

Tips For Virtual Meetings

General Tips:

Use a laptop, not a phone

To improve the quality of the connection and your meeting experience, a laptop is best to view shared screens & participants and to access mute/unmute buttons.

Set your camera to eye level

For better ergonomics and camera angles, use books to raise your camera and create a setting similar to sitting across from each other.

Stay Engaged

Resist the urge to multi-task. Stay focused on the camera screen and meeting.

For the Host/Presenter:

- **Take the Time to Test Logistics Prior to the Meeting**
 - As the meeting administrator, become familiar with the features.
- **Set Your Meeting Preferences in Advance**
 - Adjust presenter controls, set all microphones to mute, create a waiting room so that you determine who and when attendees are seen by all.
- **Set expectations**
 - Inform attendees of the expectation to use video conferencing in advance of the meeting and share the communication preference. For smaller meetings with less than 15 attendees, invite individuals to speak by unmuting their microphone. For larger groups, encourage the use of the chat box for shared comments and questions.
- **Know your surroundings**
 - Eliminate distractions not only in your workspace background, but also on your screen. Turn off notifications and applications that may pop up as you're sharing your screen that can distract you and the viewer.

For the Attendees:

- **Arrive early**
 - Virtual meetings may require a log-in or new software, so take five minutes to enter and to test your camera angle and volume.
- **Check, then check again**
 - Mute is essential for participating in virtual meetings. Use it! Unmute only when speaking, then turn it off again.
- **Participate**
 - Share comments and engage! Your interaction makes for a more productive meeting for all.

As more employees are working from home than ever before, it is becoming increasingly important to be able to conduct meetings virtually. Just as there are best practices for conducting in-person meetings, there are several recommendations for virtual meetings that will help make them more meaningful and productive. If the virtual meetings are full of technical issues, poor audio, or other distractions, it leaves staff and attendees feeling frustrated and unproductive. They end up talking about how poorly the meeting went rather than what the meeting was supposed to be about. Depending on the size of your meeting, different rules will apply to ensure that the meeting will go smoothly. Here are some general tips to help make a meeting run smoothly as well as tips for presenters and attendees.

General tips

Use a laptop, not a phone – Many people have become accustomed to using their cell phone for calling into meetings. Often times the cell phone signal is worse than the wi-fi signal that your computer is receiving making for poor phone quality. Using a cell phone also makes it more difficult to mute/unmute yourself as well as take notes during the meeting. In addition, there is a tendency with a cellphone to be more mobile and walk into a noisy or windy area creating background noise. Finally, you may miss the ability to view shared screens depending on your device.

Set your camera to eye level – People working from home often have their laptop on their lap or directly on their desk since they are using the attached keyboard, causing them to look down at their screen. This is not only poor ergonomics, but also makes for some awkward camera angles. Before a video meeting starts, try adding some books under your laptop to raise up the camera so it is closer to eye level. This will make your image look more natural, as if you were sitting across from each other in a meeting.

Stay engaged – Everyone loves to multi-task, but it can really lower the effectiveness of a meeting if no one is focused on who is speaking. This happens in in-person meetings but is even easier to do in virtual meetings. Position the applications you need on the same screen that your camera is located and stay focused on that screen. If you are turned and staring at a different screen, you are likely not focused on the meeting topic and you are showing the presenter that you are disinterested. Some virtual meeting software packages can even log when the attendee is using other screens and not remaining engaged.

For the host/presenter

For most meetings, the host of the meeting is the primary presenter and also the person that is tasked with making sure the meeting is productive for everyone. Because of this, it is necessary that they take the extra time to make sure everything is in place and all logistics are covered. Here are some things to consider:

Set up your meeting preferences in advance – When setting up a meeting, most web meeting software applications allow you to choose your settings in advance. You can typically control who can be a presenter, set all microphones to mute, set up a waiting room, etc. Review your options and make the necessary changes for your meeting. You will need to be familiar with all of your in-meeting control options so that you can seamlessly share your screen or mute someone quickly, if needed. The waiting room feature is also very helpful to avoid “zoombombing”, which is where hackers join a meeting and disrupt the meeting by shouting obscenities or take over the screen and display pornographic images. If

a waiting room is set up, all attendees are kept out of the meeting until the presenter allows each of them into the meeting.

Set expectations – If your meeting contains 15 or fewer people, using video can make the meeting much more engaging and can result in fewer incidents of people talking over each other because they can see who is trying to speak. With that said, it is important to let your attendees know ahead of time that video is expected to be used. This allows people to dress appropriately, position their camera and not have to be asked to turn on their camera. For larger meetings, you may want to limit video to presenters and encourage attendees to use the chat or Q&A box for questions rather than having them unmute themselves to ask a question.

Know your surroundings – As the meeting presenter or host, you will likely be doing most of the talking and screen sharing. To avoid distractions or disruptions, make sure you have closed out all applications that you don't need for a meeting and have open the ones that you do need. For example, if you don't need Outlook open during the meeting, close it out so that meeting reminders and e-mail notifications don't pop up in the middle of your presentation. If you are using video, try and find a room or area that has minimal background activity. Your attendees will start to tune you out if they are focused on all the activity going on behind you.

For the attendees

Arrive early – If you are invited to a meeting and don't recognize the meeting software being used, plan on joining the meeting at least 5 minutes early. This will allow you to install any necessary software and test your microphone and camera. Do your fellow meeting attendees a favor and don't make them wait 10 minutes for you to get situated. You will also want to check your camera position before entering the meeting. Most meeting applications allow you to see how you look on camera before entering the meeting. Take advantage of that and make sure your camera is pointed at your face, not the ceiling or floor.

Check, then check again – Nothing can ruin a meeting like someone having a conversation with someone else in their room. Know where the mute button is in the meeting software and use it regularly. Upon arrival to a meeting, say hello and then mute yourself and stay muted until you need to speak. As the meeting goes on, check your microphone status to ensure that you didn't forget to mute yourself after you finished speaking. The pounding of a keyboard or eating a bag of chips while unmuted can ruin a meeting as much as a side conversation that someone is having. The same reminder applies for video. Check often.

Participate – If you are an active contributor in regular meetings, you should also participate in a virtual meeting. If all the attendees are silent, it doesn't make for a productive or interactive meeting. This applies to "meetings", not webinars which it is ok to just participate and receive information.