

## GeoWeek: Ask-a-geologist

### What's the idea of 'Ask-a-geologist'?

**Context:** Many GeoWeek 2020 events have been cancelled due to COVID-19, so we are exploring ways in which we can still promote Earth Science. One suggestion is to hold online 'Ask-a-geologist' sessions for one (or more!) short periods in the Geoweek, so that anyone can virtually bring a rock/fossil/mineral for inspection, discussion and (potentially!) identification. We figured that some geoscientists, especially those postgraduate or doctoral researchers working on lab- or field-based projects, might welcome something a bit different to help fill their time.

Think of it as a kind of live version of [#stonesathome](#) or [BGS's Rock Doctor](#) on Twitter...

You might not feel confident about identifying every offering. You might not be able to see any useful features via their dodgy webcam. This does not matter: it's the conversation you have about their prized sample that is the whole point. In fact, in my experience anyone whose rock proves to be beyond the expert's expertise gains considerable kudos, plus it enhances the value of their chosen rock/mineral/fossil.

### What do I need to do?

#### 1. Plan your activity

- a. Select your preferred meeting app
- b. Think through how your interaction with participants will work in your chosen interface
- c. We recommend persuading a friend/colleague to pair up for the live session to help out
- d. Maybe limit how many samples participants can bring
- e. Invite potential participants to share/email you photo(s) of their rock ahead of time

#### 2. Publicise your session(s)

- a. Submit outline details of your event in the [online form](#) at GeoWeek HQ
- b. Mark the 'location' of your event on the event map (i.e. your location!)
- c. Check out the [Publicity Toolkit](#) at GeoWeek HQ for ideas
- d. Contact/post to local Facebook groups; local schools (who will ping home schooling parents); local geology groups (U3A, OU Geological Society etc)
- e. Basic info: what, when, how long, why (GeoWeek context)
- f. Brief bio; include a picture of yourself to personalise the event
- g. Instructions on how to access the session – you might want to invite participants to contact you beforehand for these details, so you have an idea of numbers
- h. Remind participants to ensure good lighting – strong daylight is best for viewing samples
- i. Request participants to use earbuds/headphones/headset to reduce feedback/echo

#### 3. Tips for your session

- a. Use video for yourself, if possible – make it personal!
- b. Grab a hand lens yourself, to demonstrate how to look closely at a hand specimen
- c. If you don't recognise the sample straight away, gather data:
  - i. Ask where it was found/bought
  - ii. Prompt for field relations (in situ, from beach, from driveway gravel...)
  - iii. Guide the participant to make observations for you: grainsize, colour, texture, structures, fossils, crystal shape...
  - iv. If, after all this, you still cannot identify the sample, don't be afraid to say so. They may be more impressed that their sample was the one that 'defeated' the expert!
- d. If you do recognise the sample immediately, try not to just to name it and move on. Take a little time to tell the story of its origins: whether it was 'forged in the bowels of a volcano' or 'accumulated over patient millennia on an abyssal sea floor' or 'entombed in mud and delicately lacquered with fool's gold'...

## A quick comparison of features of some free video meeting apps

Some information below may be out of date or has changed as a result of the COVID-19 situation.

Application	Video	Text chat	User list	Screen share	Hand up	Comments
GoToMeeting	No*		Limit: 3*	Yes		Compatible with multiple apps
Cisco WebEx	Yes		Limit: 3*	Yes		Secure
TeamViewer	Yes	Yes	Not sure...	Yes		Enter via meeting ID ± password
Skype	Yes	Yes	Up to 25 (or 50?)	Yes		Users must download skype, create an id, and friend host
Join.Me	Yes	Yes	Limit: 3*	Yes		Simple, compatible, no sign-up. Mute everyone else option?
Zoom	Yes		Limit: 100	Yes		40 minute limit lifted at present; secure?
Apache OpenMeeting	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	Yes		Not as pretty... Longer setup
Google Hangouts	Yes	Yes	Limit: 25*	Yes		Users need Google account and to friend host, but no download
UberConference	Yes		Limit: 10*	Yes		45 min limit for free version
TrueConf Online	Yes		Limit: 3*	Yes		
FreeConference	Yes	Yes	Limit: 5*	Yes		No downloads required
Appear.in	Yes		Limit: 4*	Yes		
Slack Video	Yes	IM	Limit: 15*	No		For Slack users only
WhatsApp	Yes		Limit: 4	No		Only to contacts and groups
Jitsi Meet	Yes	Yes <sup>1</sup>		Yes	Yes	No account required; custom url invite. Can click any user to see their video. Android, iOS – not Windows.

\*Feature only available on paid plans <sup>1</sup>web version only

## What is GeoWeek?

Launched in 2018, [GeoWeek](https://www.geoweek.org/) aims to encourage 'active geoscience' – running events for people all round the UK to experience geology locally. While the hugely successful '[Geolodia](https://www.geolodia.com/)' in Spain is focused on a single weekend, GeoWeek spans two (9-17 May in 2020) so as to include weekday events as well.

	<a href="https://twitter.com/GeoWeekUK">@GeoWeekUK</a>	<a href="https://twitter.com/activeGeoWeek2020">#activeGeoWeek2020</a>
	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/GeoWeekUKI">@GeoWeekUKI</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/GeoWeekUKI">www.facebook.com/GeoWeekUKI</a>