10 Tips to Implement Successful Webinars

COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATE SERIES

Disaster Risk Financing & Insurance Program

SUPPORTED BY
WORLD BANK GROUP

01. Be live early.

Be live at least 15-30 minutes before the start time. It is never a good idea to let participants who join early stay in the webinar waiting room. Being live early provides an opportunity for the host and presenters to interact with participants before the session starts. It also helps weed out any technical or logistical issues so that the webinar can start on time.
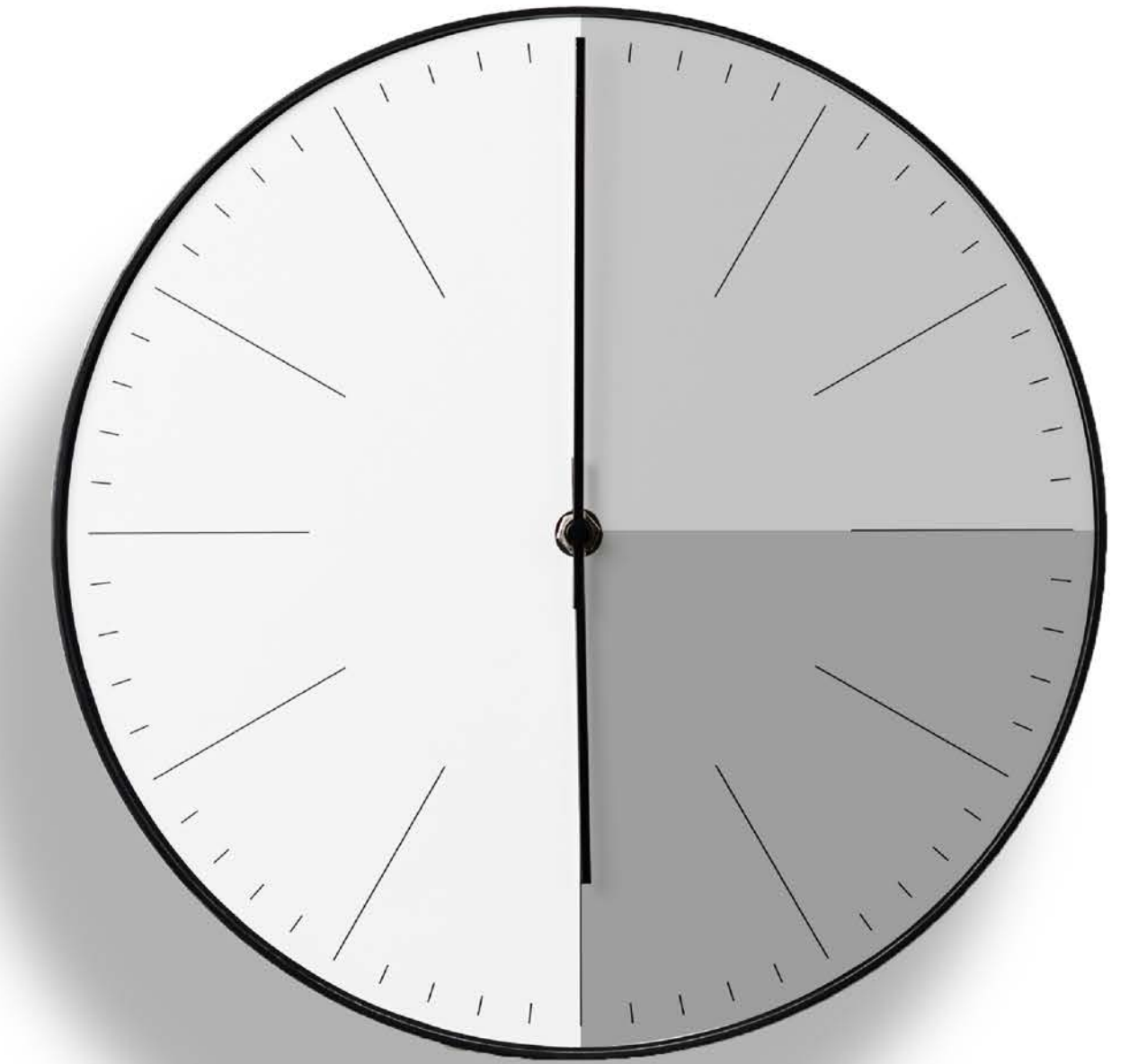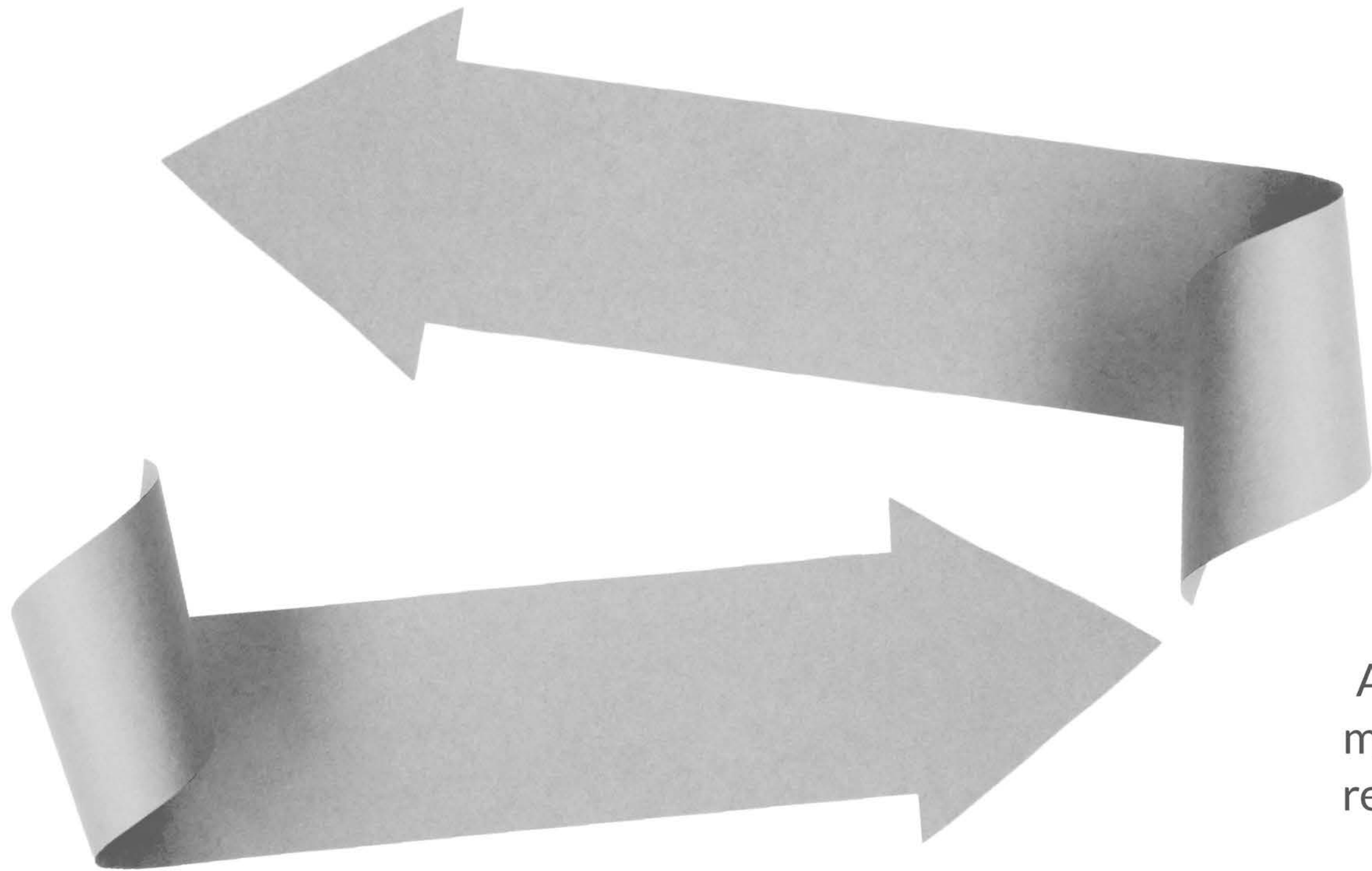
02. Have a Plan B(ackup).

Anticipate that things may go wrong. Wi-Fi may get patchy, computers or devices may malfunction, microphones or webcams may stop working, etc. Have a backup ready for the critical infrastructure required to conduct the webinar. This step will ensure a quick reconnection so that the webinar can continue as planned.

03. Start with a prepared icebreaker.

In webinars as in face-to-face presentations, icebreakers are an effective way to engage the audience and increase their attention. Start the webinar with an open-ended question, a bit of trivia, a quiz, a poll, or other icebreaker. This approach also allows for a bit of humor and helps start the webinar on the right note.

04. Plan for recap time.

If the webinar is a part of a series, spend some time recapping the earlier sessions. Keeping a list of milestones or a roadmap is often useful. The same roadmap can be referenced across the different sessions to recap the already covered content.

05. Craft an effective speaker introduction.

The introduction of the speaker(s) sets the overall mood and tone of the webinar. An introduction that highlights the speaker's most important achievements in a short, crisp manner encourages the audience to listen attentively and to take the speaker seriously.
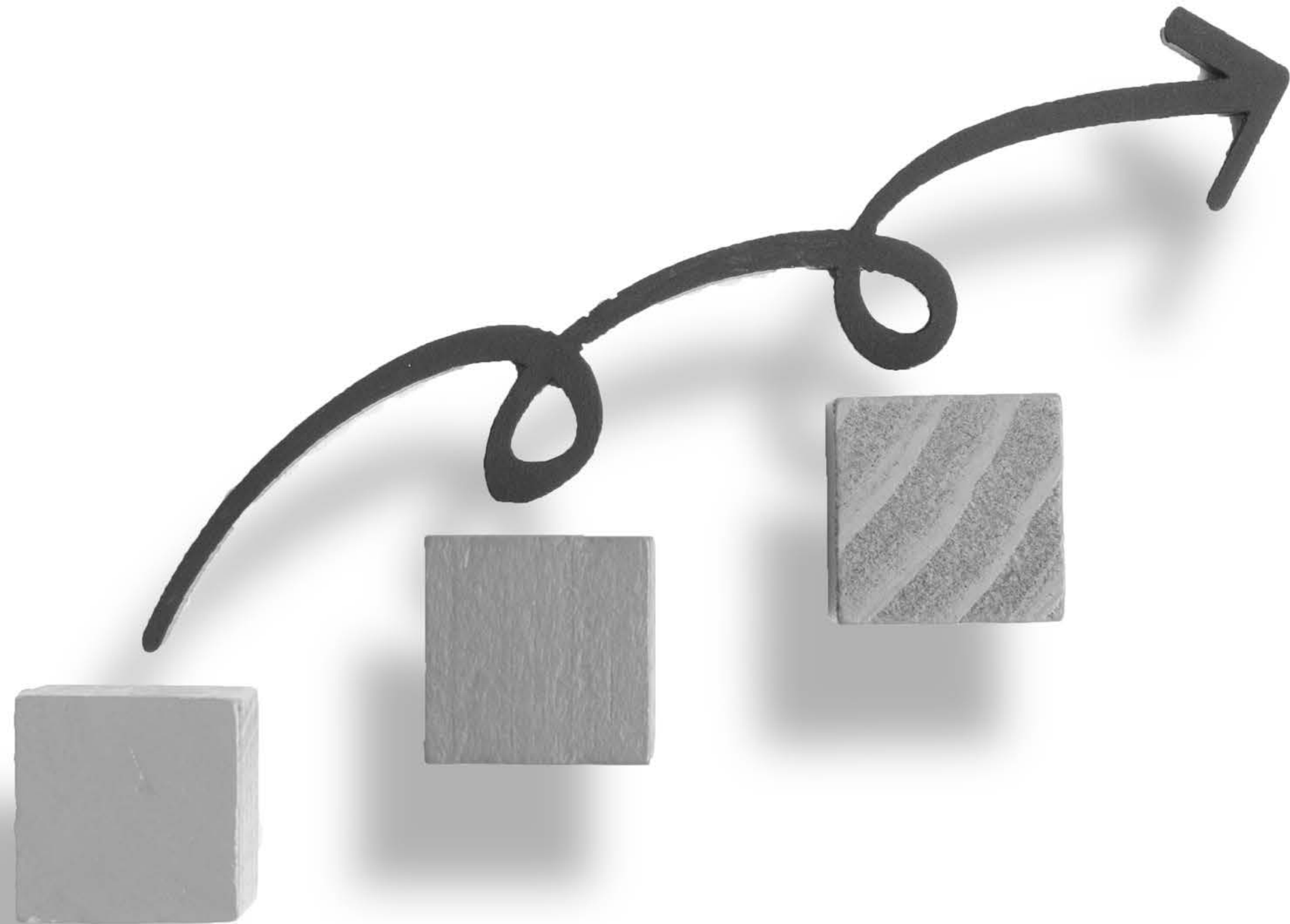
06. Provide for adequate audience interaction.

Ensure adequate audience interaction throughout the webinar by using polls, quizzes, chat prompts, etc. This step is especially important in sessions with substantial technical content or long speaker sessions. It may be tempting to cut the time set aside for audience interaction if speakers go over the stipulated time, but remember that interaction is essential to keep the audience engaged. Have a backup plan to adjust the time in other topics if speakers go on too long; do not cut back on planned interactive activities.
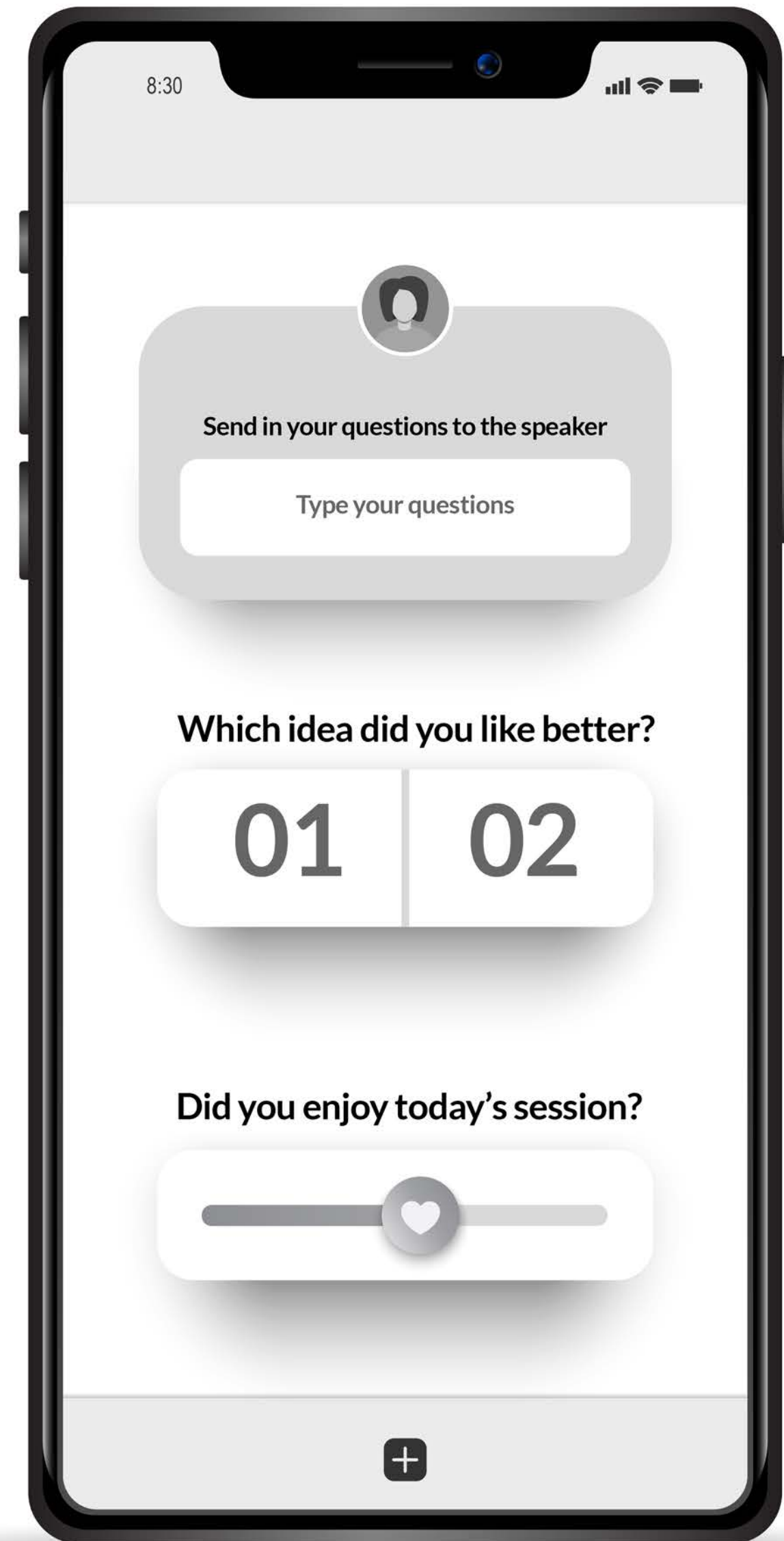
07. Set the stage.

A webinar is a performance—a one-to-many presentation interspersed with interactions and questions. Setting the stage is important:

● **Find a quiet place.** Noise in the environment will not only distract the audience, but also distract the speaker.

● **Avoid a distracting background.** A bright backlight, rotating fan, visual clutter, bright painting, shiny display piece, moving elements, and the like can be highly distracting in the video. If you feel the background is not optimal, opt for the simple virtual background that most webinar software offers.

● **Keep a bottle of water handy.** Speaking at length can compromise the quality of the voice. Sipping a bit of water is definitely advisable for longer speaking sessions.

● **Keep your video on.** It is highly recommended that hosts, presenters, and moderators keep their video on throughout the session. It indicates to the audience that the speakers are listening to one another and are not just there to present their individual pieces.

08. Remember "sound" advice.

A webinar is all about the voice:

• Vary your tone of voice and enunciate your remarks a bit more than you might in a face-to-face situation. Remember, your voice carries the webinar.

• Show enthusiasm and emotion, punch out key words, pause for effect, create variety in vocal quality and speed, and use optimum voice modulation.

• Always check with the audience to make sure your voice is clear and comprehensible.

• Avoid using filler words such as "umm," "like," or "you know," which are both noticeable and annoying in the online format. Similarly, while it is important to modulate your voice, please pay attention to vocal inflections—avoid mumbling, speaking too quickly, and raising your voice volume and pitch without reason. Listening to a recording of yourself during a practice session is helpful (if sometimes unnerving).
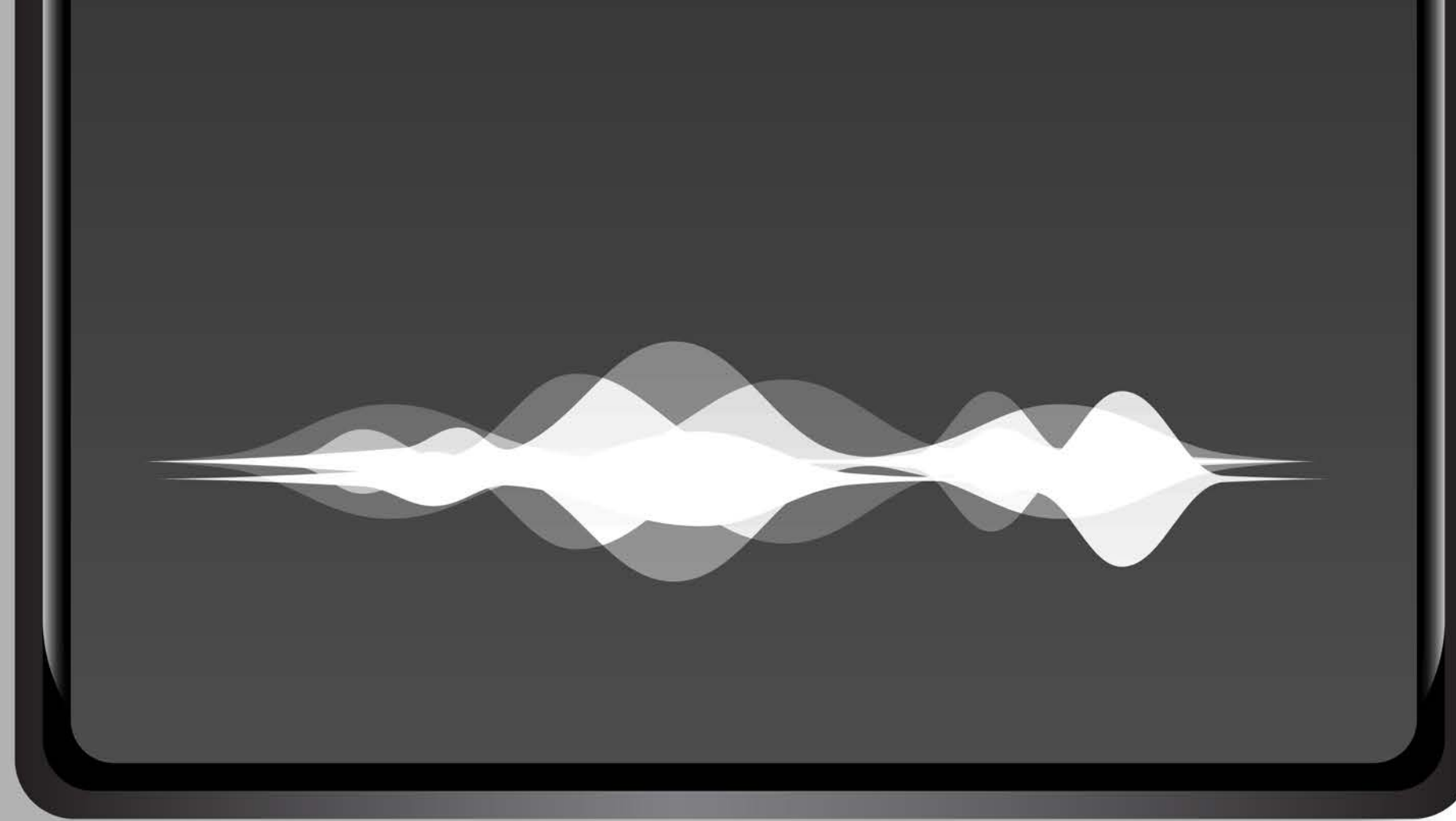
09. Don't read your content word for word;

present a clear paraphrase.

Do not read your slides verbatim. Because people read faster than you can speak, the audience will get ahead of you and lose track of what you are saying. There are several exceptions to this rule, however:

• Read a definition or a quote for effect.

• Read verbal instructions closely related to any text on the screen so as not to confuse the participants.

• Read housekeeping rules.

• Read announcements (such as invitations to join the DRF Community of Practice)

10. Establish rules ahead of time.

It is essential that you set your housekeeping rules for the webinar team and your audience ahead of time. Below are a few standard rules applicable to all webinars:

• Encourage participants to use a headset to prevent their microphones from capturing ambient noise (e.g., keyboard clatter, ticking clocks, Farmville chickens clucking).

• Ask speakers and the moderator to mute their microphones or phone lines when not speaking. The same applies to participants who are expected to speak.

• As a standard practice, mute all participants and inform them that all participants are muted by default.

• Inform participants that the webinar is being recorded.

• Explain that participants should raise their hand or send a chat message to indicate that they wish to ask a questions.

For more information,
please contact:

Kaavya Ashok Krishna
kashokkrishna@worldbank.org

Peijing Li
pli2@worldbank.org

**Disaster Risk Financing
& Insurance Program**

SUPPORTED BY
WORLD BANK GROUP