

# Celebrating During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that we have had to reimagine how we celebrate. With travel restrictions and limits on the number of people gathered, milestones like graduations, birthdays, weddings, births, and holidays have taken on a different form. However, there are still ways to make these milestones memorable—here are some suggestions.

## Send something in the mail

If you're celebrating a loved one, sending something to them—whether it's a gift, a card, a letter, or a food delivery from a local restaurant—will feel special to them. You might ask them to open it over a video call so you can see their reaction. This also works the other way around: if you're hosting an event, you may want to send written invitations or party favours by post to help everyone feel connected to each other. It doesn't have to be extravagant to be meaningful.

## Play a game

Once you get a bigger group of people on a video call, it can be difficult to maintain an easy conversation. Instead, it can be easier to do an activity, such as a quiz, crossword puzzle, or other party game—apps like House Party have in-built games that people can play together. For smaller groups, try playing board games virtually (the website Tabletopia is a free website that allows people to play board games together; you can also play some games via app).

For extra special occasions, you can even hire comedians, magicians, and other entertainers to host the event (running a quiz or facilitating a game, for example) or do an online performance.

## Curate the conversation

Another way to manage the conversation online with a larger group is to structure the conversation by asking specific questions. For example, if you're gathering to celebrate someone's birthday, you might ask everyone to come with a favourite funny memory; if you're hosting a retirement party, ask everyone to bring a wish for the person's retirement years.

## Live stream

For bigger events like weddings, you may decide to set up a live stream so that family and friends who can't be present can still be part of the day. Here are some of the questions you'll need to answer ahead of time:

- Who will be in charge of the stream on the day?
- What streaming platform or video call technology will you use?
- How will guests be notified of the event, and how will they access the link? Will it be easy for older people or members of your community with disabilities to access it?
- Will the action be audible? Will you need to use microphones to amplify the voices? Does the live streaming service provide closed captions?
- Will you need a webcam?
- Does the venue have a strong enough Wi-Fi signal? If not, can you buy mobile data to run the stream?
- What laptop will you use? Where will you plug it in? Do you need an extension cable?

## Be creative

A UK couple made headlines by having a “drive-in wedding,” meaning they could host a large number in person without breaking COVID-19 restrictions. While sticking within the guidelines of your location, you might be able to find a similarly creative way to celebrate.

Alternatively, there are easier ways to celebrate without using video calls: an extended family might put up Christmas decorations in their respective houses on the same day and send photos via email, or all cook the same recipe for dinner on the same day.

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Last Reviewed Nov 2020

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