

Online video meetings – Tips & Tricks

CHECK THE TECH

- Use a PC with webcam if possible; otherwise a laptop; smartphone should be last choice
- If you can, invest in a “telephone headset” with microphone and headphones
- Make sure you have strong and stable internet.
- Most platforms have a “test mode” for sound & video – use it!

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

- Arrange your room to minimise distracting clutter.
- Avoid “virtue-signalling” books or posters in the background.
- If you can’t control the background; consider using the “blur background” feature of certain platforms.
- Only use virtual backgrounds as a last resort in a serious meeting. They always look fake; never use filters – they project a childish image.
- Try not to be disturbed (e.g. pets, young children, co-workers nearby – especially if attending the same meeting!).
- During the meeting resist the temptation to surf elsewhere. It can be obvious to the other party (e.g. keyboard clatter or changing reflections in your glasses or facial illumination).

DRESS THE PART

- You may be in your bedroom, but don’t wear pyjamas.
- Wear something smart; there are fewer body language and gesture “cues” to project who you are than in a face-to-face meeting, so what you wear is more important than normal.
- Try to wear something that contrasts with your background – particularly if using a virtual background.

FRAME THAT FACE

- Make sure your face mostly fills the frame top to bottom and is centred left to right.
- In particular ensure top of your head is not cut off; show chest from midriff upwards.
- Allow some margin in case you lean forward or sit back during the session.
- Ensure your face is illuminated from the front; ideally from a window in daytime; otherwise by a “warm” light.
- If you wear glasses, make sure they are not acting as mirrors, either for the light or for the screen.
- Position the camera at your eye height; use books, or similar, to raise laptop etc. as needed.
- Avoid using a laptop or smartphone directly on a desk; this will give an angled view straight up your nostrils!

LOOK AT THE CAMERA

- Face the camera head-on; don't sit sideways.
- Throughout the meeting look at the camera, not the screen.
- That's worth repeating ... look at the camera, not the screen!
- Don't forget this also when you're being spoken too; glancing down looks submissive or inattentive.
- You can glance rapidly from time to time at the faces near the top of the screen to gauge audience reaction – but limit strictly.
- Don't weave and bob around; convey passion and empathy via facial gestures and vocal timbre; not head movement or hand gestures

PLAN YOUR PITCH

- Think beforehand what it is that you want to achieve from the meeting. A job offer? Agreement to your project proposal? Recognition for your efforts?
- Consider the simple "AIDA" mnemonic for the 4 steps in selling yourself, or your proposal:
 - A** – seize the audience's **A**ttention,
 - I** – arouse **I**nterest in the audience,
 - D** – lead them to **D**esire your proposal and **D**ecide that they agree with it
 - A** – get them to commit to the **A**ction to implement it
- Remember the last "A" is often forgotten; often referred to as "closing the deal".

START WITH A BANG

- This really addresses the first "A" of "AIDA". Open with a strong statement that sums up what you hope will be discussed and fleshed out over the next 10-15 mins.

KEEP IT SHORT!

- Attention spans are even shorter in virtual encounters than in face-to-face ones; so treat it like an "elevator pitch"; get to the point quickly.
- Keep a watch or clock with you (out of camera shot) so that you can track your pace.

END ON A HIGH

- Try to get the last word in, even if it only "Goodbye" or "Thank you"; if possible try to summarise the main points discussed and agreed; also try to leave the other party with a "takeaway" message.