

Etiquette Tips & Best Practices for Effective Video Conferencing

To make your video conferencing meetings more productive and rewarding for everyone, review the general video conferencing best practices and learn how to improve the experience whether you are an onsite participant or a remote participant.

Meeting Etiquette Tips

Communicate Effectively

When you begin the meeting:

- Once all attendees are present, take a minute to conduct an audio check. Making a quick round of introductions is an effective way to do this. Introductions break the ice and ensure that everyone can hear each other properly.
- If you plan to record the meeting, notify all participants at the beginning of the meeting.
- Always remember and acknowledge when there are remote participants. Reach out to them periodically to see if they have a question or something to contribute. Having remote participants on video, versus audio only, ensures that you remember they are in the meeting. Remote participants should not be an afterthought.

During the meeting:

- When not speaking, make sure your audio is muted. This will prevent inadvertent noises, such as coughs, rattling papers, or chair squeaks, from interrupting others.
- In the primary conference room, do not shuffle papers or cover the microphones on the table.
- Speak clearly and in a normal voice. There is no need to shout.
- When videoconferencing with many sites, start your comment or question by stating your name. This helps other sites identify who is speaking.
- As with any meeting, limit side conversations and multitasking.
- Leverage online collaboration tools like OneDrive or Google Drive to take notes, share content, and collaborate real-time. This enables all participants to interact, versus using a physical whiteboard or other physical visuals only available in the primary conference room.
- Tell others if you leave the video conference early.

Minimize Body Movements

- Avoid quick movements, which make it difficult for cameras and microphones to keep up with you. Quick movements may appear jumpy or choppy to others on the call.
- Maintain eye contact with the camera and stay engaged in the meeting.
- Do not turn your back to the camera.

Work Effectively with video conferencing technology

- When you ask a question or request information, allow time for slightly delayed responses because the system may experience slight transmission delays.
- Direct your questions to a specific individual.

This information was adapted by Stanford University IT, and can be accessed at <https://uit.stanford.edu/videoconferencing>

- When possible, avoid interrupting others as they are speaking. Many video conferencing systems have a voice-activated switching feature to automatically move the camera to the active speaker. Interrupting another speaker may confuse the voice activation.
- Establish an understanding among participants of when and how to interrupt. For example, have people raise hands or otherwise signal that they want to speak.
- Consider posting pending questions via chat.
- Make it safe to call out participants on poor meeting etiquette.

Video conferencing best practices

Prior to a meeting:

- When using equipment or locations not regularly used, test your meeting connections in advance.
- When possible, establish online video conferencing connections several minutes before the meeting start time.
- Create a backup communication plan in case you have trouble connecting with remote participants. A backup plan can include asking onsite participants to connect to the meeting through their laptops, using a mobile or speakerphone, and/or collaborating through an online collaboration tool (e.g., OneDrive, Google docs).

During a meeting:

- Ensure all participants can see and hear all other participants, as appropriate.
- Ensure conference room microphones are distributed appropriately to pick up all speakers.
- Ensure location lighting does not limit a participant's visibility (e.g., avoid backlighting from windows or lamps).
- Have participants mute their microphones if their location has excessive background noise or if they will not be speaking.
- Have a meeting facilitator — often, but not always, the person who called the meeting. The facilitator is responsible for:
 - providing an agenda to participants — ahead of the meeting is nice, but minimally at the start of the meeting — that includes an overview of topics to be covered and planned outcome;
 - establishing the visual or verbal cues, such as raising a hand, to indicate when someone wants to actively contribute verbally to the meeting;
 - engaging participants at all locations to ensure discussion understanding, and alignment;
 - limiting “side conversations” and multitasking or ensure all participants are made aware of that content;
- Make sure all participants have equal access to content by sharing all content within the video conferencing connection and using online tools (e.g., OneDrive, Google docs) whenever possible.