

Best practices for successful virtual meetings

With the continuation of home working in many businesses, lots of us are using virtual meetings now more than ever.

Platforms like Teams and Zoom enable us to meet with colleagues, clients and vendors. It's an important way of maintaining close connections, particularly at a time when in-person meetings aren't always an option.

Getting used to virtual meetings can be a challenge, especially if you normally work in a face-to-face environment. We've put together some tips on how to participate in, and manage, effective online meetings.



Meeting etiquette

Check your appearance and surroundings - to maintain professional standards, be mindful of your appearance. Remember that black, white and stripes can distort your view on a video call. Use Zoom virtual backgrounds if your device is compatible to minimise background distractions, though don't be afraid to share your personal space with colleagues. It may be a way to get to know each other a bit better.

Treat it like a face-to-face conversation - eye contact and body language are important to make your communications authentic. Align your camera with your eyeline for the best engagement. Make sure you look at the camera and pay attention to others. Gestures can come across as more pronounced on a video call but staying animated can help keep others' attention. Don't forget that you are visible!

Pace your speech to allow responses - in a virtual meeting, it's more difficult to pick up on gestures that allow interjections in a natural flow of conversation. Use constructed arguments, and pace your speech, to allow opportunities for feedback and discussion.

Mute your device when not speaking - that always helps to avoid unnecessary disruptions to your meetings. Also, check when you are speaking that your device isn't on mute. Be aware of background sounds, such as tapping or typing, which can be distracting to meeting participants.

Be empathetic - communication virtually can be challenging, so support your colleagues to ensure their voices are heard in your meetings. Remember not everyone will want to join the call on video, and that's OK too.

Host your meeting for success

Give a clear introduction to stay focused - you may like to plan your introduction before the meeting. Set out the rules of engagement at the start and in each section of the meeting if appropriate. For example, do you intend to present continuously, or would you like to invite interactive discussion?

Plan your meetings - it can be more difficult to host a fluid meeting without the spontaneity of face-to-face interactions. Include a clear meeting agenda to ensure your meeting keeps pace and ask the right questions to ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute and raise their points.

Use wait time to stay connected - greetings and small talk are an important part of maintaining your network when working from home. Use this time to get to know people, and to help them get to know you.

Know your meeting tools - get familiar enough to do some basic troubleshooting and explain how the meeting tools work to your participants. This is particularly important when hosting client meetings. Getting to know the platforms you are using is a worthwhile investment to ensure your future meetings run smoothly.

Time your meetings right - remember that meetings do not need to last 30 minutes or an hour. Trim your meetings to fit your agenda, rather than extending invites to fill calendar blocks. Virtual meetings are important to stay in touch when working remotely, but ensure you are also using your time efficiently and effectively. Also be mindful of time differences if participants are dialing in from different time zones.

Check your tech

Keep your meetings secure - keep your meetings secure by applying the right security controls to ensure your data is safe and your meeting is not interrupted.

Plug in - meetings can drain your battery, plug your device into a nearby socket for the best performance.

Monitor your internet - aim for a 2mbps upload/download speed or higher ([check yours here](#)). Turn off video if it's slowing things down.

Test beforehand- if you're planning a large or complex meeting, it's always worth testing your setup as closely to the real thing as possible.

Follow the guides - familiarise yourself with the platforms you are using, read the user guides and watch free video training.

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