

Virtual Presence

Tips for Online Meetings

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Limit distractions.

Find an area where you won't be interrupted to avoid extraneous noises or other persons coming into view during meetings. Avoid holding conversations with off-screen individuals. Close out other programs so you're not tempted to multi-task.

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Consider your visuals.

Front lighting is best for online video. Sitting still helps keep focus on the speaker. Ensuring that our backgrounds aren't distracting or inappropriate is a must.

If you want to see how you look to meeting participants, take a still picture with your laptop camera and study it closely to determine any needed adjustments.

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Present yourself professionally.

Dress the same way you would for an in-person meeting with the group. Professional dress and appropriate grooming are all still important as we work to present ourselves in a way that represents us and our agencies in the best possible manner.

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Be mindful of body language.

Upright posture, eye contact with the camera, facial expressions, and active listening skills are just as important in online meetings.

Assess the image you're projecting to ensure that others in your meeting see you as the capable, engaged professional that you are.

⇒ 1

Update meeting guidelines

Meeting guidelines might need to be revised for online meetings. For example, texting could be seen as disrespectful. Seeing someone chewing during an online meeting could be distracting. Consider updating your meeting guidelines to address these types of issues.

⇒ 2

Assign roles.

Meeting technology requires one set of skills while facilitation uses a different set. Consider making a list of the roles for your online meetings such as producer, facilitator, timekeeper, and a recorder to take notes.

Having these decided in advance will help the meeting get started more quickly and improve productivity once the meeting begins.

⇒ 3

Create tech ground rules.

Create agreed-upon hand signals to show if someone is muted, if they need to speak up, if someone wants to speak next, or if a participant needs to mute. Create rules for entering and leaving during meetings.

Also, decide your guidelines for recording online meetings and ensure all legal considerations are met.

⇒ 4

Test your equipment.

Get to the meeting early and always do audio/video tests. It saves time and embarrassment and also allows you time to set the layout of your screen.

Once you get it set, try to avoid touching your keyboard. While typing notes seems like a great idea, consider that your keyboard is closer to your pc microphone than you are. If you type, mute.

⇒ 5

Use mute.

Our locations are not always quiet backgrounds. The best practice is to use mute until it's time for you to speak.

If it's an open discussion and you need to keep your microphone on, you might want to keep your finger on the mute button in case of unexpected background noises.

⇒ 6

Protect sensitive information.

When sharing your screen, be aware of what else is on your desktop. It's best to share only the application you are using at the time.

Turning off email and alerts will also help keep confidential information from popping up during meetings.