on the issues to be covered and what information you would like the participants to have readily available during the meeting.

Audioconference Checklist

8. _____ Information for using the WisLine audioconferencing service.

▶ The phone number provided by WisLine and the audioconference code information. The "helpline" number in case the caller has technical problems.

▶▶ *Call-In Number:* _____

▶▶ *Conference Code:* _____

▶▶ *Helpline Number:* _____

▶ Information on proper operation of the equipment. This may include the placement of a speaker phone in a group setting, and how/when to mute the phone.

9. _____ Provide the participants "helpful tips" that will increase their productivity during the meeting. (Participant Tips are available.)

10. _____ Provide an evaluation/feedback form (may be handled electronically via a web survey) that will gather information to assist you in improving future audioconference meetings.

11. _____ Provide an email reminder of the meeting two to three days in advance, include any last minute information:

- ▶ A reminder of the date, time, phone number and passcode for the call,
- ▶ Encourage participants to be ready approximately five to ten minutes before the scheduled meeting time,
- ▶ An updated minute by minute agenda,
- ▶ A reminder of their specific roles during the meeting.





During the Conference

1. ____ Conduct a roll call of each party on the conference call, and an introduction as appropriate.
2. ____ Explain briefly why each party has been asked to attend the meeting/conference.
3. ____ Explain the protocol (i.e. asking each participant to speak one at a time during the meeting, to identify themselves by name and location, if appropriate.)
4. ____ Summarize the objectives/goals of the conference.
5. ____ Cover the agenda. Stick to the minutes per topic laid out in your agenda, and be respectful of others' time!
6. ____ Explain and follow the schedule.
7. ____ Ask for Feedback. Pause periodically, during the session, and ask someone to summarize what you've been discussing. Take a couple of questions.
8. ____ As you come to the close of the session, ask the participants to complete the evaluation/feedback form (included with the advance materials).
9. ____ Review
 - ▶ What's been accomplished toward meeting the stated objectives.
 - ▶ Review any specific assignments and due dates discussed during the meeting.
10. ____ End the call clearly and on time. Thank the participants and make sure all the participants know that the meeting is formally over, and stay on the line to ensure that everyone hangs up. If they stay on the call, it will show up on your bill.

After the Conference

1. ____ Summarize the results of the conference, as they relate to the objectives/goals and the next steps to be taken, by whom and by what deadline.
2. ____ Meeting minutes and any follow-up materials should be distributed as promptly as possible to remind all attending of their post-conference responsibilities. It should also address any "unfinished business" or "loose ends" for the next meeting.
3. ____ Evaluate the experience by reviewing your evaluation/feedback form. You may want to contact select members of the audience and ask their judgment of the audioconference and how future conferences might be improved.

Notes



Moderator Tips

A moderator/instructor should be designated for the audioconference. The moderator will act as the focal point for conducting the call and ensuring its smooth operation.

The tips below are provided as suggestions to support these efforts:

- ▶ Do the pre-planning.
 - ▶ Arrive at the audioconference early and check for dial tone on the equipment.
 - ▶ Use the best quality phone available for the meeting.
 - ▶ See that the appropriate hand-out materials are ready locally and in place as appropriate.
 - ▶ Have the roster, agenda and relevant telephone numbers available.
 - ▶ Start on time. Do not repeat what has happened for those who are late.
 - ▶ Do a brief roll-call to begin the conference.
- ▶ Review the agenda, and go over the ground rules or protocol materials.
 - ▶ Involve the participants often, calling on them by name. Summarize frequently.
 - ▶ Ask participants to identify themselves when speaking (identifying their location might also be appropriate).
 - ▶ If the meeting is to be longer than 90 minutes, plan for a break.
 - ▶ Keep the group on track; redirect the discussion to the agenda often.
 - ▶ If appropriate, take a final poll or survey of the participants before closing the meeting to ensure that all questions have been answered.
 - ▶ At the conclusion, summarize the audioconference, any decisions made, and specific actions to be taken.
 - ▶ When your scheduled time is ended, exit the audioconference promptly.
 - ▶ Press “*0” (star zero) on your touch-tone phone if you need assistance during a WisLine conference to alert an operator.
 - ▶ For additional technical assistance, call the ICS Helpline, 1-800-442-4614.

Participant Tips

The effectiveness of an audio-conference requires that participants take an active role and contribute to the experience. The following suggestions apply to audioconference participants.

- ▶ Call in about five minutes before the meeting/audioconference is scheduled to begin.
- ▶ If special materials are required, take time to review them before the conference and have them readily available.
- ▶ Make sure you understand the ground rules or protocol for the conference. If protocol information was sent, have it available for easy reference.
- ▶ Have note taking materials or your computer ready before the meeting starts.
- ▶ Find a comfortable, quiet environment where you are not likely to be disturbed by others or by outside (ambient) noise.
- ▶ Avoid participating in audio-conference calls using your cell phone or cordless telephone.
- ▶ Express your ideas freely. Ask questions. Participate actively.
- ▶ Alter voice tone, volume and pitch from time to time.
- ▶ Be sure to identify yourself when speaking.
- ▶ If you must leave early, let the group know.
- ▶ For best results use a full-duplex speakerphone with a mute capability. Adjust the volume level just high enough to avoid distortion and clipping which is often caused when the volume is too high.
- ▶ Use the mute button, on your speakerphone, to minimize background noise. Turn off any features like call waiting, paging services or music-on-hold so you don't distract other participants.
- ▶ Avoid taking other calls while you are participating in the meeting.
- ▶ To ensure clear communication speak directly into the speakerphone (about 18 inches is best). Another option for improved quality, if you are alone, is to use a headset microphone.

For information on speakerphone options, see our web site at www.uwex.edu/ics/ims/speakerphones.htm.



For more information

Voice:

608/262-0753

(M-F, 8am - 4:15pm)

Email:

wisline@ics.uwex.edu

Web:

www.uwex.edu/ics/wisline

Hours of Operation

Monday thru Thursday:

7 am – 10 pm

Friday:

7am – 5 pm

Saturday:

8am – Noon

Other hours are available by request (extra service charges apply)

General Policies

Cancellation Policy/Charge:

24 hour notice for cancellations is required. Audioconferences cancelled with less than 24 hours notice are charged the WisLine service (bridge) charge for the scheduled time per line reserved.

Minimum Charge:

There is 15-minute minimum charge on all calls. Charges begin the minute each line is connected.

Full Minute Charge:

Calls are charged per minute of use (rounded up to full minute).

Instructional Communications Systems (ICS), University of Wisconsin-Extension, serves the instructional and communication needs of Wisconsin's educational, governmental, and non-profit organizations by providing appropriate and leading edge technologies and services. One of the conferencing services provided by ICS is the WisLine audioconference service (WisLine). ICS provides planning, training and technical support for WisLine.



More Services Provided by ICS

ICS provides many other telecollaborative and support services, including:

Videoconferencing

Meet face-to-face with your colleagues, conduct courses, seminars, or training sessions without travelling across the state or country. Interactive videoconferencing makes your meetings come alive by bringing your associates into your meeting room. You can see, hear, and converse with others located hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

More information:

www.uwex.edu/ics/cv

WisLine Web Webconferencing

Webconferencing is a new way for communicating and collaborating in real-time. You can conduct live, interactive meetings, courses, and programs using a web browser and a phone.

WisLine Web combines the ease of a WisLine audio conference call with the power of visually interactive Web-based materials. To participate in a conference, you simply dial in to the phone conference, and point your Web browser to the pre-assigned URL to enter the conference center.

More information:

www.uwex.edu/ics/wlweb

ICS Webcast

ICS Webcast is a fully integrated system that allows the capture and recording of audio, video and data, such as PowerPoint slides, in one streamed media presentation. It automatically syncs a speaker's video with the delivery of his or her support data - such as graphics, slides, videotapes or DVDs - into one single, seamless presentation.

Presentations created with ICS Webcast can be presented live, so attendees can log in to an event URL and see and hear the presentation as it is happening, or presentations can be recorded and archived for later, on-demand viewing and distribution, either on CDs or on the Web.

More information:

www.uwex.edu/ics/webcast

Training, Multimedia Services, Technical Support & More

For complete information on the full range of services supported by Instructional Communications Systems, see our web site at www.uwex.edu/ics, or send an email to info@ics.uwex.edu.



www.uwex.edu/ics/wisline



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