

Some Notes on Using Jitsi

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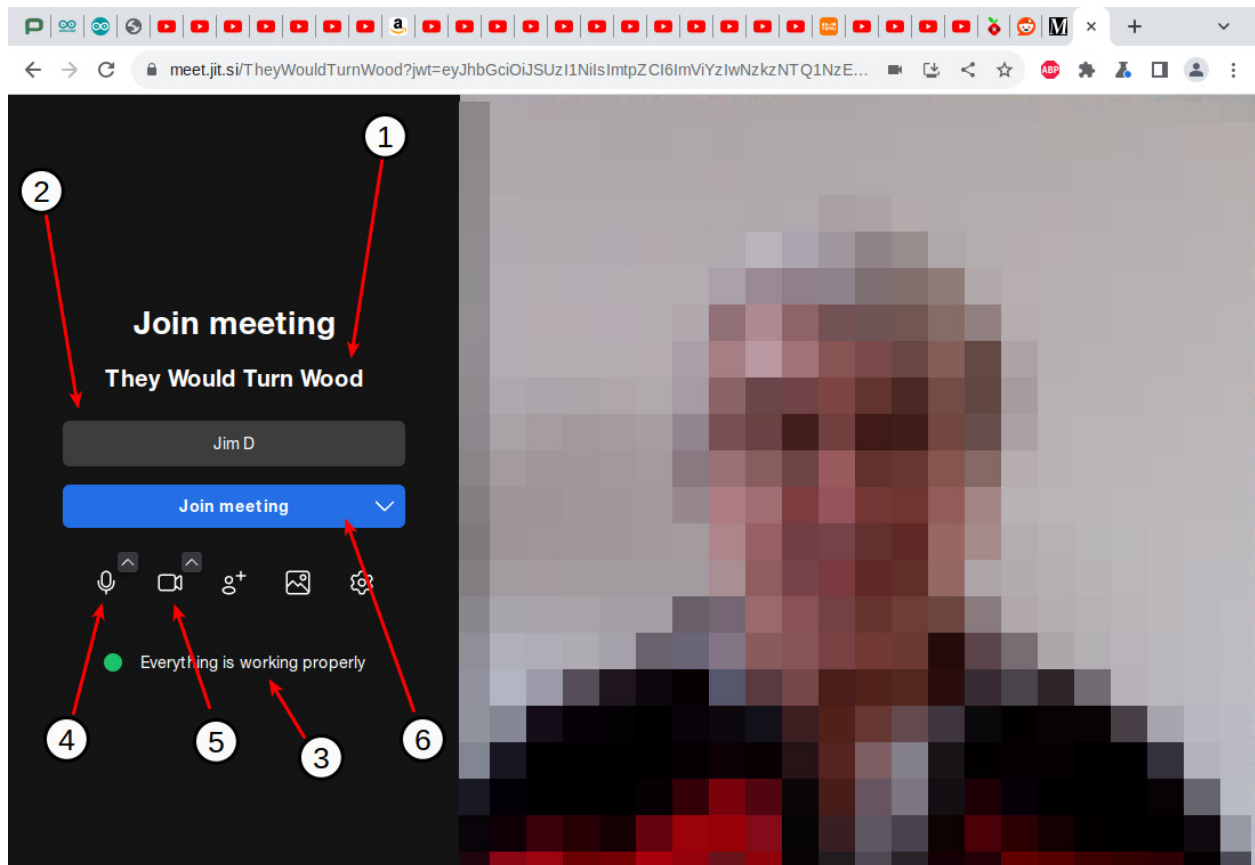
This document is a quick overview of how to use the Jitsi videoconferencing software for “attending” NWG meetings when you can't be there in person. (As I'll explain at the end, you can also easily and freely use it for your own meetings with family and friends).

Starting Jitsi

Jitsi is an “app” that runs in your browser (you can also get an app for your phone, but you probably don't want to join an NWG meeting on your phone). The major browsers (Firefox, Chrome, Chromium, ...) are all supported, provided that your browser is reasonably up to date.

If you get an email with a link to an NWG Jitsi meeting, it will be some horrible long thing (like <https://meet.jit.si/moderated/a4ec50c5d39d4120fbf5c54a3a8cac584cf9498-c2a8ae60e4a1593a3a5f42f1e>) that you don't want to re-type, so it might be easiest to read your email on the same computer as the one you plan to use for joining the meeting.

When you click on the received link, or copy and paste it into the browser's address bar and hit **Enter**, you should see a window that looks something like the following, except you should see a clear image of yourself, not a pixellated image of someone else:



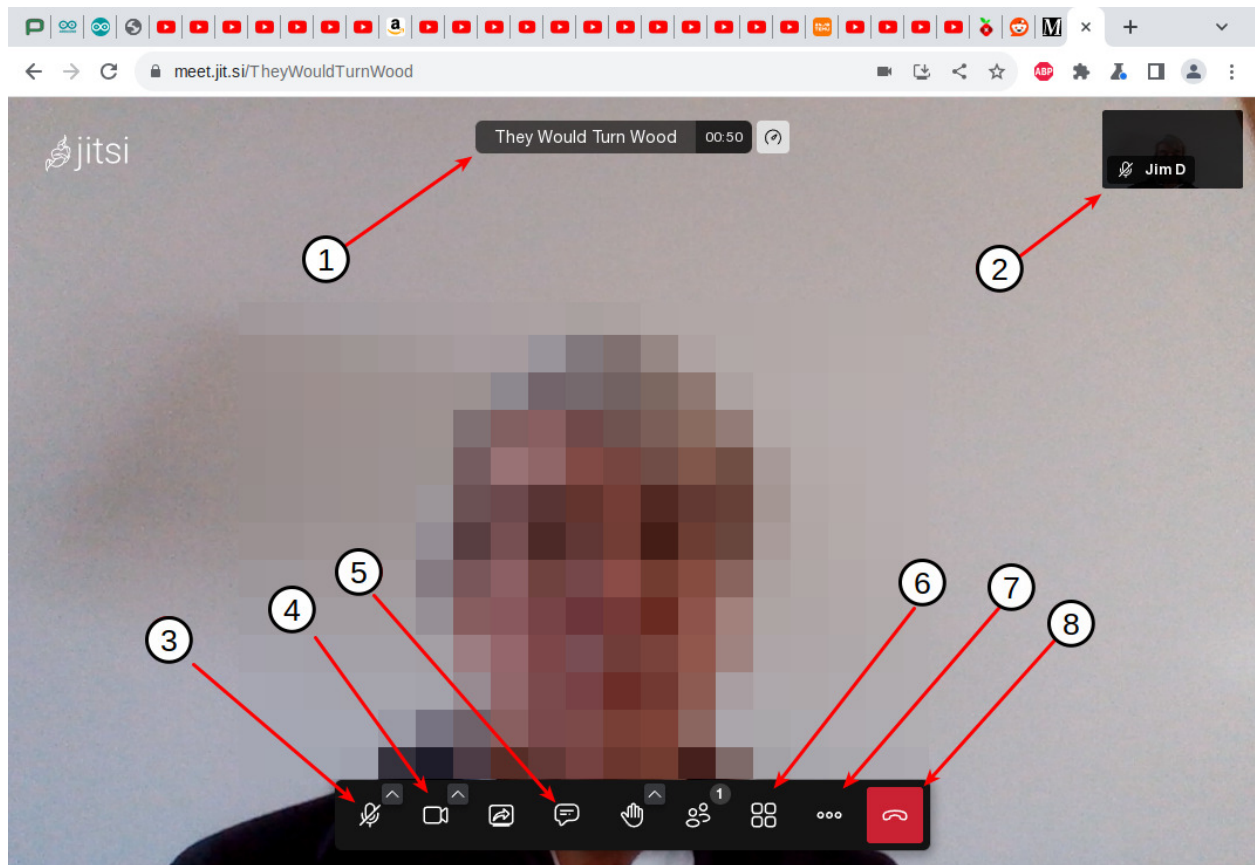
(Yes, I have way too many tabs open. And you won't have those numbered red arrows.)

Looking at the numbered “pointed-to” items in the picture on the previous page, here are some important things to know:

1. **The meeting name:** I didn't capture my login screen before the last meeting, so I just made up a meeting to grab this picture. The meeting I made up was given the name “They Would Turn Wood”, and that is shown on the Jitsi login page.
2. **Your name:** unless you are in the witness protection program, you should put your name in here so the other meeting attendees know who you are. Click in that grey box and type in your name, if it isn't already there.
3. **Working blurb:** with luck, Jitsi will tell you that all is good, and you won't have to fuss with audio or video settings at all. But in case things are not working, . . .
4. **Microphone icon:** if there is a slash ('/') through the icon, that means that your microphone is muted (or otherwise not working). In this case, try clicking on the icon; if the slash goes away, you should be good. If the slash doesn't go away, click on the small '^' near the microphone icon. This brings up a little “panel” which allows you to choose your microphone device, and also provides a sound meter which should react to you speaking into your microphone. (NOTE: the sound meter reacts even if your microphone is muted in your Jitsi web browser tab!).
Speaker: this panel also allows you to choose your audio output device (e.g., speakers or headphones). If you hover your mouse pointer over any of the available audio output devices, a small button with the word **Test** should appear. Click that button, and if you hear a sound like a phone ringing, this means that your audio output device is working.
Still having problems? If you can't get your mic or speakers (or headphones) working from here, you may need to either (a) restart your web browser, in case some other tab has previously captured your mic or speaker, or (b) go into your computer's sound controls and see if you can get things working from there.
5. **Camera icon:** if you don't see your own smiling face on the screen, and there is a slash through the camera icon, click the camera icon to see if that improves things. If not, try clicking the '^' above and to the right of the camera icon. This will bring up a little control panel which allows you to select a camera (as well as some other things).
Still having problems? If you are using an external webcam, make sure it is plugged in. If you are using an internal webcam and your computer has some ability to “mask” or “hide” your camera, make sure you un-hide it (and, if you do this, you may have to restart your web browser). Otherwise, If you can't get your webcam working from the little panel, you may need to either (a) restart your web browser, in case some other tab has previously captured your camera, or (b) go into your computer's video controls and see if you can get things working from there.
6. **Join meeting:** when you are ready to go, click this blue button to join the meeting.

Using Jitsi After Logging In

After logging in, you should see a browser window which looks something like the following:



Here are the important parts of the browser window:

1. **Meeting name:** as explained on the previous page, the name of the meeting I used to grab screen shots was “They Would Turn Wood”.
2. **Meeting participants:** on the right side of the screen you will see a list of meeting participants. (But see item 6 below!) As I was the only person in this “meeting”, there is only one little box in the column (namely, the one for me).

NOTE for items 3–8: if you don't see the icon bar at the bottom of the Jitsi browser window, move your mouse down to the bottom of the window and it should appear.

3. **Microphone icon:** you might be automatically muted when you join, as I was here. So if you want other meeting participants to hear you, you may have to unmute again. Like before, you can find more audio controls if you click on the '^'.
4. **Camera icon:** your camera won't likely get automatically turned off. However, when the meeting starts and everyone is watching the demonstrator, you might want to turn

off your camera (by clicking on the camera icon) so that your video isn't sent to everyone (and thus their home internet won't have to share the demonstrator's video with your video). Besides, nobody wants to see you scratching yourself. But if you are going to ask a question, go ahead and turn it back on.

5. **Chat window:** if you click on this icon, it will open (or close) the chat window. If you are having problems with your audio, you can still use this to communicate with the other people who are on-line. Or if you want to ask a question to the other on-line people without interrupting the demonstration, this is one way to do it.
Note: a small number appears next to the chat icon if there are unread messages or questions there. If you leave your chat window closed to save screen space, you might want to glance at the chat icon every now and then to see if any new messages have appeared.
6. **Tile view:** this changes the way in which you see the other on-line attendees (including the person running Jitsi at the meeting). Before the meeting starts, you might want to see everyone's camera in a grid, and after the meeting starts you probably want the video from the meeting to take up most of the browser window.
To the left of the tile view icon is the **Participants** icon; clicking this will give you yet another arrangement of the other users.
7. **Everything** (three dots): if you click on this icon, you can find everything that you can change, configure, set up, . . . One useful item is **View full screen**. Another useful item is **Settings**, which you may have to scroll the list down to see (depending on how big your browser window is, and so on).
8. **Hang up:** you can leave the session by clicking the red phone icon.

Other Considerations

As you see, there are a lot of controls to fuss with. If you plan on attending the meeting on-line, I suggest that you try to sign in 15 minutes early (or so). Aside from giving you time to make sure your audio and video are cooperating, there will probably be other members on-line to shoot the breeze with (and maybe help you get set up!).

If you own a headset, or are willing to invest in one (wired ones can be had relatively cheaply; for example, Best Buy has a wired Logitech headset for \$20), I strongly recommend using one. The audio is likely clearer through headphones than through your speaker, especially if there is other noise in your home. Maybe even more importantly, a headset mic is less likely to pick up other noise from your home than the one in your computer, such as someone coming in and talking to you, or your dog barking at the cat digging up your flower bed.

Creating Your Own Jitsi Meetings

As mentioned earlier, Jitsi is free to use for anyone, it doesn't have a time limit on video calls, and you aren't tied to only meeting with people who worship the same mega corporation as you do.

Jitsi provides two kinds of meetings:

- a. **Moderated meetings:** this is the type of meeting Calum creates for our Guild meetings. To get into a moderated meeting, you need to know that long nasty URL he sends before the meetings, and it is very unlikely anyone could guess this. Creating a moderated meeting takes a tiny bit of work which I won't detail here.
- b. **Unmoderated meetings:** these meetings can be joined by anyone who knows (or guesses) the URL. But they are dead easy to set up. For example, I just typed (into my browser address bar)

`https://meet.jit.si/TheyWouldTurnWood`

and a meeting was automatically created for me. So if you want to have a video call with some friends, you can just pick four words (like “they”, “would”, “turn” and “wood”), capitalize each word, and type them in (with no spaces between them) after “`https://meet.jit.si/`”. Email or text that URL to your friends, tell them to visit that URL, and away you go.

If you set up a Jitsi meeting with some family or friends, and they haven't used Jitsi before, you might suggest they read this document first.

Last Thoughts

I tried to cover the necessary ground without making this so long that no-one would read it. But if you think I omitted something really important, email me (see the newsletter for my email address) and let me know.