

Acoustics in Focus 2021

gather.town tutorial



Introduction

Gather.town is a platform for virtual gatherings that simulates an environment where people can choose to interact with others, either individually or in groups. Each space in gather.town (with a unique URL) can be customized for a specific group or event. The 2021 Acoustics in Focus meeting has a dedicated space that can be accessed at

<https://gather.town/app/lhwwaMoJFhRdAcyH/AcousticsInFocus2021>
password = sound

This platform works best with the Chrome or Firefox browsers. It does NOT work with iPads or phones.

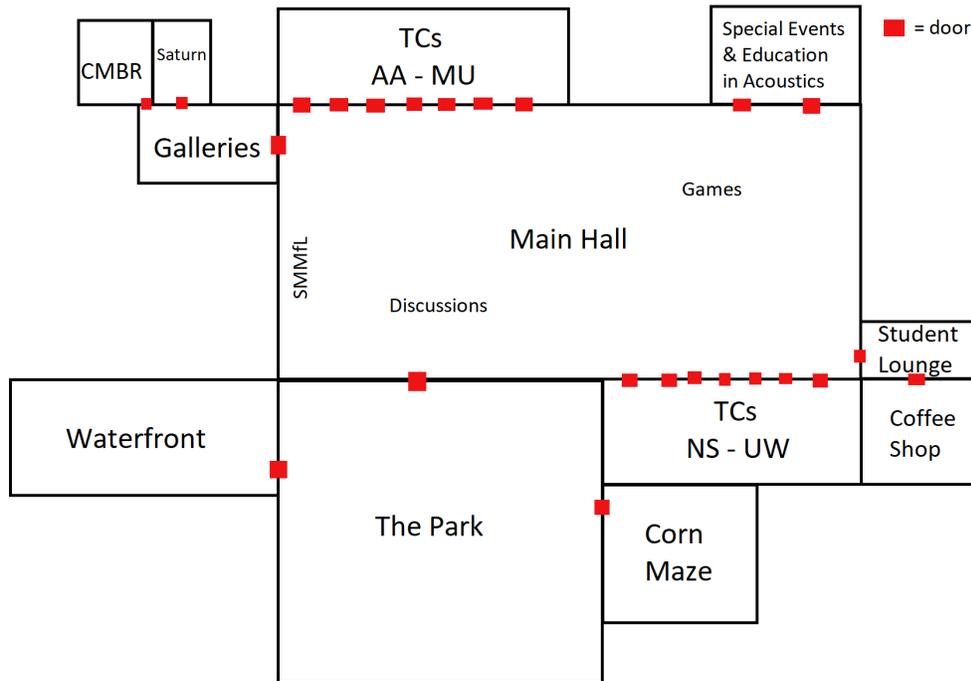
The first time you sign in to this space, you have the option of choosing an avatar and specifying your name. **Please use your full name to avoid any confusion.** You will also need to ensure that your camera and microphone are working if you wish to interact with others. (See the Tips & Tricks section for how to customize video settings)

Your avatar will "spawn" into a region that is centrally located within the space, shown below. **Use the arrow keys to move your avatar within the space.**



Navigation

Your view of the space is limited - it moves along with your avatar. To get an overview of the layout of the entire space, walk up to a signpost and the map below will appear on your screen.



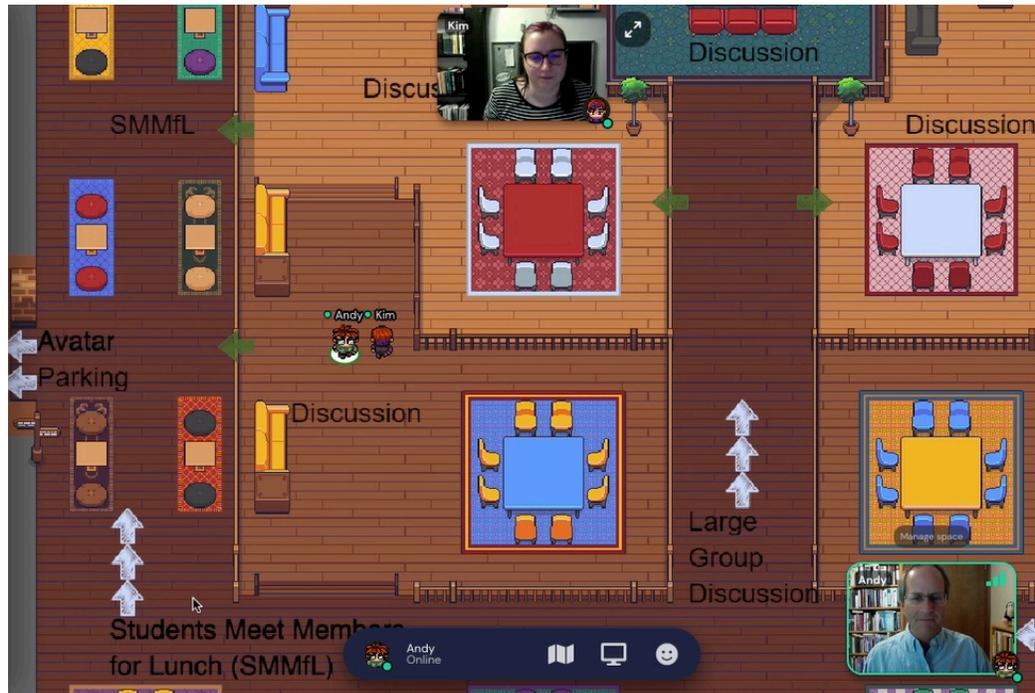
Maps: Note that this map is a static document, not GPS enabled, so the location of your avatar does not appear on it. You can also click the 'minimap' icon in the control bar at the bottom of the browser window, which does show your avatar location within the basic layout of the room you're in (no furniture or labels).

Rooms: The Main Hall has a discussion area (see Private Spaces below) and a gaming area. There are doors around the outer wall that lead to other rooms. There is a separate room for each technical committee, as well as Education, Women in Acoustics, and the Student Lounge/coffee shop. In addition, there is an outdoor area that includes a corn maze and a grassy lawn where folks participating in the live Zoom yoga can gather. Those who are particularly adventurous can explore the whispering galleries, which have elaborate background images.

Take a few minutes to explore the space and get to know the layout. This is quite similar to exploring a conference venue on your first day!

Interacting with others

The real usefulness of gather.town is in the ability to dynamically interact with others who are also in the space. When two avatars are within a certain proximity, audio and video connections are established. About 6-8 people can have a group conversation by clustering their avatars.



Private Spaces: Another approach to group conversations is to assemble the avatars in a "private space". These are marked with colored carpets, usually with a table and some chairs. Only people within a private space can interact; someone outside the space, even in close proximity, will not be able to establish a video or audio connection (although you can see the avatars). Several of these private spaces are limited to two people, which is ideal for the Students Meet Members for Lunch (SMMfL) program.

Parking area: If you plan to be away from your computer (or are doing other work), you are encouraged to leave your avatar in the parking room. This is easier than leaving gather.town completely and having to sign in again later, and it avoids the awkward situation of having a 'zombie' avatar standing in a hallway that doesn't respond.

Special objects

Many of the objects in gather.town are interactive. When you approach such an object, a bright yellow outline appears and you are prompted to press 'X' on the keyboard.

These objects include:

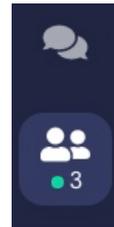
- **signposts** -- displays a labeled map of the entire space
- **bulletin boards** -- most display a schedule of events
- **white boards** -- two or more people can draw/write on a board to share ideas
- **room schedule sign-up sheets** -- anyone can edit these to reserve a room
- **games** -- online interactive multiplayer games
- **podiums** -- broadcast to everyone in the room. Use sparingly!

This is not a comprehensive list. You may chance upon some other interactive objects whose function it is up to you to discern!

Tips and Tricks

When you are comfortable with basic navigation and interaction, you may want to try some of the following ideas to customize or enhance your experience.

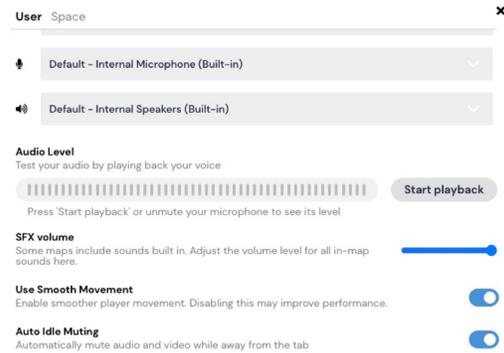
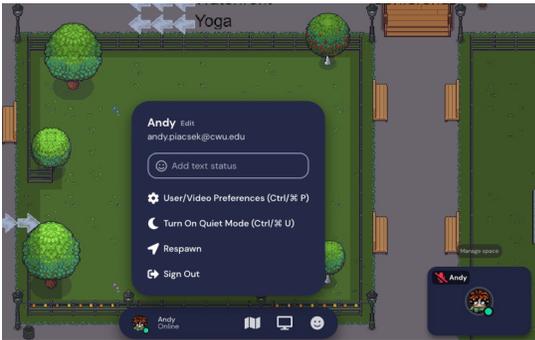
Locating and following others: To see who else is in the AiF gather.town space, click the people icon in the left menu bar (below the chat icon). If there is someone on the list that you would like to speak with, click on their name and select 'Locate on map'. A green path will appear that will lead you to them! Upon reaching your destination, remember to click 'Stop locating'.



When two or more people want to move as a group to another location within the space, you can select a leader, click on their name, and choose 'Follow'. In this mode, your avatar will go wherever the leader goes, saving you the trouble of tapping arrow keys to keep up! When you reach your destination, remember to 'Stop following'. Otherwise, it gets awkward.

Setting your user/video preferences:

If your computer has multiple audio or video inputs, you can select which ones to use. Most useful, however, is the **Auto Idle Muting** feature. In most cases, you want this switch ON, which automatically turns your microphone and camera off (muted) if you click another tab in the browser or move to another app. If your other task involves audio or video (such as zoom), this ensures that you will not have feedback or other awkward audio leakage.



Respawn: If you find that your avatar is in a difficult spot, or you don't feel like taking the time to navigate from the yoga lawn to the Biomedical Acoustics TC room, you can respawn your avatar. This puts you in the central welcome area where you first came in.

Broadcasting to a room: Each room has a podium (labeled "Spotlight"). Anyone stepping onto the podium/spotlight spot will be seen and heard by everyone else in the room. This is useful for making general announcements or perhaps MCing an event; not recommended for casual chatting.