



Using Audio with Centra Events

When using Centra for online collaboration, you have two choices for audio (this is defined as hearing what is being said and being able to speak):

1. Voice over Internet (VOIP)
2. Conference Call

When the event is created, the event creator selects what audio method will be used. A Centra event can use Voice over Internet or Conference Call. The following are some considerations, best practices, and recommendations when using VOIP and Conference Call in Centra events.

Which One Should I Use?

There is no clear answer; the method of audio used is predominately based on preference. You also may want to consider the following:

- Do you want to record the Centra event? If the answer is yes, use VOIP to record the audio.
- Do users have access to headsets or speakers/microphones on their PCs/laptops? If no, use Conference Call audio so all users can hear and participate.
- Are your event leaders familiar with using VOIP to lead a Centra event? If yes, then VOIP is a terrific cost saving audio method.
- Will all participants be at a PC while attending the Centra event? Or, will some be traveling without a computer and Internet access? If some participants are traveling and will be participating via phone, use a Conference Call.
- Do you plan to use Breakout Rooms? If yes, use VOIP.
- What are you encouraging? Most organizations promote the cost savings of using VOIP and want their users to use VOIP whenever able. Some organizations have a preference for Conference Call. It's your choice!

These are some of the questions that will help you determine what audio method you should chose for the event, but ultimately the choice is yours. VOIP, or Conference Call?

Using VOIP (Voice over Internet)

Using VOIP can save you considerable money by eliminating the use of conference calls for meetings and online sessions. Centra uses low bandwidth VOIP technology that doesn't rely on a user having a phone or phone line to participate in a Centra event. Users with PCs that include built-in speakers and microphone can immediately take advantage of VOIP. No special equipment or installation is needed to use VOIP. Some customers, however, make computer headsets available to eliminate ambient noise and to minimize disturbing others in a shared or open workspace. The cost for headsets is nominal.

This is a picture of a headset that can be used in Centra events.



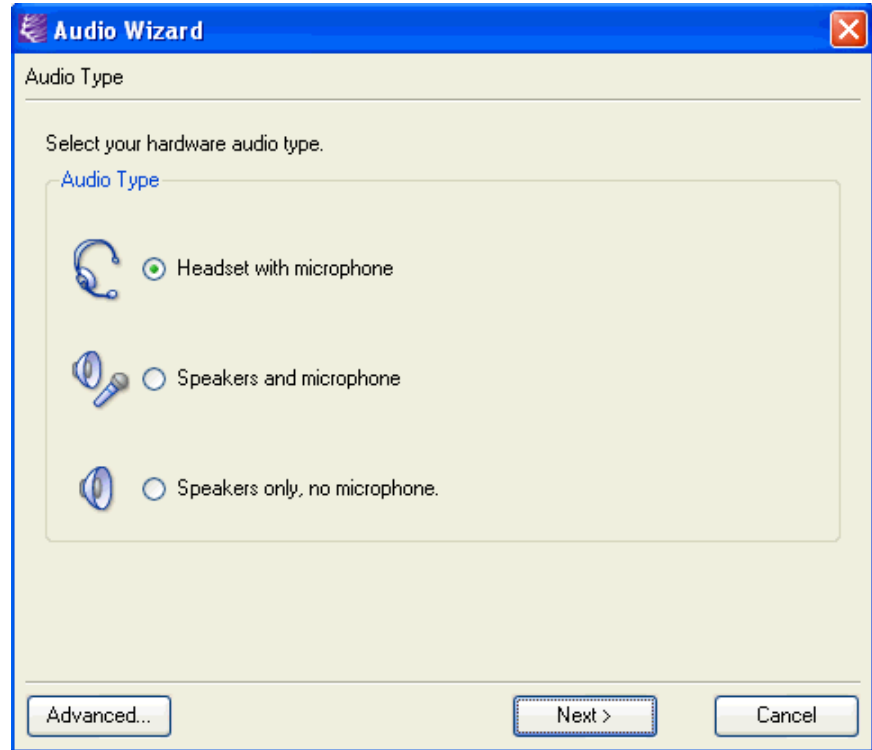
There are many models with various features. Select one that best suits your personal preferences. For additional information about headsets, see [Configuring your Audio Headset](#).

Using VOIP (Voice over Internet)

Users may be intimidated by VOIP at first. VOIP is very simple to use. First-time VOIP users are instructed to "tune" their audio using the Audio Wizard when they enter the Centra event. The Audio Wizard launches automatically and users select their audio mode. Their choices are:

- Headset with Microphone
- Speakers with Microphone
- Speakers, but no Microphone

Once they select their audio mode, the Audio Wizard guides them through tuning their speakers and adjusting the volume on their microphones. Users are encouraged to do this each time they participate in a Centra event to ensure they can hear and speak. This takes less than a minute and is very important and useful.



After completing the Audio Wizard, users enter the Centra event. Users will hear the audio through their speakers or headsets and use one of the various options (CTRL key, Lock to Talk, etc.) on the Centra interface for speaking. The Centra event leader controls speaking order and determines whether multiple people can speak at the same time (helpful to create a “meeting atmosphere” of free-form conversation). Your Centra leaders should be familiar with how to use their audio and how to instruct the participants to speak.

Enhancing Your VOIP Experience

When creating a Centra event you will be able to select an audio codec in the Audio section. An audio codec is an algorithm used to compress and decompress the audio stream. An audio codec is selected by default; however, if your company has enabled other options in the Domain Settings, you will be able to select an audio codec from the following choices:

- Centra SC3 Codec (less than 1KB/second)
- ILBC Codec (2KB/second)
- ISAC Codec (3 KB/second)

- IPCMWB Codec (13 KB/second)

During system setup a default codec will be selected for all Centra events. You also will select what codecs you want available when creating Centra events. Most Centra users select the 2KB/Second or the 3KB/second as the default. Both produce good audio quality without consuming a lot of bandwidth. The 13KB/second codec is popular for “high quality” events. The audio quality will be similar to “conference call” audio. We encourage you to experiment with the codecs and determine which codec you want to use when using VOIP. Bandwidth consumption increases with audio quality so be sure to discuss this with your IT department.

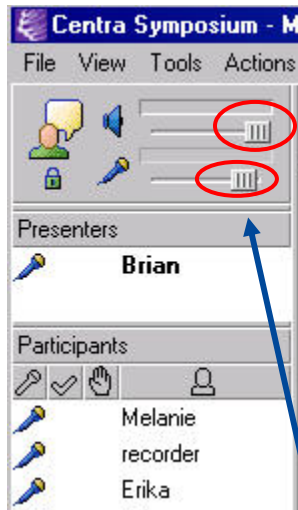
Best Practices for Using VOIP

The following are some best practices for using VOIP when attending a Centra event.

- Always run your Audio Wizard before attending the event to ensure your sound is optimally tuned. The Audio Wizard can be accessed through the System Check link or during an event either from the Tools menu or by clicking the Headset icon on the Toolbar. It takes less than a minute to run and can ensure you can hear and be heard.
- The Audio Wizard can be run several times, so run it until your audio is fine-tuned.
- If using a headset microphone, place the microphone approximately three inches from your mouth. If your microphone is too close to your mouth, it will create a ‘muffled’ sound in the session.
- Ensure the headset plugs are fully plugged into the correct ports on the PC/laptop. If using a laptop, plug the headset into the laptop, not the docking station.
- When in a Centra event, hold down the CTRL key for one second before speaking, and keep it held down for one second after speaking. This will ensure all your audio is being heard.
- If you are using external speakers and a microphone, select that option in the Audio Wizard. This will ensure you don’t have ‘loopback’ audio (an echo that results from your voice being heard in your microphone and being re-broadcast). If using a headset, select, “Headset mode”.

- In the event, you can adjust your sound or microphone level. For example, if someone is too loud, you can adjust your sound to turn it down. Likewise, you can also turn up your sound, if you can't hear someone. From within the session, find the speaker icon and the microphone icon (found directly above the presenters panel), and adjust the sliders to the right if too soft, or to the left if too loud. You can do this right in the session without having to leave the session.

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Move this slider to the right if you can't hear the person who is speaking, or to the left if the speaker is too loud.

Move this slider to the right if your microphone volume is too low, or to the left if your microphone volume is too loud.

Using Conference Call Audio

Another audio option in a Centra event is a conference call. You provide the conference call information when creating the event and the information is displayed as participants enter the Centra event. Conference calls at Vanderbilt are handled through AT&T's service. Anyone with a V-net code can acquire a host account on AT&T's reservationless audio conference service, with a unique conference number and codes. For details on subscribing to this service go to <http://its.vanderbilt.edu/services/webmeeting/>.

Participants dial into the conference call for audio and use Centra for the visuals and interactivity. In this scenario the Centra event leader focuses on using the collaboration tools (Survey, Application Sharing, etc.) while the audio is transmitted via the phone. When users have questions, they simply speak into their phone. Everyone who is on the conference call line can hear and respond.

Conference call audio is very easy to use and, because participants are familiar with conference calls, they don't worry about things like, are they transmitting their audio or how to resolve an issue if someone is not able to hear through their VOIP headset.

The setup of using a Conference Call number is very easy. This is done when the Centra event is created. Simply enter the details for the dial in number and access codes; this information will display when users launch the Centra event. They dial in to the number and are connected with audio. They also will need to launch the Centra session, if not done so already, to see the visuals.

Many groups who use Centra for team meetings use a conference call to accommodate multiple people in the room sharing a PC. The group collectively hears and speaks through a speakerphone. This is very a common practice and a scenario in which a conference call is best.

Two Limitations of Using Conference Call Audio

There are two disadvantages of using Conference Call audio in a Centra session. The first is when you want to use Breakout Rooms. This is a feature in the Centra Live (Symposium) product that allows small groups to work separately. In a Breakout Room each group works together to solve a problem or to collaborate on a task. If you use a Conference Call with Breakout Rooms, you either will need to provide a unique conference call line for each Breakout group or instruct the breakout room teams to use text chat or email to communicate. Otherwise, with a conference call everyone on the call, regardless of the Breakout Room they are in, will hear each other. If you use VOIP with Breakout Rooms, each Breakout Room has its own audio isolated to that room.

A second reason you may want to avoid using Conference Call is when you plan to record the event. The Centra recording feature records only VOIP.

Best Practices for Using Conference Call

Some find the Conference Call method easy to use and this method enables users who are not using a PC to hear the event. Here are some best practices when using Conference Call audio when attending a Centra event.

- ❑ When entering an event that is set up for Conference Call audio, select "Telephone" from the Audio Wizard. This will show the conference call dial in number and access codes.
- ❑ Encourage the event leader to ask participants to "raise their Centra hand" when they have a question or would like to speak. This will help keep the session easy to manage and you will know who is speaking.
- ❑ Encourage users to use the Mute function when participating via conference call. This is helpful to eliminate background noise.
- ❑ If recording Conference Call audio using the CTG, ensure the Conference Call profile is setup and has been tested. Upon launch of the Centra event, ensure the CTG "connects" to the event.

- Array microphones or speaker phones can be used for Centra sessions with Conference Call audio. Do a test of all users near the speaker phone to ensure they can be heard by the Centra event leader.