

GatherTown Social Event

What is it?

GatherTown (<https://www.gather.town/>) is an immersive interactive experience that allows users to explore a digital space with an onscreen 'avatar' (see below). At MicroSeq2021 we will have a Social Event using the Gather platform which will allow attendees to meet and discuss their research or whatever they might choose. Gather allows proximity based conversations, so rather than 100 people all trying to talk on a Zoom, as you wander the digital conference space you'll engage with just those around you.

How does it work?

The link for GatherTown will be provided during session 6 (Day 2 – see program).

Gather is accessed via the web and uses your standard webcam/speaker set up much like any other video conference system. Ideally use Firefox or Chrome for this event, and if you're comfortable to it is best viewed in incognito/private browsing mode. This typically disables browser extensions that may interfere with your participation in the event (you can still participate without this requirement, it just may minimise the number of bugs you encounter).

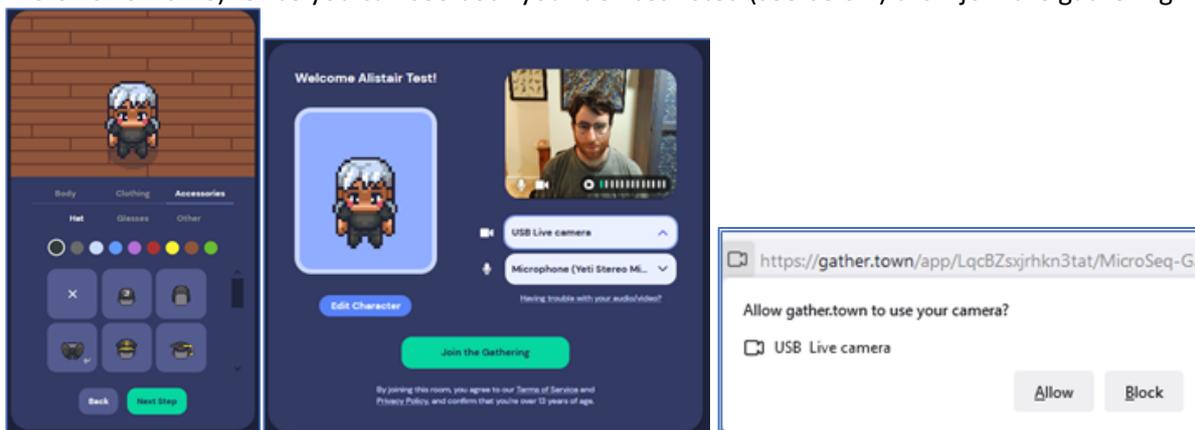
Tutorial

Below is a series of helpful tips for how to get started with Gather. We also recorded a short video detailing the below (link: <https://youtu.be/MDhqOs3md0A>)

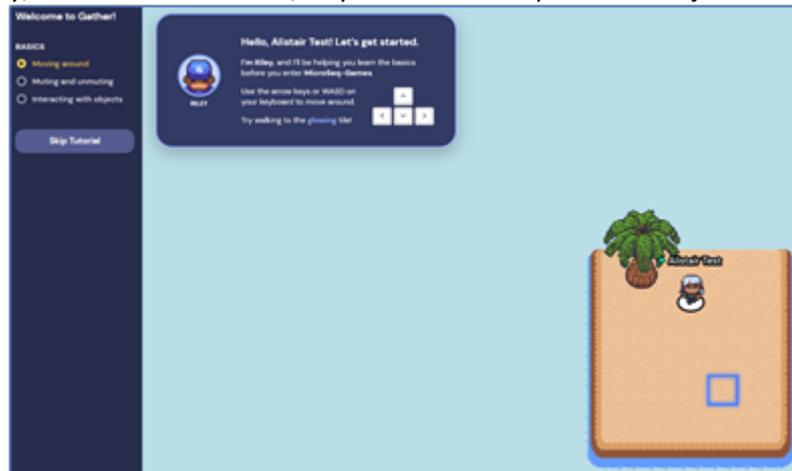
If this is your first time using Gather, when you click on the link it will take you to a page asking you to create a character avatar (see image below). You can pick any combination of features you wish; this can be changed later if you'd like.

You will then be asked to name your avatar, ideally for this event use your real name rather than a nickname so that you can be identified from afar more easily – then click 'finish'

You will be asked to 'allow' access to your **microphone** and **webcam** by your browser (ideally use Firefox or Chrome). Once you can see both your devices listed (see below) click 'join the gathering'.



You'll find yourself on a deserted island (image below). This is a tutorial for new users! You can follow the tutorial briefly, this takes ~2 minutes, or you can click 'skip tutorial' to join the social event.



The basics of the Gather tutorial include

- Move up, left, down and right with either your arrow keys or W, A, S, D, respectively (they make the same shape as the arrow keys but for your left hand)
- You can mute your microphone or turn your camera off by hovering the mouse over your video image/box in the bottom right corner and clicking the microphone or video to turn them off or on.
- You can interact with items using the 'X' key on your keyboard, and leave the windows/screens that pop using 'Esc' on your keyboard or the '(x)' (X in a circle) that appears in the top right of the screen

[The MicroSeq2021 Gather Space](#)

After you complete (or skip) the tutorial, you will arrive in the MicroSeq2021 space. In this Gather space there are four rooms to explore. Note that people in your immediate vicinity will be available to talk to, but if you move too far away from them you won't be able to hear/converse anymore. The welcome room (where you arrive) contains 'help desks' that have items you can interact with to help you navigate Gather, go here if you're unsure how to use the program. There are tables and chairs for you to discuss different MicroSeq topics based on the icon on the tables – go here if you would like to meet researchers in a similar research area to yourself (example icons and topics below).

Topic	Microbiome	Bacteria	Fungi	Virology	Software
Icon					



The three other rooms are puzzle rooms - containing 3 of the 6 'Secret Letters' needed to solve the secret word (detailed below). These rooms are the MicroSeq Maze, the Assembly Room, and the MicroSeq Botanicals room. These can be found by going through the doors at the top of the map.

The MicroSeq2021 Secret Word!

There are Six Secret Letters scattered about the MicroSeq2021 Gather space that spell out the MicroSeq2021 Secret Word. These can be found in the welcome room (3 total) and the additional rooms (1 in each). Each of the letters can be found by interacting with objects around the space, answering trivia, or solving riddles. By unscrambling these letters to find the Secret Word and submitting it via a google form that can be accessed in the 'Staff Area' (or via this link if it won't load in the Gather space: <https://forms.gle/tdSJswpwyLEDR9rm46>) – you could win a prize!

